



CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
宣道國際學校

Maestros

A passion for music and music education

In a series of insightful interviews to be published over the next few weeks, we sit with accomplished musicians heading the CAIS Specialized Orchestral Training Program and ask them to take us to the beginning of their musical journeys, what inspired them, how they nurtured their passion and talent for music, their professional careers and what led them to teach music to others.

CLARINETIST

Chiu-Yuan Chen



Manson Tam (MT)

Chiu-yuan Chen (CYC)

MT: Can you tell us a little about where you grew up and your early musical training?

CYC: I was born and grew up in Taiwan. When I was a child, my mother strongly encouraged my two sisters and me to learn playing piano. One day she discovered that I was able to play all the pop songs without music notation and realized that I was good at the sensation of tone. Then, she invited a piano instructor for me to enhance skills. Besides, I attended in the special music class playing piano when I was studying in secondary school. In the meantime, I was also interested in playing clarinet and chose this instrument's course as the major in the National Taiwan Normal University.

MT: After graduating from National Taiwan Normal University, you went to New York to study contemporary music – what led to your interest in the US?

CYC: When I graduated from the Bachelor degree program, I originally planned to be a secondary school teacher. At that time, I joined with my classmates to participate in a number of auditions in the US and see any new opportunities that fit me the best. Eventually, I obtained a scholarship for study in New York. Therefore, I spent five years in “The Big Apple” and received a Master of Music from Juilliard School and a Doctor of Musical Arts from City University of New York right before moving to Hong Kong. I have been one of the members of Hong Kong Sinfonietta since that time.

MT: Was there a particular teacher or mentor in clarinet or composition that you sought out in Taiwan, US or Hong Kong? Did he/she bring any influence to you?

CYC: There are a number of teachers and mentors I came across. But who has brought me the most impact in my music journey? I would say the answer is my mom. Walking toward a musician is always difficult and has to spend much time or even money, but she has been backing me up since the day one. No matter which path I chose, she had never voiced reservations. So she is an important person in my music journey.

MT: You are now teaching in HKAPA and CAIS. How did you get into teaching?

CYC: I used to teach in HKAPA. However, the number of students decreased in the current academic year. I am not teaching there at the moment. As I love music and know the importance of learning music at the young ages, I truly enjoy every moment in the music classes with students. On top of CAIS, I am now teaching in several local schools as well.

MT: Do you have any advice for children who are interested in music?

CYC: Practice, practice and practice.

Practice is the process of getting closer to achieving your musical goals. When we practice, we take elements of our playing that we find difficult, and play them carefully until they are easy. Once what you are practicing becomes second nature, playing your instrument becomes a lot of fun. Before

you get to that stage, you will find it takes a lot of hard work and concentration.

Regarding how often should you practice your instrument if you are a beginner? There are no rules when it comes to music, and there are no rules when it comes to practicing music. What we have instead are good ideas that have been proven over many years to help you become a better player. One of these ideas is that small amounts of regular practice is much better than a massive session in the weekend. When you practice, you develop muscle memory. This is where you learn to do the movements without having to think about them. If the only time you play your instrument is during your lesson, then your muscles will have trouble remembering what they did during your last lesson and you will not make much progress. Music is very fun when you are making progress.

Like me, besides being a musician, nothing else I wanted to strive for when I was a young student. So I kept practicing every day.

MT: Thank you so much for sharing your journey with our CAIS community.

CYC: You are welcome. I am so lucky and happy of being one of the instructors in the CAIS's Specialized Orchestral Training Program.

