MAGAZINE

MAESTRO

AUGUST
VOL. 1



INTERVIEW: TIANRAN CHENG

"Hard work pays off, don't give up, success is just around the corner!"

OVERCOMING STAGE FRIGHT:

a handful of strategies for musicians to tame performance anxiety

INTERVIEW: AYA OKIMOTO

"We all thought that it would just be a good experience."

INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL PHILLIPE ANDREE

First Prize winner of the Piano Competition Online

FOR BEGINNERS: THE PERFECT APP TO LEARN HOW TO READ NOTES

"FOR SURE, MUSIC WILL BE WITH ME FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE."

WINNER'S VOICE:

MAXIMILIAN ZHU

GRAND PRIX WINNER AT 5TH PCO

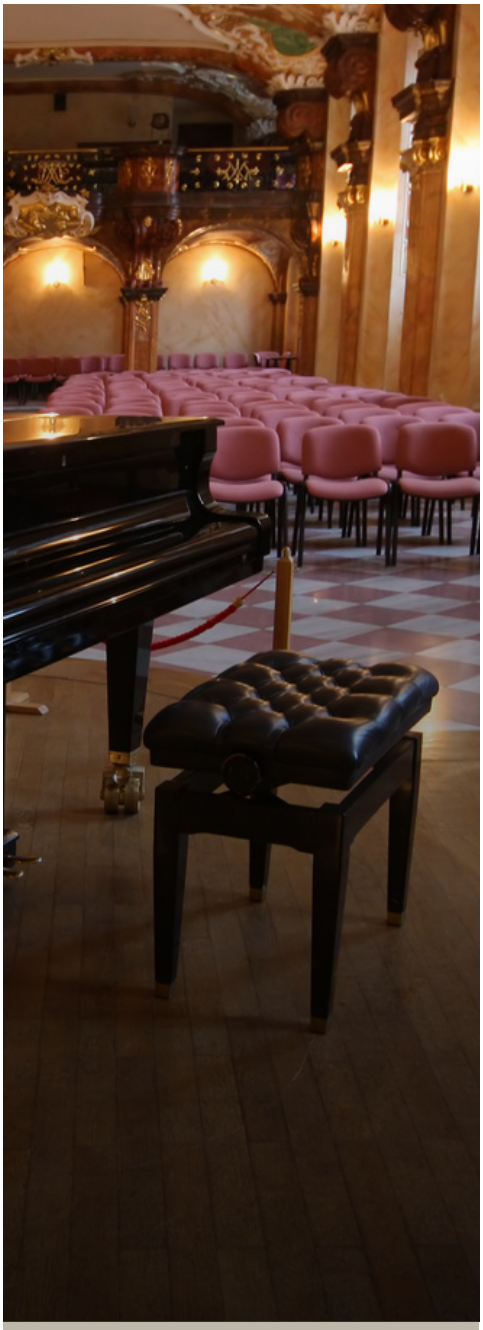


TABLE OF CONTENT

03.

Tianran Cheng

First Prize winner in the 3rd International String Competition Online in Poland in 2023.

06.

Michael Phillipe Andree

First Prize winner of the 5th Piano Competition Online.

08.

Conquering Stage Fright

Practical tips for musicians to master performance anxiety.

10.

Maximilian Hongcheng Zhu

Grand Prix winner of the 5th Piano Competition Online.

12.

Aya Okimoto

First Prize winner of the 6th Piano Competition Online.

14.

TunyStones

Amazing piano app.

Tianran Cheng



Tianran Cheng began studying the cello at the age of six. She is currently studying under the guidance of Tao Ni (faculty of the New England Conservatory). Tianran was awarded First Prize in the 3rd International String Competition Online in Poland in 2023.

Introduce yourself. Who are you, where are you from, what composers do you like and why?

My name is Tianran Cheng and I am from China. My favorite composers are Tchaikovsky and Beethoven. I appreciate Tchaikovsky's music for its beauty, soothing qualities, and healing effects. I like Beethoven's music because most of his pieces are emotionally deep, with contrasts, and sometimes very powerful.

How did it happen that you started playing an instrument? Describe your path.

One time, my mother took me to see a concert by the young musician, La Li. I hadn't started learning music yet, but I found myself dancing along to the music. My mother noticed that I seemed to have some musical talent and took me to a music store. At that store, she asked me which instrument I liked the most. I didn't know what any of the instruments were, but I thought the sound of the cello was beautiful and the shape was unique, so I chose to learn the cello.

Who is your role model, your mentor? Why?

My mentor is Tao Ni, who was formerly the principal cellist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and is now a cello faculty at the New England Conservatory of Music. My role model is the famous French cellist, Gautier Capuçon. I admire his excellent right-hand technique and his ability to produce beautiful and soothing sounds even near the fingerboard. I also appreciate his musicality; he is always deeply immersed in the music and tells stories through his playing.

What does your daily life look like? Describe your sample day. How do you manage to find a balance between school and practicing?

I wake up at 7:30 every morning to go to school. After morning classes, I have lunch at school. Then, I have one class before going home to practice the cello. I usually start practicing at 2:30 pm and practice until dinner time. After dinner, I do my homework. This schedule allows me to balance my practice and study time without neglecting either.

What was your experience with the String Competition Online? What are your thoughts?

For the participants of the next competition, can you give any advice?

I would like to say to the participants of the upcoming competition: be well-prepared before the competition, such as ensuring accurate intonation, rhythm, and technical control. Whether it's an online or in-person competition, don't be nervous. As long as you immerse yourself in the music and don't think about irrelevant things, you will perform your best.



When you feel like giving up, encourage yourself more and believe that you can do it. Hard work pays off, don't give up, success is just around the corner!

What is your guiding principle by which you work?
I think that when you encounter mistakes during practice, don't be impatient. You should calmly and patiently look for the cause of the mistake and figure out how to solve it, instead of getting angry and frustrated. This won't solve the problem. When you feel overwhelmed or can't seem to fix the issue, encourage yourself and believe that you can do it. You can even write a note of encouragement and place it in front of you. To make others enjoy your performance, you must first believe in yourself and play the music beautifully, as if you are telling a story to others with your cello.

What are your plans?
In the future I hope I can change the problem of vibrato, I hope I can have various vibrato instead of just one; I also hope I can solve the problem of rhythm, it would be better if the rhythm needs to be more stable. I hope to become a great cellist in the future.

Would you like to add something more from yourself?
I hope all my music learning partners can enjoy learning music, truly fall in love with it, and treat it like a friend to cherish. When you feel like giving up, encourage yourself more and believe that you can do it. Hard work pays off, don't give up, success is just around the corner!





Michael Phillipe Andree

Interview with Michael Phillipe Andree,

First Prize winner of the Piano Competition Online

"Playing the piano is about enjoying yourself and sharing that joy with your audience".



Tell us about yourself. What composers do you like, where do you get your inspiration from?

My name is Michael Phillipe Andree, I'm 12 years old and I'm from Indonesia.

I enjoy listening to a lot of composers like Rachmaninov and Chopin. But mostly, I get my inspiration in music from Tiffany Poon.

Her performances are very expressive, she produces great dynamics and elegance, in many times she plays with the tone and the dynamics of the music while giving explanations of how she feels about it.

Tiffany's Youtube videos can also entertain me, she often records her practice sessions with a down-to-earth and humbleness feel to it. Even though I have never met her in person, for me her downness to earth is something to look up to.

classical-music.info

How did you come to play an instrument?
I started music when I was 5 years old. One day my grandpa bought me a toy piano. I was listening to a song and I just instantly played the tune of the song on my toy piano. After knowing that, my parents took me to piano lessons and that's how my musical journey started.

Who is your role model, your master? And why?
That's a hard question as I have many great pianist to look up to. But if I had to choose it would be Seong-Jin Cho, for me his playing style is very impressive. He emphasizes both feeling and technique in his playing. Another one would be Tiffany Poon.

What is your day like? Describe your typical day. How do you manage to combine your daily routine with your practicing?
Everyday, I practice piano for at least 1 hour. After school, sometimes I have academic and non-academic lessons. I practice more when I don't have any after-school lessons.

> **Don't be afraid to put some of your creativity on your playing**

What is your experience with Piano Competition Online? What are your thoughts? Any advice for participants in the next competition?
I think the competition is very well managed, it gives opportunities to young musicians like myself, to test their playing out there and get valuable feedback to improve in the future. My advice for the participants for the next contest is don't be afraid to put some of your creativity on your playing, where it may be in dynamics, expressions, tones, etc, should the chance permit.

Your plans for the future?
As I am still in junior school right now, I don't really have a plan than just practice diligently and try out many techniques and approaches to my playing.

In the future, I want to study music abroad. I would like to travel around the world and become a concert pianist. I'm also interested in composing music. My dream is that my composition could be used in movies and games.

As a young pianist, I still have a lot to learn both technically and mentally, and many distractions would come around, like playing games and friend's activities. Sometimes all that makes it hard to keep ourselves motivated in doing the piano routines, so it's a good thing to talk to someone you can trust on any of your distractions, so you can get help to view things from another perspective to maintain your motivation and your balance. Nevertheless, never forget, playing piano should never be a burden, it is about enjoying yourself and spreading that joy to the audience.



Conquering Stage Fright

Practical Tips for Musicians to Master Performance Anxiety



For all musicians, taking the stage can evoke a mix of excitement and nervousness. Performance anxiety, commonly known as stage fright, is a real challenge that many musicians face. The fear of being judged, the pressure to deliver a flawless performance, and the anticipation of making mistakes can hinder a musician's ability to give their best on stage. However, fear not! With the right strategies and mindset, musicians can overcome their nerves and confidently embrace the spotlight. In this article, we will explore effective methods to conquer stage fright for classical musicians.

Prepare Thoroughly

One of the most crucial ways to combat performance anxiety is through thorough preparation. Make sure you practice your repertoire extensively and become intimately familiar with each piece. Rehearsing repeatedly will boost your confidence, making you feel more in control during your performance. Additionally, consider practicing in front of a mirror or recording yourself to get comfortable with the idea of being observed during performances.

Visualize Success

Visualization is a powerful technique for managing performance anxiety. Spend some time mentally rehearsing your performance, envisioning yourself playing flawlessly and receiving enthusiastic applause. By consistently visualizing success, you condition your mind to associate the stage with positive outcomes, reducing the fear associated with performing in front of an audience.

Practice Controlled Breathing and Relaxation Techniques

Deep breathing and relaxation exercises can work wonders in calming nerves before a performance. Regularly practice controlled breathing exercises to regulate your heart rate and induce a sense of calm. Techniques like progressive muscle relaxation and meditation can also help you remain centered and focused during high-stress situations.

Gradual Exposure

For musicians dealing with severe stage fright, gradual exposure to performing in front of others can be very beneficial. Start by playing for a few friends or family members, then progress to small gatherings, open mic events, and eventually, larger audiences. Gradual exposure desensitizes your mind to the fear of public performance and builds confidence over time.

Embrace Mistakes

Even the most accomplished musicians make mistakes during performances. Accept that making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process. Instead of fixating on errors, focus on the overall interpretation and emotional expression of the music.

Establish a Pre-Performance Routine

Creating a consistent pre-performance routine can help anchor you before stepping on stage. Whether it involves stretching, visualization, or a specific warm-up routine, having a ritual will signal your brain that it's time to shift into performance mode.

Practice Positive Self-Talk

Replace negative thoughts and self-doubt with positive affirmations. Remind yourself of your skills, hard work, and past successful performances. Developing a habit of positive self-talk can boost your self-confidence and resilience.

Overcoming stage fright is a process that requires patience, dedication, and a positive mindset. Classical musicians can conquer performance anxiety by adopting strategies such as thorough preparation, visualization, controlled breathing, gradual exposure, embracing mistakes, establishing pre-performance routines, and engaging in positive self-talk. By implementing these techniques, musicians can transform stage fright into a catalyst for exceptional performances, allowing their passion for music to shine through in all its brilliance. So, stand tall, take a deep breath, and step onto the stage with confidence – the world is waiting to hear your musical masterpiece!



Grand Prix winner of the Piano Competition Online

Maximilian Hongcheng Zhu

My parents are from Shanghai and I was born in 2013 in Germany and currently live in Heidelberg with my parents. I like a lot of composers because they all have different styles, it's like having different dishes in a big luxurious meal. I can draw different musical feelings from their styles.
From the time I was 2 years old, my mother used to take me to various concerts. Strangely enough, I always managed to listen to the whole concert without making any noise, although sometimes I would take a nap in the middle of the concert. When I was five, my parents bought a piano and found a Russian teacher for me to start teaching me to play the piano. After six months I switched to the Heidelberg Music School and studied piano playing with Mr. Uwe Balser. From the age of 6 I also learn to play the violin.

> **“Composers, they all have different styles, it's like having different dishes in a big luxurious restaurant.**

Maximilian Hongcheng Zhu



In the classical music scene nowadays, there are many famous pianists, like Mr. András Schiff, Mr. Daniel Barenboim, Mr. Lang Lang, etc. They are my role models and I often go to their concerts with my parents.

I am currently in the fourth grade of a public elementary school in Germany. School classes are usually only until 1pm. I usually finish my school homework first after lunch. Then I start practicing piano and violin. In case there is no competition, I usually practice piano for 2 hours and violin for 1 hour a day and spend the rest of the day doing sports, like playing tennis and swimming or reading books that I am interested in.

I have participated in various national and international music competitions every year since I was 7 years old. To date, I have participated in nearly 20 competitions of all kinds and have won many awards. The most important thing about competitions for me is that they allow me to practice with greater precision and to develop my mental skills on stage.

I hope to meet people who are as talented as I am in the field of music and are willing to work hard for it, which makes me feel excited and inspired.

So far I don't have a very specific plan. Because I am only 9 years old, there are so many possibilities in life. I want to gain knowledge in all areas because only a well-rounded person can be mentally healthy and knowledgeable. But for sure, music will be with me for the rest of my life.



AYA OKIMOTO



Interview with Aya Okimoto,

First Prize winner of the Piano Competition Online

"To be honest, my parents, teacher and myself were never expecting to win. We all thought that it would just be a good experience."



Introduce yourself. Who are you, where are you from, which composers do you like, where do you get your inspiration from.

Hi, my name is Aya Okimoto and I am 14 years old. I attend Punahou School. I live in Hawaii and really enjoy playing romantic pieces such as Chopin and Rachmaninoff.

How come you started playing an instrument? Describe your journey.

I started playing piano at three years old where I would sing and play the chords of Disney princess songs. However,
I started to develop my love for classical pieces at the age of five. I study piano at Punahou Music School under the instruction of Mr. Steven Casano from five years old.

At 9 years old I entered my first piano competition which was the Junior Steinway competition.

To be honest, my parents, teacher (Mr. Steven Casano), and myself were never expecting to win. We all thought that it would just be a good experience. However, when the results were announced, I placed 1st Prize, we could hardly believe our ears and were overwhelmed with joy. Ever since that day, we decided to enter other competitions as well. As music is a huge part of my life, I created a group called the Wish Makers during Pandemic. We share our talents/hobbies to make entertainment video for Senior homes and children hospitals during the holidays.

Who is your role model, your master? And why?

I truly admire Chopin as he is my favorite composer and I love playing his pieces. My teacher Mr. Casano is also a role model that I will always look up to. He is so kind and very supportive. He thoughtfully selects my competition pieces and makes sure they are the best fit for me.

> **I highly suggest that if you are debating on whether to enter this competition, you definitely should!**

I am truly grateful for everything he does for me and admire him as a musician as well.

What is your day like? Describe your typical day. How do you manage to combine your daily routine with your practicing?

My daily life is usually packed with school and other extra-curriculars. As I am 14 years old, I am starting high school soon. My schedules are becoming more occupied with the heavier homework load. However, I make sure to manage my schedule by making extra time for piano practice and my other activities. Additionally, I am thankful to my parents as they drive me to my lessons so I can manage my schedule. Starting this fall, my school is allowing me to practice piano during my breaks at the music building. It will allow me to have more time to practice and I'm excited to begin the school year!

What is your experience of our competition? What are your thoughts? Do you have any advice for participants in the next competition?

Entering the PCO competition was a wonderful experience for me. During the pandemic, in person events were forbidden. However, this on-line competition allowed us to continue improving our musicianship skills and motivating ourselves to work harder.

I highly suggest that if you are debating on whether to enter this competition, you definitely should! It is truly an amazing opportunity.

What is your guiding principle? How do you work?

My guiding principle is to work hard and continue preserving as your efforts will always result in positive outcomes. Even on days where I am unmotivated to practice, I make sure to practice every day for at least an hour to ensure that I can keep up with my pieces.

What are your plans for the future?

I plan to double major in university. Along with my piano studies, I am interested in the medical field. I would like to become a dermatologist but also pursue my passion on the side.

What do you enjoy doing apart from music?

I enjoy playing the violin, singing, dancing hula, playing golf, and doing soroban (mental calculation). Most of all, I love to be with my family, friends, and my dogs.

Would you like to add anything of yours?

Please follow me on my instagram @aya_music27
I post stories related to music and life in Hawaii.



TUNY STONES
for piano

AMAZING PIANO APP



Learn music reading in a creative and fun way!

Music reading poses a challenge to kids, yet it is one of the most important elements of instrumental lessons. So how best to tackle this and improve the learning process? “TunyStones - Piano”, a new App offers a novel solution.

The TunyStones App is a real game changer for piano lessons and home practice. Thanks to this playful, nonverbal and highly motivating method, the rather unpopular and dreaded subject of music reading is transformed into a thrilling and motivating game. TunyStones contains a sophisticated algorithm that recognises real acoustic piano sounds, which move Tuny, the game character, automatically corresponding to the played tones.

info@tunystones.com

Jan Gazdzicki, the inventor of the method, explains:

"In our game little stones represent notes - and the musical stave is turned into a river surrounded by a beautiful mountain landscape. Tuny jumps along a river from one stone to another. But finding the notes is often hard and as a result, Tuny - in his smart concert costume - may fell into the water instead of landing on the stone. No worries - there is always another chance!"

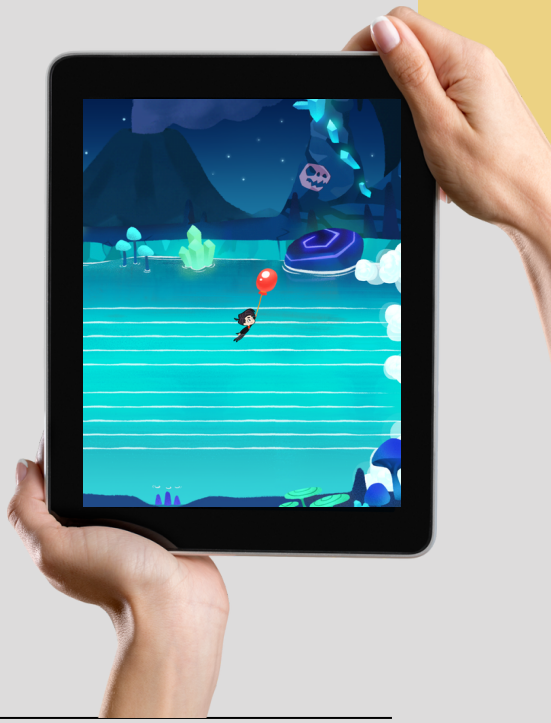
What makes TunyStones stand out?

- Effectively supports teaching, learning and motivates pupils
- It is free for all music teachers (full version)
- Free trial available for everybody
- Teaches from scratch - no previous knowledge required!
- The game is nonverbal: you intuitively understand how it works by playing
- Enhances creativity with composition, improvisation and reading features
- Enables you to compose your own music
- Turns music reading into a great adventure
- This smart app automatically adjusts to different learning types/speedsIncludes introductory levels to provide a general understanding for music notation

"The use of the app does not require any previous knowledge, as it is self-explanatory.



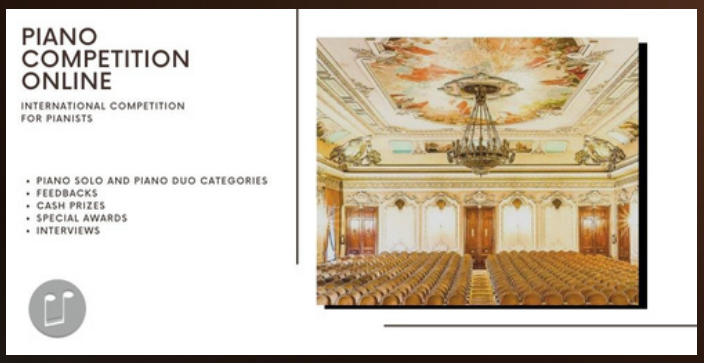




PARTNER COMPETITIONS









UNIVERSAL MAESTRO SOCIETY

JOIN UNIVERSAL MAESTRO SOCIETY TODAY AND UNLOCK A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES.