

琴鍵上的法華行者：陳毓襄專訪

Lotus Sutra Practitioner at the keyboard:

An Interview with Gwhyneth Chen



編輯部採訪整理

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Photos courtesy of Gwhyneth Chen



BODHI FIELD | 菩提田

Gwhyneth Chen, the international pianist known as "Taiwan's pride", held an outdoor piano recital to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Master Hsuan Hua's Coming to the West. The concert took place at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas at Talmage in Northern California on June 24th. Among the over 500 concerts in her career, this was a very different one. More than 80% of the audiences that night were local Talmage and Ukiah residents. After the piano recital, clergies from various religions prayed together for world peace. Dharma Master Wu Guang from Beijing Longquan Temple praised the concert, saying: "This was really a good way to attract Westerners to Buddhism."

The next day, we interviewed Gwhyneth Chen about her career as a pianist. The following is an excerpt from the interview.

Q: I heard this story from someone. It says that that when you were in kindergarten, you saw your teacher playing the piano in your music class. When the teacher took a break, you walked up to the piano and played it. Everybody was so surprised. Do you think that you are gifted or maybe you have already had a close affinity with music in your past lives?

A: Regarding the congenital condition for playing, my bone structure is stronger than the average woman even though my hands look quite

有「台灣驕傲」之稱的國際鋼琴演奏家陳毓襄，6月24日在萬佛聖城舉行了一場「紀念宣公上人傳法西方五十週年」的戶外個人鋼琴演奏會。在她演奏生涯500多場音樂會中，這是非常不一樣的演奏會。當晚八成以上的聽眾是當地達摩鎮和瑜伽市的居民，一個多小時的鋼琴演奏之後，還有各宗教的神職人員代表聯合為世界祈福。來自北京龍泉寺的悟光法師讚嘆說：「這真是接引西方人接觸佛法的好辦法。」

演奏會次日，陳毓襄居士接受本刊專訪，暢談她的鋼琴生涯。以下是訪談的重點摘錄。

問：聽說你讀幼稚園時，唱遊課看老師彈鋼琴，然後下課趁老師走出教室，自己就跑上去彈，結果大家聽了都很驚訝。你覺得自己是不是有彈琴的天賦，還是宿世就跟音樂有不解之緣？

答：就彈琴的先天條件而言，我的手看起來挺正常，但我的骨骼結構比一般女性強壯，所以我

normal. So, when I play the piano with such force, it was described as "earth shattering". A chiropractor once told me that I should not ask all my students to play like I do. I do not have much strength when I'm not playing. But when I'm playing, my strength increases. In music, I found myself.

I was nine when I came to the United States, and I met a very good piano teacher who taught me for six years and laid a solid foundation for me. Later I encountered another teacher and then I went to the Juilliard School of Music and met yet another wonderful teacher. My affiliations with teachers are very good. My piano teachers and the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua are all great teachers. Among all the relationships in my life, the best ones are the ones with teachers. Whenever I want to learn something, a good teacher will appear.

Q: Talk about the Venerable Master's influence on you.

A: When I was 23 years old, I competed in the Ivo Pogorelich International Solo Piano Competition which is a global piano competition that awarded the highest prize---\$100,000. Out of more than four hundred works, only 40 entered the preliminary round. The preliminaries, the semi-finals and finals were finished within three weeks. In the beginning of the competition, the contestants were harmonious like a family. But the closer I got to the finals, the fewer friends I had. I was the youngest contestant among the group. When it was announced that I had won first prize, the media went into a frenzy which became the headline news in the music industry. However, that night, no one talked to me. Back in my room, I fell into an extreme loneliness.

During the preparation for this competition, I had read the Venerable Master's Dharma talks. I was particularly moved by the story of his staying by his mother's grave to mourn for her. So I decided to take refuge with the Venerable Master after finishing the competition. A photo of Venerable Master and an image of Earth Store Bodhisattva were put on my piano to accompany me through that period of preparation.

The next day after winning, I went to pay my respects to Venerable Master. It was the first time I saw him. Venerable Master gave me a lot of advices. However, at that time I did not really understand some of his words because I had just learned about Buddhism. What I remembered

彈琴的力道很夠，曾被形容為「天崩地裂」。有位整骨師就說，我不能要求我所有的學生都彈得像我一樣。我不彈琴時沒什麼力氣，但只要一彈琴，力氣就來了。在音樂中，我找到了自我。

我九歲來美國，遇到一位非常好的鋼琴老師，教了我六年，為我奠定堅固的基礎。之後遇到另一位很好的老師，接著進入茱莉亞音樂學院又遇到一位好老師。我的老師緣很好，遇到的鋼琴老師與宣公上人都是明師。我這輩子最好的緣就是老師緣，只要我想學一樣東西，好老師就會適時出現。

問：談一談上人對你的影響。

答：23歲時，我參加全球鋼琴比賽獎金最高（10萬美元）的波哥雷里奇鋼琴大賽。400多件作品當中，挑選40件進入初賽。三週之內，進行初賽、複賽與決賽。比賽剛開始，大家都像家人似地和氣；但愈進入決賽，身邊的朋友就愈少。我是年紀最輕的參賽者，當宣布我獲得第一名時，媒體競相報導我得獎的消息，成為當時音樂界的頭條新聞。但那一晚，卻沒有一個人願意

跟我說話；回到房裡，我陷入極度的孤寂。

也就是在準備比賽的那段時間裡，我讀到了上人的開示。上人為母守孝的故事令我特別感動，所以我決定在比賽結束後，一定要皈依這位老和尚。上人和地藏王菩薩的法相就放在我的鋼琴前，伴著我練琴度過那一段歲月。

得獎隔天我去拜見上人，也是我第一次見他。上人跟我說了很多，

但因為我才剛接觸佛法，有些聽不太懂。不過我記得最清楚的，就是上人教我不要急著成名。當時很多鋼琴界的經紀人與最具規模的音樂公司都來找我，這些都是很好的機會，但上人卻教我不要簽訂長期合約。上人告訴我我要多留在家裡練琴、多修行，還要拿個音樂博士學位。



the most clearly was that the Venerable Master had instructed me to not be in a hurry to get famous. A lot of brokers in the piano industry and many large music companies came to me, and those were good opportunities. But the Venerable Master advised me not to sign any long-term contracts. Venerable Master told me to stay at home to practice more, cultivate more, and to get a doctoral degree in music.

I was very lucky to have a number of opportunities to meet Venerable Master in private. It not only affected my comprehension of music, but also affected my personal cultivation. Venerable Master asked me to memorize the *Lotus Sutra*. I do not know why the Venerable Master specified this Sutra. To this day, I still have not memorized it. But I have bowed to the Sutra: one bow per word and have already finished bowing the entire Sutra once. I am now bowing the second round.

Q: Did you ever want to become famous before the Venerable Master advised you?

A: No, it was not my personality to get famous even though the opportunity has always been there. I am an introvert. I do not like noise. Now my life is basically playing the piano, meditating, holding mantras, bowing to the Sutra, and practicing Qi Gong. Those five things keep me busy from morning to night.

However, in the performing arts and entertainment industry, a lot of socializing is inevitable, especially when I was young. Those social activities are a waste of energy. It is especially difficult due to my diet. All musicians drink. Drinking alcohol is as common as drinking water in Europe. When I went out with other musicians, they all drank wine, I was the only one who ordered orange juice. They would laugh at me, saying: "Don't you already have enough Vitamin C?" Because I am a vegetarian, and I do not eat this and that, they would mock me: "Do not be so hard on yourself, take a day off and eat some meat!" On the contrary, a vegetarian diet gives me strength when I play the piano, and sometimes I even break the strings!

Q: Hundreds of listeners were from Talmage and Ukiah last night. They would not have come if it had not been for the concert, and they looked very happy.

A: To perform at CTTB is also a task which Venerable Master gave me to do. I finally fulfilled my vow last night. Everyone has a different mission. Although I am not a nun, I think my mission is to promote the Buddha Dharma through music. I had donated the entire \$100,000, the prize of from the Ivo Pogorelich Piano Competition to Venerable Master back then because I believe that the Venerable Master can put that money to better use than me. I was very happy that I could donate the prize money but the organizers were very unhappy with me when I did that.

Ivo Pogorelich heard about it within a week after the competition. I was studying piano with him in London at that time. He said: "The money is yours, and you can use it as you wish. However, the prize

我很幸運在上人住世時，有數次機會單獨拜見他老人家。這不僅影響我對音樂的領悟，同時也影響我個人的修行。上人要我背《法華經》，我不知道上人為什麼指定這部經，到現在我也一直沒背會。但我一字一拜，已經拜完一整部，現在繼續拜第二部。

問：在上人提醒你以前，你是否曾想過名揚四海？

答：沒有，那不是我的個性，雖然機會一直都在。我從小就內向安靜，不喜歡喧嘩。現在我的生活基本上就是鋼琴、打坐、持咒、拜經、練氣功，每天這五件事就讓我從早忙到晚。

但身處演藝這個行業，交際應酬是不可避免的，特別是在我還年輕時。這些社交活動很浪費精神，尤其飲食方面更不容易。所有的音樂家都喝酒，在歐洲喝酒就像喝水一樣普遍。我跟其他音樂家一起出去，他們都點酒，只有我叫橘子汁，他們就會笑我說：「妳的維他命C攝取得還不夠嗎？」一起吃飯時，因為我吃素，這也不能吃，那也不能吃，他們就調侃我：「不用那麼辛苦，就放一天假開葷嘛！」事實上，吃素讓我更能凝聚彈琴的力道，有時甚至還把弦給彈斷了！

問：昨晚好幾百位聽眾來自達摩鎮與瑜伽市，如果不是這場演奏會，他們不會來的。他們都顯得非常高興。

答：在聖城演出，也是當年上人告訴我該做的事，昨晚終於滿了我的願。每個人有不同的使命，雖然我沒有出家，但我想我的使命就是透過音樂弘法利生。當年我將波哥雷里奇鋼琴比賽的10萬元獎金全部捐給上人，因為我相信上人更能善用這筆錢。能捐出獎金我很開心，但是主辦單位很不高興。

波哥雷里奇本人是在比賽後一週聽說這件事，當時我正在倫敦跟他學琴。他說：「錢已經是妳的，妳愛怎麼用都隨妳。但這筆獎金原本是要給妳進修、買一架好鋼琴，或是辦大型演奏會用的。」我說我為這筆錢找到更好的用途，我也告訴他，有機會要安排他拜見上人。10年後，他到柏克萊佛寺禮佛，也參觀過

was meant for you to study, buy a piano, or host a large recital." I said that I had found a better use for the money. I also told him that I would arrange for an audience with the Venerable Master when the opportunity arises. Ten years later, he went to Berkeley Buddhist Monastery to bow to the Buddha. He had also visited Taipei Dharma Realm Buddhist Publish Association in Taipei. Whenever he comes to Taiwan nowadays, he would eat vegetarian meals with me. It is not easy for a pianist from Europe to eat like that.

Q: To what degree does your daily cultivation help your performance?

A: I can give you a definite answer. I had attended a two-week tour of Hong Kong, the United States, and Canada. Except for the two nights riding the airplane, twelve consecutive recitals started at eight, every night. The daily schedule is to tour during the day, practice in the afternoon, and perform at night.

If you did not cultivate and adapted adopted a vegetarian diet, two decades of such a lifestyle would be very harmful to your health. After two full hours of a recital, there are large parties, small parties, receptions, or dinners with the conductors and brokers, in addition to meeting the fans, some of which are wild. You do not have any chance to be alone, and there is no time to restore your energy. When it is time to play, you have to be in an optimum state. Whether one can do it really depends on one's own "gong fu" of concentration.

It is very dangerous for musicians to consume so much essential life energy, which definitely needs to be restored. This restoration relies on cultivation. A pianist's career is like drinking tea. Only by sipping it slowly will it last a lifetime. This is what Venerable Master taught me back then: "Take your time, so that it will last for a long time." I did not understand it until now.

Regarding cultivation, I do not meditate much. My favorite practice is to bow to the sutras. Every day I bow the *Lotus Sutra*, one word, one bow. I can feel myself transforming and breaking through during each bow. Every page of the Lotus Sutra gives me inspirations, much needed for a musician. ❀

台北法界佛教印經會。現在每逢他到台灣，跟我一起吃飯他都只吃素。這對歐洲的鋼琴演奏家而言，是很不容易的。

問：你每天的修行對演出有何程度的幫助？

答：我可以給你一個非常肯定的答案。我曾經參加一場香港、美國、加拿大的兩週巡迴表演，只有搭機的前後兩晚除外，連續12場每晚八點準時開始的演奏會。每天的行程就是白天參觀、下午練習、晚上表演。

如果你沒有修行、沒有吃素，20年這樣的生活方式是非常地有害健康。演奏會整整兩小時，結束後還有大型派對、小型派對、招待會，或是跟指揮家與經紀人共進晚餐，還要面對粉絲，有些粉絲很瘋狂。你根本沒有機會獨處，沒有時間養氣。演奏時刻一到，你就得進入最佳狀況，這時候只能看個人的定力功夫了。

對音樂家而言，精氣神消耗這麼多其實是很危險的，一定要將之恢復，這時就得靠修行。鋼琴演奏生涯就像喝茶，必須慢慢啜飲，才能持續一輩子。這是上人當年教導我的：「慢慢來，才能維持得久。」我直到現在才懂。

談到修行，我打坐的時間不多，最喜歡的是拜經。我每天拜《法華經》，一字一拜之間，都能感受到自己的轉變、突破。《法華經》的每一頁經文，都帶給我不同的靈感和啟發，這正是音樂家最需要的。❀

初聞無生曲 始聽不死歌
原來法如是 不少也不多

—宣公上人作於1985年7月16日

*A tune of non-production at the beginning,
A song of immortality at the origin,
The dharma is just Thus.
It neither decreases nor increases.*

— by Venerable Master Hua
on July 16, 1985

