

*year, she's returning to Carnegie Hall for a tenth concert series called the Music Explorers series, where they will be educating and bringing young people to listen to music sung by Classical musicians from around the world.*

*Here is Miss Fang Tao Jiang.*

Thank you, Lynn. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. First of all, I want to thank you, all of you, and the Schiller Institute's efforts at making the world a better place. And I want to thank the panel for your wonderful speeches. I've learned a lot. And thank you for having me here, not to sing, but to speak!

When I first got an invitation to speak at this conference, I thought I could talk about the love relationship between Einstein and his violin; or the "Mozart effect" on children's developing brains; or how Bach's music would be considered the most valuable advanced creation and cultural heritage in the universe, a billion years later. I also could have talked about how deep breathing and singing have helped my colleagues, my friends, young children to cure ADD [attention deficit disorder], and anxiety attacks, or asthmas.

But today, I've chosen to just come here to share with you a few true stories from my own experience, my stories.

I was born in a city on the Yangtze River in China. The Cultural Revolution was long over then, and we were embracing all the new ideas in culture; we were having a mini-renaissance. My parents encouraged me to embrace, enjoy all the creative artistic activities which they were forbidden in the Cultural Revolution. I enjoyed reciting ancient Chinese poems, while studying calligraphy with a master tutor. I liked my dance and music classes, and dreamed about becoming either a hurdle runner or gymnast for the Olympics. And my mom, even at my kindergarten age, encouraged me to study English. I

hope that helps me today!

Life was beautiful. But on a very hot, sunny, Summer day, my world turned very dark. My mother had an accident, and passed away. I was nine years old. For a long time, I kept a painful secret to myself: I thought

---

Fang Tao Jiang

---

## Through Beauty, One Proceeds to Freedom

*Fang Tao Jiang was introduced by Lynn Yen:*

*I want to introduce Miss Fang Tao Jiang, who is a lyrical soprano. She actually started working with our foundation, to bring the beauty of Classical music to a lot of young people that we're working with, as well as parents and teachers. We recently had a concert here in December with a capacity audience of about 650 people, and she performed nine pieces in six different languages, and she absolutely wowed everybody.*

*A little bit about Miss Fang Tao Jiang: She is the winner of the Bellini International Vocal Competition. From Lincoln Center, to Rome, to Paris, to Berlin, she has performed throughout the world, on some of the most prestigious operatic and concert stages. She's worked with all of the leading companies, including the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Rome Opera. This*



EIRNS/Fang Tao Jiang

*Fang Tao Jiang: "In music, we're all good citizens: Music unites us."*

that I was the cause of my mother's death. I thought if I hadn't asked her to take me to the zoo that day, nothing would have happened. I felt that I had no way to redeem my fault, and I was very sad and depressed, as a nine-year-old.

My sister and my schoolteachers tried very hard to keep me busy with school programs. My sister loves music. She often played LP records, some cassettes, with mostly Classical music.

### **Inspired by Brahms and Dvorak**

One day, there was a singer's album, and one song got my attention: It was Brahms's "Lullaby." It was in Chinese, so I understood. I loved it so much, as if I was listening to my mother singing. Later, my sister took me to a live concert, and amazingly, the soprano sang exactly the same lullaby. Her voice was otherworldly sounding, without a microphone! I went home and cried my heart out. And soon, I learned all the songs I could find that were related to mother's love and childhood. I would sing them all day long, as if I was singing to my mother.

At age 13, I joined a youth singing competition in the city and I won. And two of my competing songs were Dvorak's "Songs My Mother Taught Me," and the other one was a Chinese song, called "My Mother's Kiss." After the competition, singing became an important part of my life. Classical musical singing was like a ray of sunlight, lighting up my dark world.

At age 15, I had my first official, Italian old-school voice lesson. And I have to say, I didn't enjoy it that much, because I had to sing in Italian, which I didn't understand. By the time I went to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, I had gotten out of my depression. And I managed to have my Carnegie Hall debut before my graduation.

When I traveled around the world, audiences often asked me, "Why did you choose to become a Classical singer?" And, actually, my father used to ask me, too, "Why do you choose seemingly the most difficult profession in the world? You're Chinese, and you want to sing opera, in eight languages that you don't understand!" And I'd say, "But I will understand with time." I have to confess, it was not love at first sight.

Remember my dream of being an Olympic gymnast, and also that I didn't like my first singing lesson, because I didn't understand the Italian. But over the years, I have learned to sing eight languages and managed to speak some of them, and through the language

studies, I see the world! I see the world of people! Different languages carry different temperaments from different cultural backgrounds. But in music, we're all good citizens: Music unites us.

As I got more access to it, I fell in love with the truthful nature of the art form, and the beauty of all the master musical works.

Think about singing. It's your instrument. Each of you has that instrument. And it's *your* voice, and it's with natural acoustics. And to me, it's one of the most honest art forms. It doesn't matter who your dad is; you get up and you have to sing; and people judge you by your art, not other elements.

I also had to learn to love my body, and my instrument, embrace, and also manage, my own emotions, and overcome my fear of judgment and imperfection.

Over the years, Classical singing had made me physically healthier, mentally stronger, emotionally more balanced, and a true, happy, better person in life. One day after my concert, a production of "Romeo and Juliet" in France, a young teenager came up to me, and said, "Oh, it is beautiful! Beautiful! But why would Romeo and Juliet take ten minutes to say, 'I love you'?" Like, why is the duet so long? And I had had the same question!

Years, years ago, I was thinking, "In opera we always take a long time to describe a simple emotion; like I would sing a whole aria, or a half aria, to sing just three words, 'I love you.'" But by then, I was so proud to answer her, and I said, "Why not? Isn't that wonderful to celebrate our emotion? Take it, expand it, and celebrate it? And how would you like to change it? Would you like to have Romeo say to Juliet, 'Hey! Do you want to hang out?'"

So I'm a more mature person, to answer that question. I felt the connection and conviction. I was very convincing.

### **The Soulful Zone of Free Expression**

When I sing well, get into the very—we call it, soulful—zone of words, poetry, and music, I feel that I am in tune with the world, and have lots of warmth and love in my heart. And I feel so free, free of expression. And this is the intangible magic of music-making. When audiences come to me and thank me in tears, and say how much my voice has inspired them, and made them have goosebumps, I think that's a good thing. I say to them, "I am very thankful that you are here, and to share all the masterpieces with me, to make me feel

what I do has meaning, and to make me feel it's worth all the hard work and tears in practicing, to make someone's life a little better."

From generation to generation, composers strive to achieve the freedom of expression, strive to discover the beauty of the world with new compositional ideas, methods, breaking boundaries of thoughts, concepts. And I am a big advocate for newly composed *good* music. I have done lots of premieres. But I tell you, some composers really go far to make an impression. Once, I had to sing a song while shaking a tree branch to make a rustling sound.

Another time, all the cast were not feeling it, in a new composer's work. We were wondering why. I didn't feel it, my colleagues also felt like, "What is this?" One day, the composer took us to his studio and pointed out a huge machine, and he said, "I love this baby!" It was a computerized, big machine. He said that because this machine did most of the composing for him, he did take time to try to figure out the *formula* of Bach's music—using the machine, yeah. Then he thought that he found some patterns of his own. Despite his hard work, analysis, and efforts, all of us musicians found it hard to connect with his work, and the music really ... sounded awful. Well, I'm not mentioning his name.

He actually really confirmed my idea of art, that it's something raised above all. To create an art, there needs to be intuition, imagination, and that so-called little genius we may all have. If it's reduced to facts and reality, or simply to mimicking, or to make an impression, the most I call it is "craftsmanship." Art is intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. And it's beautiful. It's certainly easier said than done.

A dear friend of mine, a colleague of mine, I've been working with for a long time, collaborating, is a well-known composer. To be equal, I'm not mentioning his name.

He once told me, "I tell you, our masters have done great works with those 12 notes!" It's very hard, it's not easy for composers nowadays to write something unique, new, and still beautiful. But there is hope, because this same composer recently wrote a grand opera, called "Dr. Sun Yat-sen." It's about the Chinese revolutionary, the father of democracy in China. His revolution was in 1911, way before the Communist Party, and the Kuomin Party. He was the founder of the Kuomin Party, the nationalist party.

So, this composer took all elements from music-

making in East and West and combined his own experiences and humanity, made this wonderful work. It's really doing well. We're going to produce it with the Santa Fe Opera in 2014. I was very honored to be part of this wonderful music-making. And I played Mrs. Soong Ching-ling, the wife of Dr. Sun Yat-sen in the opera. I wish I was taller. People say I look a little bit like her.

I know my composer friend took four years to write it, which is unusual nowadays. Because I have known composers, now especially in China, "So much money. You write a number tonight! Tomorrow we're going to have a party." So people are just rushing; rushing the deadline to compose, compose! Because everything's so fast! But he took four years to write it. But I think it's well worth it, because beauty is the truth, and truth will last. All composers would like their works to last, and to be cherished, a million years later.

## **The Power of Beauty**

I will finish my speech with a true story that continues to inspire me. A few years ago, I got to sing Susanna from the "Marriage of Figaro," with the Utah Festival Opera. The first cast company meeting was held at the beautiful Ellen Eccles Theater. A UFOC founder and music director Michael Ballam pointed at the beautiful hall, and told us this story: The new classic-structured theater was the principal venue and auditorium for the Cache Valley Performing Arts Center for decades. Over the years, performances ceased, and the theater was allowed to deteriorate. The stage was empty and the orchestra pit silent, lights dimmed in the auditorium, and dirt accumulated in the dressing rooms.

In 1998, the theater was threatened with demolition. The proposed demolition plan came to the attention of Mr. Michael Ballam. He instead proposed a restoration plan that was to be decided by the City Council. The votes from both sides, yes or no, were very close. One undecided councilmember asked Mr. Ballam, "Why do we need to spend so much money on this theater? It doesn't provide me a basket of bread!"

Mr. Ballam answered with a beautiful smile on his face: "Dear Lady, we have been admiring your rose garden for years! We know that you put lots of heart into it. This theater is like the beautiful roses in your garden. Would you consider cutting back on your bread some time, and have more roses?" One minute later, the restoration plan was passed.

Schiller said, "It is through beauty that one proceeds

to freedom.” Today, I encourage you, and I dare you, and I thank you, to have courage to endure the power of beauty in the world. And when we are growing the roses, let us smell them. Please do not forget to invite our children along, because they might not be a Chinese girl who lost her mother, but they are the children of the world, the beauty of the world. And they need the love inside, like all of us.

Thank you.