

From Humble Beginnings

by Kailey Wong

Although I have had many great role models in my life, the person I admire most is my piano teacher. Her extraordinary work ethic, perseverance, and compassion inspire me each day. Even in the face of adversity, she has never allowed her hardships to deter her success. As such a successful professional in the piano community, she has not allowed her achievements to make her conceited. She has never lost sight of her passion and where she started. I will always strive to retain the high standard of perseverance, humility, and dedication she has set for me.

My piano teacher came from very humble beginnings. Her journey began when she was just a young child, studying the piano, just like me. I vividly remember her telling me a story that has stuck with me to this day: her mom forcing her to wake up at seven in the morning every day to practice piano for an hour before she could eat breakfast. Despite the generational difference between us, I am often able to relate to her experiences. The joy on her face when she mentions working on the same Beethoven Sonata as a senior in high school has never failed to be infectious.

She has worked hard to excel as a pianist and become a nationally-respected leader in the field of piano pedagogy. Even with such extraordinary success, she has had her fair share of challenges in life. After her husband passed away, she had to raise three boys as a single mother. At the height of her career, she was a senior piano editor and director of keyboard publications for top music publishers. Five years ago, when she was diagnosed with cancer, she continued to teach even through her chemotherapy treatments. Just a few months ago, her father fell and has needed a wheelchair ever since. I know all of these ordeals have been extremely stressful for her,

but she has always continued to fulfill her duty to her students with a smile on her face. My piano teacher's journey has demonstrated to me that through hard work and perseverance, success is possible.

Even with her impressive accomplishments, my piano teacher remains one of the most humble and compassionate people I know. She is truly invested in each of her students. No matter their skill level or personality, she has the unique ability to see and nurture their potential. She goes to great lengths to help her students succeed: providing extra lessons for free; marking fingers, pedalings, and phrasings on sheet music; preparing materials for music theory classes.

Her passion, support, and enthusiasm have fostered my love for music. She has taught me to pour myself into the music: to look beyond the notes on the page and find the story and emotions behind them. She always aims to inspire a life-long love of music within her students. She has been an exemplary role model and source of inspiration to me. I aspire to be a piano teacher as well one day, and I want to inspire a new generation of musicians, just like she has.