

LUZERNE MUSIC CENTER

2020
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ALUMNI PROFILE

Zlatomir Fung

Zlatomir Fung started playing the cello when he was 3 years old, but he didn't get serious about music until he attended Luzerne Music Center the summer he was 11.

"Going to Luzerne around that time was very formative for me," the 21-year-old said from his family home in the metro Massachusetts area. "I saw several people who were quite passionate about music and wanted to study it at conservatory. I have a competitive spirit in me and it drove me to see other people achieve a lot on their instruments. I wanted to be like that."

Fung has certainly succeeded. Late last month, the student of Richard Aaron and Timothy Eddy at The Juilliard School was awarded the Avery Fisher Career Development grant, a program overseen by the Lincoln Center of the Performing Arts that bestows the \$25,000 honor upon up to five promising musicians a year (this year, Fung was one of just three).

In 2019, Fung became the first American in four decades to win a first prize at the International Tchaikovsky Competition in the Cello Division — and the youngest musician ever to do so.

Other accolades include winning the 2017 Young Concert Artists International Auditions and the 2017 Astral National Auditions; taking top prizes at the 2018 Alice and Eleonore Schoenfeld International String Competition, 2016 George Enescu International Cello Competition, 2015 Johansen International Competition for Young String Players, 2014 Stulberg International String Competition and 2014 Irving Klein International Competition; being chosen as a 2016 U.S. Presidential Scholar for the Arts and awarded the 2016 Landgrave von Hesse Prize at the Kronberg Academy Cello Masterclasses; earning fellowships at Ravinia's Steans Music Institute, Heifetz International Music Institute, MusicAlp and the Aspen Music Festival and School; receiving the Kovner Fellowship; and being featured on NPR's "Performance Today" and "From the Top."



"I'm still trying to improve and become the best cellist I can be," Fung said. "I find a lot of value in experience, so one of my biggest priorities is to get out there, perform as much as I can, learn something from every performance I give and bring that with me to the next one."

With COVID-19 changing everyone's norm, Fung is experiencing a very different routine from what he was used to. Before the virus hit, he attended classes Tuesday and Friday, and spent weekends traveling around the world to perform concerts. He had started planning his next season, when he would take longer trips to perform several shows in Asia and Europe.

"Now that everything in the music world is halted, it's not only about whether they'll return to normal but also whether there will be a new normal," he said. "The music world will be changed forever."

In part, the response to coronavirus reiterates what Fung loves about music. Driven into their homes, people are finding comfort in a favorite sonata, a drawing lesson from an illustrator or a virtual art exhibition.

"All art is a form of storytelling," he said. "Throughout the ages, evolving from

gathering around the campfire to more intricate forms with all these formal communications and narratives, the basic idea is to take the person who is listening on a journey from point A to somewhere else ... altering a person's state, affecting them with something you're showing or telling them. It's a fundamental human desire; it drives us."

The world over, musicians, authors and artists are responding, taking to social media to share their gifts.

"Of course, in a time of global crisis, it's only natural that we try to find ways to comfort one another, to engage one another," Fung said. "The most important thing for musicians is to keep the sense of love and passion we have for the music, which is the reason we do it in the first place."

Fung credits Luzerne Music Center with helping him realize that passion. "I was not only being exposed to phenomenal teachers who introduced me to the intricacies and beauty of music, but also I was driven by my colleagues who inspired me to work harder," he said of the summers of 2010 and 2011, which he spent at LMC.

"Luzerne is a great place to discover yourself as a musician."