

# LUZERNE MUSIC CENTER

## 2020 CAMPAIGN

FOR  
LUZERNE  
MUSIC  
CENTER

## ALUMNI PROFILE

*Maya Shih*

During the fourth week of the COVID-19-driven stay-at-home order, a longtime dream of Maya Shih's came true: Her family — she, her much-lauded pianist husband and their three daughters — played Robert Schumann's piano quintet in their Lancaster, Pennsylvania, home.

"It really was a 20-year-old dream coming to fruition," she said.

Maya always hoped she would marry a musician so they could have children and play chamber music as a family.

She met Christopher Shih through a mutual friend when she was studying at the Heifetz International Music Institute and he was preparing to compete in the Van Cliburn Professional Competition.

"It was several months later that I heard Chris play a concert and realized that I had to get to know him better," she said. "Music was absolutely a key factor in our relationship."

The couple performed the first movement of Gabriel Fauré's violin sonata at their wedding and moved a step closer to Maya's dream coming true. As the couple's daughters were born, the Shihs introduced them to music early.

"Since my wife and I are both musicians, it was natural that they would become musicians as well," Christopher said. "We had them play violin, cello and violin, respectively, with the intention of eventually forming a piano quintet, as my wife plays viola too."

Forced to stay home during the coronavirus pandemic, Maya was ecstatic when, mid-April, the family began working on Schumann's epic masterpiece together.

"With our children, my dream of a piano quintet planted itself in my mind and never left," said the violinist, violist, educator and 1989 Luzerne Music Center alumna.

In the years since Maya fell in love with and married Christopher — a well-respected gastroenterologist with a thriving practice and pianist who won the Concours International de Grands Amateurs de Piano in Paris in 2008 and the Van Cliburn Amateur Competition in 2011 — the family's shared love of music has grown through her connection with LMC.



While Shih loved the violin from the time she was little more than a toddler — the instrument, she said, is "as expressive as the human voice" — she didn't start playing until she was 14. She took piano lessons from age 7 until her parents agreed "after much begging," to find her a violin instructor.

She had played for less than a year when her parents heard about Luzerne Music Center and called to ask if their daughter could attend.

Their request was denied. "But my parents sent in a recording and I was accepted in the senior session of 1989," she recalled.

In the years since, the Shihs' two oldest daughters, 15-year-old Elena and 17-year-old Nina, have attended Luzerne Music Center.

"I liked the camp immediately," said Nina, who first attended the summer before sixth

grade and in the fall will be a first-year student Princeton University. "The amazing food, plus the outdoor activities, plus all the fun I had in orchestra and chamber drew me back to LMC year after year."

Nina and Elena attending Luzerne Music Center made the Shihs the first of a growing number of families sending second generations to experience everything LMC has to offer.

"My wife attended when she was a young student, and she thought it would be a good fit for our children," Dr. Shih said. "It's unique because of its small size allowing close attention to each camper, as well as a very warm, family-like collegial atmosphere."

Maya Shih's memories of LMC mirror that of what her daughters experienced.

"I remember feeling safe and loving the fresh air coming in through the cabin windows," she said. "I loved the fun bonfires and evening games, as well as my newfound independence within the camp's ground."

Because of the family's ties to LMC (and his considerable talents and reputation as a concert pianist), CEO and Artistic Director Elizabeth Pitcairn invited Christopher to perform with her as part of Luzerne Chamber Music Festival a few years ago.

Only the Shihs' youngest daughter — also a violinist — hasn't performed at LMC (at age 10, she hasn't gone to sleepaway camp yet).

Maya Shih is a music instructor who taught violin at Peabody Preparatory for many years and now teaches from home and performs with Lancaster Symphony Orchestra.

She began teaching the Shih daughters when each was 3 years old.

"I was given the violin before I even had a chance to develop an interest in music," Nina said. "At that age, I thought that violin was something that everyone did: they ate, they slept, they read and they played the violin."

As she grew, though, Nina developed her own love of music and her instrument.

"I could not possibly measure the impact that music has had on my life, for music is my life," she said. "Every moment of my life has been shaped in some way by my music."

And that is music to Maya's ears.

"Music is one of the most unyielding and driving forces in my life," Maya said. "It is one of the few things that I believe in with complete and unwavering devotion."

That has, of course, instilled in her family a shared commitment to and love of Luzerne Music Center.

"It is really hard to put into words what I love so much about Luzerne," Nina said. "But I know for sure that I'd want any future children of mine to meet people as interesting as the people I met, play pieces as beautiful and rewarding as the pieces I played, and just enjoy the cool, boreal air of the Adirondacks."