

Chloe Chung

Middle school and piano student

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Transcript:

00;00;00;06 - 00;00;01;21

Well. Hello! What is your name?

00;00;01;29 - 00;00;03;17

My name is Chloe.

00;00;04;02 - 00;00;09;04

Yay! Well, how long have you been learning from Sandra?

00;00;09;15 - 00;00;15;22

Oh, I've been learning from her since I was, I think, five or six. So that's nine ish years?

00;00;15;23 - 00;00;20;01

Yeah, that is a long time. Have you had other piano teachers before?

00;00;20;22 - 00;00;22;27

No, not really.

00;00;24;03 - 00;00;30;00

Well, is there anything you remember from your very first lessons with her?

00;00;30;08 - 00;00;53;23

Yeah, I remember this one thing. So basically, when I first learned, she was really weird...in a good way, so she made me just, she grabbed my hand and maybe dropped onto the piano a couple of times. And I don't know why she did that. I think I remember her saying it was so I could *feel* the piano. Yeah, that's the only thing I remember from the first lesson, but I remember it really clearly. Yeah.

00;00;59;07 - 00;01;11;12

Core memory. Yeah. Inside out. Yeah. Did you have certain expectations going into the first lesson? And was that, that was pretty different from what you expected, right?

00;01;11;13 - 00;01;25;11

Yeah, I was very different from what I expected. I don't think I had any specific expectations, but I did not expect it to be dropping my hand on the piano. I was really shocked, or confused.

00;01;25;27 - 00;01;31;09

Dropping your hand on the piano just without any organization at all? Just like splat?

00;01;31;15 - 00;01;40;29

Yeah. And then, yeah. So she just held my hand, she hold me to relax and then just took it away and then it dropped. Yeah, and it made a really loud sound, and we did that for a couple of times.

00;01;41;16 - 00;01;43;09

Yeah. And what happened after that?

00;01;44;06 - 00;02;06;00

I don't really remember. Well, I guess my first lesson was really sure. Now I do one hour, but my first lesson, I think it was 30 minutes. Yeah. And then [it] became 45 minutes and hours an hour. Yeah. And I think for the rest of the time we just talked. We don't really do any piano related things.

00;02;06;19 - 00;02;07;09

Oh, okay.

00;02;08;13 - 00;02;22;07

And I remember sometimes, one year before a scene, you're pretty stressed out about it, and you just went in for an *impromptu* lesson about theory that so... No? it's fine.

00;02;22;07 - 00;02;33;24

I don't know. I don't remember. Was that right? A couple of years ago?

Probably maybe two.

I don't remember this, but it probably happened.

00;02;41;09 - 00;02;59;19

Well, it sounds like you have a very clear memory of the very first lesson. Yeah. Do you think the way she teaches you has changed since you've gone a lot older? Do you still have any unexpected instances that she would teach you something in a different way?

00;03;04;04 - 00;03;06;02

Oh, well, I feel like, yeah, the way she taught me over the years has changed, because in the very beginning, it was very hands on. Like, when I was learning something new, usually, like, sit right next to me and play it and teach me how to play by physically pressing my hand in the piano. And when I was first learning how to use the pedal, she was basically pressing my foot down on the pedal and releasing it.

00;03;34;00 - 00;03;44;12

Yeah, but like, now it's more instruction. She would just tell me how to use something, and I would usually get it. I don't get it right away, but I can figure it out on my own. So, yeah.

00;03;45;25 - 00;03;50;01

Proud of you. What about the performing aspect?

00;03;50;09 - 00;03;51;09

Oh. [Laughs]

00;03;51;28 - 00;03;54;14

What's going through your mind?

00;03;54;28 - 00;04;23;00

Oh, performing. I don't like performing that much because it makes me nervous. I don't know. It's like getting on stage, to give a speech or something. I used to hate it. Now it's fine, I guess. Okay, so when I was younger, when I had my first studio recital, inside her house, it was really scary because everyone was so tall, and I was really short, okay?

00;04;23;06 - 00;04;43;27

I was like, six years old, and I had to go, and I'd played for these strangers. It was really intimidating. But as I got older, like, I think it was before Covid happened, like two years before that. I had a lot of performances and recitals and stuff, and by that time I was still a little nervous, but I got a little better. Like, I was more confident, I guess. And then covid happened. And I haven't played for anyone in two years, and every test or recital I've done was recorded, it was pre-recorded. So I got to record it on my own and then play it live. So I wasn't really playing for an audience live, so. And last December was the first time I played for someone in a very long time and did not go so well.

00;05;10;04 - 00;05;12;18

What was it? Was it the Bach concerto?

00;05;12;18 - 00;05;34;05

It was the winter recital thing. It is December 2021 and I play Prokofiev and it was the first time I was playing live in two years.

I started it over again because I was starting to get the hang of performing and then. Yeah.

00;05;34;21 - 00;05;39;09

Hm. Okay. Well, is playing for a real audience something that you missed?

00;05;40;14 - 00;05;41;06

Okay, well...

00;05;41;13 - 00;05;44;07

You can say no.

00;05;45;03 - 00;06;09;05

Well not “no”, because I mean, sort of? I don't really like playing for an audience, but I feel like it's something that I have to do, to kind of like improve in piano. Not like it'll make me play better. I guess it's just if I can play in front of an audience without feeling so nervous, I mean, I like playing for other people, but I get nervous about it.

00;06;10;01 - 00;06;17;15

Yeah, and what has Ms. Sandra said to you about feeling nervous during a performance, if anything, do you ask her about?

00;06;17;19 - 00;06;24;13

Yeah, I've asked him about that once. Like, a couple of years ago, and she says that you'll never stop feeling nervous and that she still feels nervous too.

00;06;24;23 - 00;06;27;03

So does that make you feel better?

00;06;27;18 - 00;06;28;25

Not really.

00;06;30;20 - 00;06;49;27

So do you think performing is one of the hardest parts of being a piano student as a whole for you then, like just a mental game? Or are there other aspects - like I know you have a really busy schedule and maybe sometimes learning a new piece is difficult. So what do you think is the hardest part?

00;06;50;04 - 00;07;14;04

I think for me personally, performing is the hardest part. I know a lot of people like performing, but I don't like performing that much. With my busy schedule, I think it's actually not that bad. I think I just got used to practicing piano every day and it's just a thing that I do every day, it's become a habit, so making time for it, it's not that hard anymore. It used to be really hard because I didn't want to practice piano when I first started learning. I'm like, “Do I have to practice today?” And my mom was like, “Yes”. And then, yeah.

00;07;23;05 - 00;07;24;20

So what got you into piano?

00;07;25;21 - 00;07;39;10

Like, at the very beginning. Oh, it was because my aunt knew Ms. Sandra in Taiwan and they were friends, and my aunt came to visit one year and she was like, “Oh Chloe, you should try playing piano.” I'm like, “Sure.” And then that was when it started.

00;07;40;18 - 00;07;43;08

The Origin Story of the Star. That's nice. All right. Well, you said it's become a habit for you to practice piano every day. What do you think is like, if you had to choose one thing, what would it be that motivates you to keep learning and growing and improve?

00;08;01;06 - 00;08;29;17

I think that motivation, I don't really know where it comes from, but I feel like it's just a thing where I feel like it's, oh, this goes back to the performing on stage thing. Like I don't like playing in front of people, but what keeps me more of it is that I can *play* for other people. And this is some people, a lot of people enjoy hearing piano being played, and then I play for them and then they are really happy about it, it makes me feel good. So I think that's part of it. And another part of why I keep playing piano is just because it's like school. I don't know.

It's like school?

Yeah, like I don't like school that much, but it's not. I don't like doing the schoolwork and stuff. I still like going to school for some weird reason, and a lot of people think I'm weird for. I like doing schoolwork, okay? But sometimes it gets like a lot, it's annoying, and I don't want to do it, but I know that I have to do it because if I didn't do it, I wouldn't have anything to do all day.

00;09;07;07 - 00;09;27;15

It's sort of a thing it's like, you know how some people, like, after college, they're like, “Oh, my God, what am I supposed to do now? Because I don't have school?” And then you have to go find another thing you want to do. I feel

like school and piano, they're just like things I do every day, and I've gotten used to them so much that if I didn't do it, it'd feel weird.

00;09;28;21 - 00;09;30;23

Yeah, part of your identity.

00;09;33;05 - 00;09;35;28

Yeah. So about school. I know you played oboe for A while, right?

Oh, yeah. Two years ago.

00;09;40;01 - 00;09;41;24

Did you not like it?

00;09;42;03 - 00;10;02;19

No, I liked it. I picked band -I didn't pick band because I really wanted to be in band - I picked band because I didn't want to be in choir. Okay, so. And then I went to band, and I thought I was going to play flute because everyone plays flute. But then there was one day it was like, kind of like, pick your instrument day, where the teacher showed us every instrument, and he played a little bit on each one, and I'm like, I don't want to do flute. I want to play oboe because that sounds so cool. It had a reed and everything where you had to soak in water before you play every time. And I'm like, I'm going to do that. So I went in my oboe and then we started playing.

It was, okay. It was not that hard for me because I already knew how to read the notes because of piano, you know? So I just had to learn how to blow through the reed. That was difficult, but I got the hang of it eventually, and I would say it was a good experience, but I would not continue to do bad. I don't think it was really my thing. I don't really like doing it, but I'd write it, so now I know. But if I were to go back to sixth grade, I would do it again. It was just a good experience overall, and I made a lot of friends, and I learned about a new instrument.

00;10;53;15 - 00;11;05;24

And you applied what you knew from piano. Yeah. So what makes piano more of your thing and is any of that connected to who you have as a teacher and also the community, like the studio recitals?

00;11;06;17 - 00;11;17;08

I feel like piano is strongly connected to who I have as a teacher because I feel like if I started off with a different teacher, I wouldn't be playing piano right now.

00;11;17;09 - 00;11;27;21

Oh, okay. Yeah. Tell me more about that. What makes Ms. Sandra some, like, sounds like she's part of the driving force between you continuing, yeah? What makes it so?

00;11;27;21 - 00;11;51;12

Yeah, like, okay, if I were to, like, switch to another teacher or not, I think I would continue it because I love playing piano. I enjoy playing piano. But at the very start, if I had a different teacher, and that time I did not like me, I hated piano. It was not fun. I didn't want to practice. And I hated performing in front of other people and as Ms. Sandra weren't there because, I feel this is it was very encouraging.

00;11;51;28 - 00;12;11;13

I mean, every teacher was encouraging, but she had a different way of being encouraging. It was like inspiring or motivational and it is kind of, like when I don't want to practice and my mom was yelling at me for me to practice and then I still didn't want to practice but I still practiced because she was yelling at me. And then the next day I'll go to her lesson. And then we were playing together. And then after the lesson, I feel like I wanted to keep doing piano again. Yeah, but since I was really young and I didn't really like practicing, after a couple days, that would go away like that. But then after I went back to our lesson, then that feeling would continue.

00;12;30;16 - 00;12;39;17

Okay. So like, she, she sometimes inspired you, like right there, tight then. Does she inspire you in other ways? Like when you go see a performance of hers?

00;12;40;03 - 00;12;51;17

Oh, yeah. I just feel like she really loves piano. It's her thing. You know why? Yeah.

00;12;52;29 - 00;13;02;26

Okay. I guess you're going to continue piano throughout high school?

00;13;03;00 - 00;13;04;05

Yeah, I think so.

00;13;04;15 - 00;13;13;28

Do you think you'll do anything with that beyond? I think Sabrina is minoring in piano in college. Do you think it's something you'd like to do?

00;13;15;01 - 00;13;48;12

Oh, so I hope that, I don't think I'm going to, like, do anything with piano. Like Sabrina minoring in college, I don't think I'm going to necessarily do that, but I hope to be able to continue to play piano throughout my life. I don't have to go to lessons or have a teacher, but I want to be able to just be able to play on my own what I want to, play something that I want to play and have a piano there.

00;13;48;20 - 00;13;49;22

Mhm. I'm excited for when you go to college.

00;13;54;18 - 00;13;56;10

Aren't you going to college next year?

00;13;56;11 - 00;14;20;28

Yeah. Will you miss me? Well I have your email. You can always text. Mhm.

Well I guess one last question or second to last question is, so you're probably going to have some performances where you feel pretty good about how you did and others like the Prokofiev. You said you didn't think it went that well, yeah?

What do you like to do after a good performance like back in pre-COVID days?

00;14;26;14 - 00;14;44;27

After a good performance, I like to go home and just sleep. Okay. That sounds weird, but I don't know, I usually don't really do anything else or a good performance. I just be like, "Wow, I actually wasn't that nervous as I played really well. It was great." Yeah.

00;14;46;01 - 00;15;02;23

And you have more of that as you keep on learning? And also, do you have any teachers at school who kind of teach like Ms. Sandra in any way, just by using encouragement and leading by example?

00;15;03;16 - 00;15;04;20

Not really.

00;15;05;22 - 00;15;07;11

Do you have any teachers that you like, then?

00;15;10;13 - 00;15;11;06

Oh help! [Laughs] Let me think about it. So I had this teacher, she was my science teacher in seventh grade last year, during distance learning, and she was teaching me biology. Last year during distance learning, everything was so bland and boring. It was so hard to focus on anything, but I'd be actually paying attention in her lectures. I don't know if it's because I like biology so much or maybe how she was teaching. She wasn't doing anything special, but I feel like she made me really like the subject. I think it was because she really enjoyed that subject too, like when a teacher is teaching, you can tell if they actually are passionate about what they're teaching or they're just choosing a subject because they want to be like Okay! I have some teachers, I can tell they don't like the subject that they're teaching, and I don't know why they're teacher, I mean, I can still learn from them, but just doesn't make me feel like it doesn't make me like the subject that much. But I feel like something that Sandra and my science teacher from last year have in common is that they're both really passionate about the subject that they're teaching, and it shows, and you can tell that they are, which makes them better teachers. And you tend to like them more when you have a teacher like that. It just is a great example to set up for your students. Yeah.

00;16;45;20 - 00;17;11;19

I agree. And finally, over distance learning last year, how did you feel having piano lessons virtually? I know you said your science teacher was able to kind of draw out some passion in you, for either the subject or just learning in general. Do you think that still happened through piano lessons too?

00;17;11;21 - 00;17;35;14

I feel like piano online was - I prefer in-person because you can actually interact with the teacher and they can see what you're playing and stuff, and over distance learning, it's kind of hard. Sometimes I'll play something wrong, and she wouldn't notice. And I'd be like oh, okay, I'd notice that but.

00;17;42;08 - 00;17;49;16

Ah, the question was just like, talk to me about how you felt about having virtual piano lessons.

00;17;49;17 - 00;17;59;15

It was really different. Yeah, I still prefer in-person because online it was just kind of sad. I don't know, you just didn't get that much out of it.

00;18;05;19 - 00;18;08;00

But was there anything positive, especially like....

00;18;08;04 - 00;18;29;14

Okay, the positive thing was there was no driving to a well, you weren't wasting time driving to the place in the back from it. And there was sometimes traffic and I saved a lot of time just by driving to school, driving back home school and driving to Miss Sandra's house and going back. So like, yeah, that was the only positive that came out of it.

00;18;29;22 - 00;18;52;05

I mean, I still, over distance learning it was just kind of hard to do everything online, especially piano because I just felt less motivated to continue with it online. I don't know, I guess I'm a really social person that needs to see people face-to-face. Yeah.

00;18;53;03 - 00;18;57;17

And sometimes we plan like getting together with and and, and right like basketball?

00;18;58;03 - 00;18;59;15

Yeah, that was fun.

00;19;04;26 - 00;19;07;27

If you had to guess, what would you say motivates Ms. Sandra to play? And is that similar to what motivates you?

00;19;19;14 - 00;19;44;14

One time I interviewed her for a school project too, and I asked her why she started playing piano. I don't remember all the details, but she says the moment she realized she wanted to be a concert pianist was this time she was this music camp when she was like 11 - when she was a little younger. She heard this person playing piano and she was standing behind them and she heard this piece and then she thought, this piece was so beautiful. It made her cry. And she felt like this piece brought so much joy to the people that was listening to it. And that was the moment she realized she wanted to be a concert pianist. I think the reason that she plays so much and what motivates her to play is because she wants to play for other people. She wants to present to other people. Yeah. And it's like her own way of contributing to the people around her - because like doctors and stuff, they save lives, and it's really cool - and this is like her way of, I guess making other people around her a little bit happier after hearing her play.

00;20;31;23 - 00;20;49;10

That's a really good way to put it. And it's like the way she rolls the way she does what she does. It's pretty humble paper. It's not like, have to try to beat everyone on every single competition and gets it. As you said, it's more of a community thing.

00;20;49;10 - 00;20;56;19

Yeah, I don't think she's trying to be anyone. I think it's more like a personal goal. It's sort of like trying to win someone else.

00;21;00;27 - 00;21;02;24

I think that is very important. Okay. I guess here concludes our interview. Thank you for... [Laughs]