

**Music, and More – Rachel Cheung (2008)**

*“We envision our students to embrace the Maryknoll spirit signified by the school motto ‘Sola Nobilitas Virtus’ (Virtue Alone Ennobles).” – the Maryknoll vision.*

Piano prodigy and young maestro are titles often bestowed on 21-year-old Rachel Cheung, who has won numerous international awards since she was nine.

Rachel started learning piano at the age of three and was admitted to the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (“HKAPA”) at the young age of nine. She is currently a senior student with Professor Eleanor Wong, Senior Lecturer and Artist-in-Residence of HKAPA’s School of Music.

In 2001, Rachel won her first championship, in the Hong Kong regional competition of the Steinway and Sons International Youth Piano Competition.

In 2003, she won the first prize and three jury prizes at the International Competition for Young Pianist in Memory of Vladimir Horowitz.

In 2004, she won the First Prize and a Peer Jury Prize for the most popular finalist at the Gina Bachauer International Junior Piano Competition.

In 2005, she was the youngest pianist to give a solo recital in the Hong Kong Arts Festival.

In 2009, she won the fifth prize at the Leeds International Pianoforte Competition, the best result ever for a Hong Kong pianist.

In 2010, she was a semi-finalist at the 16th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition.

Rachel has performed in Hong Kong and overseas since a very young age, and in many occasions collaborated with renowned orchestras such as the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, St Petersburg Orchestra, the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hong Kong Sinfonietta.

Despite her young age, Rachel is a mature performer with confident demeanor and impeccable deportment on stage. Success did not come to Rachel because of her talent, it was hard work. Rachel practices assiduously, dedicating all of her time to the piano; nine to nine at the HKAPA is quite a normal day. To prepare for the 2010 Chopin Piano Competition in which Rachel was one of the semi-finalists, she practiced on average of 10 hours every day

for more than a year.

Many of Rachel's happy childhood memories are with her alma mater. She started there in primary one and continued through to Form 3 before she went to HKAPA. "I am very privileged to have studied in such a distinguished school. I miss the kind hearted Sisters who cared for us like we were their daughters. They are my role models for life."

Rachel owed much of her achievements to the stout support given by the school, enabling her to participate in international music performances without missing school lessons. "As I often have to skip classes, the teachers gave me extra lessons so I won't fall behind."

Luck was not with Rachel always. In 2004, she met her biggest challenge in life — she contracted meningitis when touring St. Petersburg. Her motor control was impaired and she was confined in hospital for over a month.

"The Sisters and teachers were very considerate. They eased my study pressure by allowing me to study only five subjects when I was recuperating." Propelled by passion and determination, Rachel soon trained her fingers to dance on the piano again. "I can't thank the school enough for supporting me all along." Rachel reminisced.

On stage, Rachel expresses each repertoire delicately to captivate her audience. In daily life, Rachel lives by the Maryknoll motto "Virtue Alone Ennobles" through respect and affection to her peers, kindness in dealing with people, sincere appreciation of the universe, and diligent pursuit for excellence.