

# A Decision Driven by Passion: Orinda Musician Hye Yeong Min

By Mei Sun Li



Photo provided

Into her late 30s and well established as a cancer research scientist, Orinda resident Hye Yeong Min (pronounced "Hey Young") in 1997 courageously and decisively took a detour in her career. She abandoned science for music and eventually received a Masters of Chamber Music degree at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Min says of her conservatory training, "It was the hardest, most intense period of my life, and it was great."

Harvard and Stanford educated molecular biologist turned classical pianist, Min teaches piano, is a solo performer, both locally and at music festivals around the country, and also is a chamber musician. "Making music with others, when it goes well, is really exhilarating," she says.

Although her repertoire includes the great compositions of Chopin, Mozart, Brahms, Schubert and Schumann, Min feels particularly close to Beethoven's Sonata Opus 110, one of his last piano works. "It is a very spiritual piece that touches me deeply when I play it," she says. The decision she wrestled with 17 years ago was clearly the right one.

Dwight Stone, composer and President of the Contra Costa Performing Arts Society, says, "Hye Yeong Min is a superb pianist whose musicality comes to life in every piece she chooses to play. Her background in science as well as art translates into clarity of interpretation and execution." Min is an active member of CCPAS and a past president.

In Seoul, Korea, when Min was only 6, it was the captivating

keyboard tunes from a neighbor's piano that drew her to music. Soon she was taking lessons from that neighbor and putting in practice time there as well since her family did not own a piano.

When Min was 9, the family, including three sisters, immigrated to America, settling in Monterey, California. Along with the move, a piano purchased for \$100 and a remarkable piano teacher became a significant part of her new life.

While in grade school, she was already tinkering with chemistry sets and fascinated by the biological sciences. A high school junior year summer internship with a neuroscientist at NASA's Ames Research Center sealed the deal. "On the first day, I saw a bucket containing a human brain and watched a technician carefully cutting up brain slices," she says. Following undergraduate study in biology at Stanford, Min earned a doctorate at Harvard. Music remained a passion but necessarily took a back seat.

Soon she was deeply involved in cancer research. "I did like being a scientist," she says. "It was intellectually stimulating and we were close to a breakthrough in being able to cut off the blood supply to malignant tumors which then was a very new idea. But I never experienced the passion that I had for music."

Years later in 1997, heeding a growing, gnawing, and pent up feeling that music needed to be more central to her life, Min finally gave up the struggle and turned in her company badge. She re-focused on her piano practice and also allowed herself the luxury

of devoting more time to her two young daughters.

When Laura and Anna headed off to college, she applied to the music conservatory program and dove into the grueling 16 hour days of piano practice, chamber group rehearsals, lessons and classes. However, with the support of her husband Tom McDonald, an attorney, who enthusiastically took over household duties, Min received her master's degree in 2009.

Min and violist Wendy Clymer will be performing Brahms Violin Sonata No. 2 in A Major Opus 100 (transcribed for viola) at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 13 at Grace Presbyterian Church, 2100 Tice Valley Blvd. in Walnut Creek. This is a free Contra Costa Performing Arts Society event.

## Live The Retirement That You Deserve With A Reverse Mortgage!

- For homeowners age 62 and older
- You retain the title
- No monthly mortgage payments
- No income or credit score requirements
- No limitations on how you spend the proceeds



David Chang  
Reverse Mortgage Advisor  
NMLS #913224



Reverse Mortgage Solutions, Inc. dba Security One Lending  
NMLS ID 101636, 2727 Spring Creek Drive, Spring, TX 77371  
Licensed by the Dept of Business Oversight under the CA Residential Mortgage Lending Act 4131074. Homeowner remains responsible for paying property taxes, required insurance and home maintenance. This ad is for a 1st mortgage loan.

Phone: 925-984-1190

## THE BMW 4 SERIES. UN4GETTABLE: DESIGNED TO CATCH YOUR EYE.



Michael Heller, BMW Concord, mlheller78@hotmail.com

BMW Concord



Call  
Michael Heller  
925-998-2150

BMW Concord | 1967 Market ST. | Concord

## TAXI BLEU All Airports Served 24/7

Dispatch:  
**925-849-2222**  
Direct:  
**925-286-0064**  
www.mytaxibleu.com  
mytaxibleu@gmail.com



## Excellent Care

AT HOME



Heartfelt & Supportive  
Care  
At All Times...

3645 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite D Lafayette  
(beside Trader Joe's)  
www.excellentcareathome.com

Our mission is to provide personalized care, help maintain independence and enhance our client's quality of life on a daily basis.



- Fully bonded and insured
- Geriatric care management
- Hourly care
- Live-in care
- Transportation to and from medical appointments
- Medication reminders

Call to schedule a free assessment and plan care review. 925-284-1213

It's what we do



## 25 Years of Caring, Recognized for Excellence

Exploring Care Options? Considering In-Home Care?

Eldercare Services will work with you to reduce family burdens and stress by helping you make important decisions and transitions throughout the aging process.

- Flexible and Stable, Full-Service Agency
- Reliable & Professionally Trained Caregivers
- Expertise You Can Trust



Accredited by The Joint Commission

Call for an initial Complimentary Professional Assessment  
888-714-8381 or visit EldercareAnswers.com

## Contra Costa Performing Arts Society Founder's Concert April 27

The Contra Costa Performing Arts Society is a local non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the performing arts among its members and in the community through free public concerts and workshops. Founded by Rosamond M. Davis in 1974, CCPAS will be celebrating its 40th anniversary with a Founder's Concert at 2 p.m. Sunday, April 27 at Grace Presbyterian Church, 2100 Tice Valley Blvd in Walnut Creek. For more information about this event and about other upcoming music performances including the annual high school vocal competition, go to www.ccpas.org.

MARY H. SMITH, D.D.S. • CECELIA THOMAS, D.D.S.  
A Professional Corporation  
96 Davis Road, #5 - Orinda, CA 94563  
925.254.0824



Taking care of all your dental needs for you and your family. Emphasizing cosmetic dentistry with implants, and Invisalign. Nitrous oxide is available. Consultations are complimentary. Dentistry with Excellence.



Senior Assisted Living  
that Feels Like Family

Contact us today!  
(925) 954-4572

