



Ziyu Shen, *violinist*

The Amati Magazine

Young Artist of the Week: Ziyu Shen, violinist

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Photo: Matt Dine

Ziyu Shen, 18, is a rising star of the viola. After winning the Lionel Tertis Viola Competition at only 15, she is now studying at the Kronberg Academy with Nobuko Imai and is a member of Young Concert Artists Inc. in the US. She performs at the Wimbledon International Festival in November 2015

Ziyu, how did you first get interested in music and start to play the violin?

When I was very little, I was deeply touched by a famous Chinese violin concerto named 'Butterfly', which was performed by my first teacher during my first lesson of my life. The piece was related to an extremely beautiful but sad love story. It led me the way to the violin world.

Which teachers and other musicians have had the biggest impact on you, and in what ways?

The one who had the greatest impact on me is my previous viola teacher, Professor Li Sheng from Shanghai Conservatory of Music. He gave me a great help, not only in musical technique, but also with personal behaviour. My current teacher is Nobuko Imai. She has such amazing personality that I always feel refreshed with new ideas after lessons. Gidon Kremer has assisted me a lot with my chamber music experience - continuous improvement and the demands for perfection in every detail, which has benefited me a great deal.

What have been your breakthrough moments so far? And which collaborations with other musicians have been especially exciting?

Having been working and studying with famous maestros in recent years, which was a great improvement for me not only in musicianship, but in personal development...people like Nobuko Imai, Gidon Kremer, Steven Isserlis. Every time I study and rehearse with them, I can clearly feel their everlasting passion for the music.



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What viola do you play, where/how did you get it and what qualities do you like in it?

Currently I'm playing on a viola made in 1722 Italy which was supported by maestro Gidon Kremer and the Kronberg Academy. Its mysterious and old sound attracted me very much.

Please tell us something about the programme you are performing in Wimbledon?

Our programme (with pianist Anthony Hewitt) includes two major sonatas for viola and piano by Johannes Brahms and Rebecca Clarke, which I am very fond of. Both sonatas carried a lot of weight in violists' repertoire and performance. Besides the sonatas, there will also be several interesting, various-styled short pieces such as by Maurice Ravel and Kreisler, as well as a featured Chinese work based on traditional folk songs.

What are your plans for further study?

I'm just starting my study in Germany. For further study plans, besides the more possibilities of significant concert and festival attendance, I would love to study and work deeply into the classical music of Europe.

What else have you got coming up in the 2015-16 season that you're looking forward to?

In the 2015-16 season I will continue my performance and participation events such as the Viola Masterclasses in Japan, and the Verbier Festival chamber music in residency in Switzerland. I'm especially looking forward to my series of concerts in the USA next spring and autumn. Recitals will be taking place in several venues in New York, the Kennedy Center in Washington and in Boston. If anyone is staying in those cities at the time, you are warmly welcomed to my concerts!