

## **Eileen Ho Pursues Her Passion @ Lexington Music School**

*Interview by Pamela Rice, MCA*

Stellar, talented and thoughtful fourteen year old Lexington High School freshman, Eileen Ho, sat down with us to talk about her passion for classical violin and the role that Lexington Music School, her teacher Marla Rubinson, and Munroe Center for the Arts have played in her success in competition and performance.

### **How long have you been playing violin and will you share one of your best memories about it with us?**

I've been playing violin since the age of five. I studied violin in school, as well as with a private teacher. I vividly remember when I passed the ABRSM (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music) Global High Scorers' Concert exam with distinction, at nine years old, in Shanghai. Because I passed with distinction, I was invited to perform in front of a large crowd. This was my first time performing in front of a large audience. I've loved performing ever since, and I participate in the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra (BYSO) now.

### **We understand that you recently won a prestigious violin competition. Can you tell us about that?**

I won the Annual BYSO Concerto Competition with the Bruch Violin Concerto. The winner of the competition gets the honor to play solo at Symphony Hall with their orchestra accompanying them, in April. Preparing for the competition was difficult and playing in front of the judges was a bit scary, but overall, it was a lot of fun and an awesome experience. I am so glad that I did it! Prior to this, I hadn't done any violin competitions, so this was a big step for me.

### **How long have you been studying with Marla at the Lexington Music School, and what role do you feel Lexington Music School, Marla, and Munroe Center for the Arts have played in your success?**

I've studied at the Lexington Music School with Marla for close to five years. I think that Lexington Music School and the Munroe Center have provided me with a hospitable and nurturing environment for me to grow as a musician. Marla has also definitely played a huge role in my success. She is always kind, enthusiastic and encouraging, and is the person that introduced me to the BYSO concerto competition. I definitely would not be where I am right now without her. Marla has helped me improve so much. She is an amazing person and an amazing teacher.

It is also great that Munroe Center is right here in town, so close to home. I love the building, because the rooms have such great acoustics for playing music.

### **Tell us a bit more about why you love playing the violin...**

I feel like playing violin and creating music is a great form of self expression. Music is a great way to build connections with others, and I love playing with my peers in string quartets and in orchestras. I've met so many amazing people through music. Music builds community, and I love to share it with other people. For example, I play in the Lexington Chamber Music Program, where we go to nursing homes and play for the residents. I really enjoy doing that. I also have a wonderful memory of being eight or nine years old, and performing at a relative's wedding. It was so much fun to perform for family, and I am so glad everyone enjoyed my playing.

### **Who are your favorite composers and what are your favorite pieces to play?**

Right now, I'm working on the Violin Concerto No. 3 in B minor, Op. 61, by Camille Saint-Saëns, and I've had a lot of fun playing the piece so far. If I were to pick my favorite piece that I've played, I'd have to say that it would be the Bruch Violin Concerto, which is actually the piece that I played for the competition! I also like listening to Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso in A minor, Op. 28, also by Saint-Saëns, which hopefully I can play once I improve even more!

### **In terms of playing music, what inspires you the most?**

I often look up to amazing musicians and violinists, such as Hilary Hahn. I actually went to see her perform at Symphony Hall a few years ago. It's surreal that in a few months, I will be performing on the same stage that she did. I always want to improve and keep practicing. I want to try my best to do well.

### **What are some of your other interests and hobbies?**

Outside of music, I have a passion for art and science. I love creating digital art, and have won awards for my digital artwork in the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. In 2020, I received two Gold Keys and a regional "best in category" award for Massachusetts. I've also competed in Science Olympiad at school at the regional and national level. Last year, we won the state championship and advanced to Nationals. I also coach for Science Olympiad and teach English through a club at school. Eventually, I want to pursue a career in STEM or art, but I will always play violin as a hobby!

### **What advice would you give to young musicians who want to get good at their instruments?**

I would advise young musicians to grow their passion for music, and to have fun while practicing. When you treat music as a hobby and not as a chore, you will find yourself enjoying it more and more! I have to say that I'm very grateful for my parents and grandparents who encouraged me to practice and to play, because looking back on it now, I would not be where I am today without their support. The hard work pays off in the end! Stick with it, but don't forget to enjoy it and have fun while you're doing it!