

Hi All,

The article below appeared in the Guardian this weekend, and I thought you might be interested to read it. You will recall, I am sure, that Christian thrilled us with his playing last July..... and his first ever UK recital was with us at the Gower Festival. Here's hoping that he will come and thrill us with his playing again in the future!

Best wishes

Anne

### ***Could a 12-year-old Australian-Chinese violinist be the next child prodigy?***

**Decca Classics' youngest-ever signing, Christian Li, has been hailed a 'superstar' who is already up there with the greats**



'I love playing in front of people': 12-year-old Christian Li.  
photograph: Jess Brohier/Universal Music Group

The classical music world is no stranger to young talent. The 19th century virtuoso Niccolò Paganini started playing aged seven, while Yehudi Menuhin caused a sensation with his performance, at the same age, of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto.

Now, however, there's a new kid on the block, whose backers say transforms from 'normal child' to 'absolute superstar' the moment the lights dim. Christian Li, a 12-year-old schoolboy violinist from Melbourne, recently became the youngest-ever artist signed by the Decca Classics record label. He will release a new recording later this month, a contemporary adaptation of a traditional Chinese folk tune.

"We've seen some amazing young children go on to become great legends," said Decca's executive producer, Helen Lewis. "Christian's joining a long line of wunderkinds... Menuhin, [Jascha] Heifetz, [Maxim] Vengerov, [Christian's] hero."

Lewis says she was overwhelmed by Li's talent when, aged 10, he became the youngest-ever winner of the Menuhin competition, the world's leading violin competition. The Chinese-Australian was joint winner of its 2018 junior prize, performing Summer from Vivaldi's Four Seasons, with videos of that performance since attracting millions of views online.

"I was struck by his skill, maturity and musicianship," said Lewis. "It's astonishing to witness. From his physicality, you can tell he's completely immersed in the music. His interaction and his silent dialogue with the orchestra is really amazing to watch. He has real confidence on stage and leadership of the ensemble..."

"Later on, I learned from the Menuhin competition, our friends there, that Christian had formed really lovely friendships with other competitors - playing about with them backstage. So you really get the impression that, when the stage lights are turned off, he's just a normal child. Then the lights turn on and he's an absolute superstar."

Like Vengerov, one of the most celebrated violinists playing today, Li began learning the violin aged five. He practises for four hours a day during the week, and more at weekends. Otherwise, he loves reading and watching films, particularly science fiction ones, and Harry Potter: when he first visited Decca in London last year he was "extremely excited" about the Harry Potter shop at King's Cross Station, recalled Lewis.

"But then, in the very next breath, he's talking about how much he loves the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, and the ins and outs of the music... It's really quite remarkable to hear these sorts of things from someone so young."

Li's mother, Katherine Li, said she believed his talents ran in the family.

"Although we are not a musical family - I am a certified practising accountant and my husband, George, is an electronics engineer - I assume Christian inherited his grandfather's gift for music," she told the *Observer*. "He has a very good ear, good musical memory and shows great passion for music. We really recognised his ability when he started studying violin at the age of five. His first few music teachers were constantly surprised by his talent."

On May 22 Decca Classics will release Li's recording of the Fisherman's Harvest Song, a traditional folk tune inspired by the fisherman's harvest in the South China Sea and adapted by contemporary Chinese composer Li Zili.

Li said: "I chose this piece because it connects me to my Chinese heritage through music. The beautiful melody in the opening expresses the fisherman's strong emotion as he returns to his village after being at sea. I love being able to express this heartfelt song through the singing quality of the violin."

"I love playing in front of people," he added.

Lewis praised Li's technical dexterity when performing works such as the fiendishly difficult *La Ronde des Lutins* (Dance of the Goblins), by the Italian composer and violinist Antonio Bazzini, which Decca released in March to announce his signing.

She said: "It requires all manner of techniques. He's got an extraordinary accomplishment of all the techniques... [and] he just infuses it with light, colour and vitality. That's what sets him apart. You compare that recording with the long list of greats who've recorded that piece and he's really up there with the best."