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# 'The Sound of Shanghai' proves that music cheers and also cures

## Wang Yong

WITH a polite bow, a teenage girl in a plain white shirt and a dark-color skirt greeted the online audiences on Tuesday night before playing a Chinese violin masterpiece devoted to romantic seaside scenery.

As she picked an ethereal melody on her violin, I could "see" with my mind's eye sea waves ruffled and nudged by a gentle wind. Her upright figure added a sense of loftiness to the serene musical scene. The violin piece she played is called "Haibin Yinshi," or Seaside Tone Poem, which was composed by a renowned Chinese musician in 1962 to give people hope by describing the beauty of nature. Indeed, throughout her solo performance, I felt as if I was close to a faraway sea under the sun, even though I was under lockdown in Shanghai.

Many other musicians, including violin gurus, have played the same music long

before 15-year-old Liu Xuanling, but her performance on Tuesday night was unique. She was a special guest at an online concert called "The Sound of Shanghai," organized by Shanghai Daily, which featured nearly 20 performers — foreign and Chinese, professional and amateur — who are all locked down as the city seeks to prevent the spread of Omicron, a highly contagious variant of the novel coronavirus. She wore a medical mask, and her "stage" was a makeshift hospital in Shanghai.

"May every quarantine place get such musical soothing. It does wonders on many levels," wrote an online audience member identified as GILIAM, who commented on Liu's performance. Many other "spectators" typed "bravo" one after another to show praise the girl.

Her "stage setup" was "made" of no other elements than segregated recovery beds, medical staff dressed in white

protective suits, and others under quarantine. When she began to play, few people around her paid close attention, but gradually, a medical staff member and one quarantined lady turned their gazes toward the girl and listened silently and solemnly till she finished the whole piece.

Such is the power of music, especially in such a special space.

In a blurb to the concert anchors, the girl wrote: "More or less, people who are under quarantine here may feel anxious, but music can be soothing." She revealed she is from Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, and has come to Shanghai to prepare for exams at a conservatory. She was put under central quarantine after a nucleic acid test was in doubt.

At the end of her show, she smiled behind her mask and cheered along with the audiences, her lovely pigtail waving from side to side.

Certainly her musical skill has room for improvement, but what moved me most is her beautiful mind, which readily brings hope to others as well as herself in adversity. Music cheers, and perhaps more importantly, it cures.

Similar was the case with Song Siheng, a renowned pianist who has become a volunteer in his locked-down community, helping keep order during nucleic acid testing, distributing food to neighbors, and soothing the hearts and minds of all who come with worries.

He was the first performer at the online concert. The first piano piece he played was called "A Walk," which he composed during the city's fight against COVID-19 in 2020. As he moved his fingers slowly on his piano at home, a sequence of images of quiet, shaded streets popped into my mind. I began to "walk" along with him, through imagined lanes and neighborhoods. All of a

sudden, all worries associated with the lockdown left me.

Toward the end of the concert, my wife and I performed an ancient Chinese melody "A Beautiful Night." We are amateurs, but we tried to convey a sense of peace to our fellow countrymen during these special times when many people from around the country are supporting Shanghai in its fight against COVID-19.

It was a pleasant surprise when I read a message from one audience member: "How peaceful the music is!" At that moment, I realized that music creates and spreads a spirit of peace and harmony, even if it's performed by amateurs.

"The Sound of Shanghai" drew a viewership of more than 30,000, along with over 40,000 "likes" and nearly 2,700 retweets worldwide.

There are difficulties in nipping the Omicron but let's be hopeful, and give hope to others, by sharing music that cheers and cures.