

YOUTH

A classic in the making

A singer's debut album is scheduled to be released ahead of his 23rd birthday, **Chen Nan** reports.

When Cai Chengyu appeared on *Super Vocal*, a talent show produced by Hunan Satellite TV for classically trained singers in 2018, he was still a student of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, where he was trained to become a bel canto tenor. Little did he know then that he would be embarking on one of the most thrilling experiences of his career.

During the past two years, he has gained over 1 million followers on the micro-blogging platform Sina Weibo. He has performed at national galas, such as the Spring Festival Gala, one of the most-watched annual events in the country, as well as participating in several variety shows.

"It happened so fast — what I achieved and have now — that I am still learning with each project I am involved with," says Cai, who is pursuing his bachelor's degree at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

Cai is excited about releasing his debut album on Jan 15, which will feature six songs, before he turns 23 years old on Jan 17.

On Oct 30, the first song from the album, titled *The Light Beyond*, was released by Decca Records, part of the Universal Music Group. The song, which is a Mandarin version of an English song with the same title, is adapted from a 2013 musical, titled *Lightseeker*, written by award-winning Singaporean songwriter Dick Lee.

The Mandarin version of the song also features a performance of the Budapest Art Orchestra.

Cai also traveled to Ulaanqab in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region to shoot the music video for the song. With the beautiful scenery and his performance, Cai says he hopes it will be a fresh take on the song, using his classically trained voice to bring a romantic blend of classical and pop music to his audiences.

"Though I haven't watched the musical *Lightseeker* yet, I love the



“Classical music is full of color and touches our senses and our hearts. I am happy to see more young people enjoy the art form through my crossover projects.”

Cai Chengyu, singer

vibe of the music, which is full of hope and confidence," Cai says.

The release of Cai's new song received a warm response online.

"Though only one song was released, I felt like I was watching a musical. I like his voice, which tells the story of a young man seeking out his dream," Chen Yixin, one of Cai's fans, comments on one of the record company's social media posts.

In July, Cai sang in the role of Don Ottavio in the Shanghai Opera House's concert version of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. It was his first major performance in an opera.

First performed in Prague in 1787, the opera is about the notorious libertine Don Giovanni, who seduces

women and kills them. Don Ottavio is the fiancé of Donna Anna, whose father was killed by Don Giovanni.

"I turned down other work for this. It was a great experience to perform the role. I felt the energy, and that's the best feeling," Cai says.

Under the baton of conductor Xu Zhong, who is director of the Shanghai Opera House, Cai, along with other singers, received online coaching in language, music and stage performance by artistic directors from the Vienna State Opera and the Sydney Opera House.

"The two-month training was intensive. If I hadn't reached Xu's expectations, I would have been replaced by other singers," Cai says, adding that he was happy to have made it.

Xu says it was Cai's voice, rather than his popularity, that helped him to win the role.

"His voice suits the role of Don Ottavio well," says Xu.

"I had to point out every tiny flaw to him. The experience helped a promising young singer."

Born in Suzhou, Anhui province, Cai developed an interest in music from a young age. He recalls that at the age of 4, he sang at a public square in his hometown.

"In my last music class in high school, I performed a song in front of the whole class. My teacher encouraged me to pursue a career in music," he says.

In 2016, he successfully became a student of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music with the fourth best grades nationwide.

"It was during my study at the conservatory that I was able to fully immerse myself in classical music," says Cai.

"Classical music is full of color and touches our senses and our hearts. I am happy to see more young people enjoy the art form through my crossover projects."

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Cai Chengyu has seen his music career grow quickly over the past two years. The singer performs at various events thanks to his increasing popularity among young audiences. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

US academic urges change in policies

NEW YORK — The next US administration should rectify "costly and consequential" federal policies that have damaged American universities' ability to attract top academic talent from around the globe, urged Lee C. Bollinger, president of Columbia University.

In an open letter to US President-elect Joe Biden on Thursday, Bollinger says thousands of international students are unable to return to the United States.

"Or, if they are able to gain entry, they face onerous restrictions that threaten their ability to pursue their academic careers."

Bollinger says, "Of greatest concern, there has been a sustained assault against the vibrant exchange with the international community."

It's a grave mistake to turn international students away or hinder their ranks, says Bollinger who sees international students as being "utterly foundational to our pursuit of excellence in American higher education."

In the past four years, the federal government has erected barriers to foreign students coming to the US, cut the length of their stay, and curbed their ability to work here after completing their studies, Bollinger says.

Hence, "our ability to attract the greatest academic and scientific talents from around the globe, whether in the form of promising students or gifted faculty members" has been eroded, he says, urging Biden to take action against this as soon as possible after his inauguration in January.

Bollinger calls for reforms, including expanding H-1B visas to restore postgraduate opportunities for international students and reducing the backlog of requested visa renewals and applications.

He also asks that the next administration allows sufficient duration of stay for international students to complete degree programs, end paranoia of Chinese students and work with Congress to address long-term challenges facing international students and faculty.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, over 1 million international students came to the US each year to study, according to Bollinger.

XINHUA

Time for recognition as teen inventor is named 'Kid of the Year'

LONE TREE, Colorado — A 15-year-old Colorado high school student and young scientist who has used artificial intelligence and created apps to tackle contaminated drinking water, cyberbullying, opioid addiction and other social problems has been named Time magazine's first-ever "Kid of the Year".

Gitanjali Rao, a sophomore at STEM School Highlands Ranch in suburban Denver who lives in the city of Lone Tree, was selected from more than 5,000 nominees in a process that culminated with a finalists' committee of children, Time for Kids reporters and comedian Trevor Noah.

Rao said in a Zoom interview from her home on Friday that the prize is "nothing that I could have ever imagined. And I'm so grateful and just so

excited that we're really taking a look at the upcoming generation and our generation, since the future is in our hands."

Time says in a statement, along with Nickelodeon, it wanted to recognize "the rising leaders of America's youngest generation" in making the award.

For 92 years, Time has presented a "Person of the Year", and the youngest ever was Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, who was 16 when she graced the magazine's cover last year.

Time says Rao stood out for creating a global community of young innovators and inspiring them to pursue their goals. Rao insists that starting out small doesn't matter, as long as you're passionate about it.

Rao's sense of invention started

early. At age 12, she developed a portable device to detect lead in water. She has created a device called the Epione that diagnoses prescription opioid addiction at an early stage.

She has also devised an app called Kindly that uses artificial intelligence to help prevent cyberbullying. It allows teens to type in a word or phrase to find out if the words they're using are bullying and lets them decide to edit what they're sending or to proceed.

"And currently, I'm looking back at water, looking at moving things like parasitic compounds in water and how we can detect for that," Rao says after a day's remote schooling.

She told actress, activist and Time contributing editor Angelina Jolie in a Zoom interview that her science pursuits started early as a way to

improve social conditions. The drinking water crisis in Flint, Michigan, inspired her work to develop a way to detect contaminants and send those results to a mobile phone.

"I was 10 when I told my parents that I wanted to research carbon nanotube sensor technology at the Denver Water quality research lab, and my mom was like, 'A what?'" Rao told Jolie.

She said that work "is going to be in our generation's hands pretty soon. So if no one else is going to do it, I'm going to do it."

The sensor technology involves molecules of carbon atoms that can detect chemical changes, including chemicals in water.

Rao has partnered with rural schools, museums, and science, technology, engineering and math

organizations, and other institutions to run innovation workshops for thousands of other students.

In a world where science is increasingly questioned or challenged, Rao insists that its pursuit is an essential act of kindness, the best way that a younger generation can better the world. Science and technology are being employed as never before to tackle the coronavirus pandemic, global warming and a host of other issues, she notes.

"We have science in everything we're involved in, and I think that's the biggest thing to put out there, that science is cool, innovating is cool, and anybody can be an innovator," Rao says.

"Anybody can do science."



Gitanjali Rao, a 15-year-old Colorado high school student, has been named Time magazine's first-ever "Kid of the Year". AP

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