

YOUTH

When Ju Xiaofu was 4 years old, his parents bought him a piano as a birthday gift. It was a choice Ju made himself because, as he recalls, "a piano is very big, beautiful and produces different sounds by tapping the keys".

"For me, it was a fun toy," says Ju. Now, the 21-year-old is one of the most promising pianists in China. This summer, he has a hectic schedule performing in cities across the country.

One of the concerts is for young audiences, which will be held at the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing on Aug 6. It will include Debussy's *Preludes Book 2, L 123*, and Schumann's *Scenes from Childhood Op 15* and *Piano Sonata No 3 in F Minor, Op 14*.

"Debussy and Schumann are two of my favorite composers. Their music pieces are romantic, abstract and full of imagination, and draw influences from the Eastern world," says Ju.

When Ju gave a recital in Beijing in 2019, he performed Debussy's *Preludes Book 1*. It's a goal for him to finish playing all of Debussy's preludes — 24 pieces for solo piano divided into two books of 12 preludes each — before Ju turns 22.

It's a task set by Ju's teacher, Austrian pianist and composer Joerg Demus, who died at the age of 90 in 2019.

"Right before I began my study at the Juilliard School in New York, I met Demus when we performed together in Chengdu, Sichuan province. We didn't speak much until we started to play," recalls Ju.

"He taught me lots of things, which was inspiring for me. One thing he told me was that I should play with my heart rather than my brain."

Ju is also collaborating with Chinese jazz pianist A Bu, who adapted three poems written by Ju into music pieces. Under the title of *Three Sketches Op 5*, the three music pieces are *Anonymous Tears*, *La Fausse Etude* and *Memoir of Florestan*, which will be performed during the concert in Beijing.

According to Ju, it will be a premiere of *Three Sketches Op 5* and the original poems will be shown to the audience, printed on paper or recited by Ju during the concert.

"For me, giving a solo recital is



Keying into summer

Pianist Ju Xiaofu set to enthral audiences across China, **Chen Nan** reports.

very challenging because I have to fully focus on the music. I usually spend some time alone before my solo recitals. The solitude prepares me well," says Ju.

"When I play onstage, music is the best way to serve as a bridge between me and the audience in the concert hall."

Before his Beijing recital, the pianist will perform in Shanghai, collaborating with New Classic Ensemble under the baton of Jin Yukuang.

As part of the annual Music in the Summer Air Festival, the concert will see Ju play US composer Philip Glass' *Piano Concerto No 3*, which will be the piece's China premiere.

On July 30, the pianist will perform with the Jiangsu Symphony



Ju Xiaofu has worked his way to become one of the most promising pianists in the country since his stage debut at the age of 14.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Orchestra in a concert in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, which will not only see Ju play two of Bach's concertos but also see Ju serve as the conductor.

It is a busy summer for the young pianist, who will go back to New York to continue his study at the Juilliard School.

Besides concerts, Ju keeps practicing at least six hours a day.

"If I didn't practice at least six hours a day, I would feel uncomfortable and things could go wrong," says Ju.

Born and raised in Nanjing, Ju learned to play the piano at age 4 and displayed his talent by winning a number of music awards. At the age of 12, Ju decided to pursue a future career as a pianist and three



Music and poetry are two art forms that are indispensable for me. Both are my personal expression and mirrors of my life."

Ju Xiaofu, pianist

years later he was enrolled to the middle school affiliated to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

Since his stage debut at the age of 14, with the Shanghai Philharmonic, where he performed Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No 3*, Ju has played with orchestras, including the China Philharmonic, Xi'an Symphony Orchestra and Hong Kong Youth Philharmonic.

In 2018, he traveled to New York to pursue his bachelor's degree at the Juilliard School with Yoheved Kaplinsky.

Ju's mother, Lei Shurong, who is a translator and an author, recorded his growth and his music study by publishing a book, titled *Mr Potato Starts to Play Piano*.

In the book, Lei writes: "Ju is not a child prodigy. He went through challenges like many other music learners."

Ju says: "It was a process of keeping yourself concentrated and keeping up your musical practice without forgetting about your original goals. I have to be committed and achieve my balance under pressure."

Influenced by his parents, Ju also enjoyed reading as a child. He says his home is filled with books. "Even half of our dining table is taken up by books."

At 16, Ju started to write poems and in 2019, he published his first poetry collection, titled *On the Path Seeking for the Ruins of Spring*, which has about 150 poems he wrote from 2016 to 2019.

"Music and poetry are two art forms that are indispensable for me. Both are my personal expression and mirrors of my life," Ju says.

Contact the writer at chenman@chinadaily.com.cn

Members of African community impressed by progress

TAIYUAN — Justina Obaoye-Ajala from Nigeria was impressed when she saw the new buildings to which previously poverty-stricken rural residents had been relocated.

"I saw that cave house where they were living before. But now they are living in good buildings with good facilities," says Obaoye-Ajala.

Youth representatives from 13 African countries visited Xingxian, a once impoverished county located in North China's Shanxi province, from July 13 to 17 to learn about China's poverty-alleviation efforts.

The group consisted of students, lawyers, doctors, journalists and entrepreneurs, and was organized by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries.

Over the last eight years, China's

final 98.99 million impoverished rural residents living below the current poverty line were declared poverty-free. The country then met the poverty-eradication target set out in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development a decade ahead of schedule.

During the trip, the African representatives visited multiple places, including a previously poor village, industrial bases and relocation sites for the poor.

In Shahao village, which was once trapped in poverty due to poor natural conditions and inconvenient transportation, the young Africans witnessed the new lives of villagers.

"I was amazed that they had no shortage of necessities such as electricity and tap water," says Sumayyah Hosany, a doctor from Mauritius who is working at the



I saw that cave house where they were living before. But now they are living in good buildings with good facilities."

Justina Obaoye-Ajala, Nigerian, speaking of her recent trip to the rural areas of Shanxi province

Panhealth Medical Center in Wenzhou, East China's Zhejiang province.

Today, roads are connected to every household, with 76 new-energy streetlights installed, according to Meng Qingke, the village's Party secretary.

Meanwhile, the village focused on the development of small industry based on grain crops, while the local paper-cutting craft — a form

of intangible cultural heritage — has also been passed on and developed over the past few years, Meng says.

Also on the trip was Joseph Olivier Mendo'o from Cameroon, who is working on his PhD at Peking University.

He learned that the Chinese government has explored many ways to reduce poverty and stimulate the internal motivation of people

to lift themselves out of poverty, he says.

The officials and villagers really trust each other, he adds.

The trip in Xingxian gave the group a deeper understanding of China's poverty-relief industries.

The representatives visited enterprises of processing agricultural products to learn how poverty alleviation is closely linked to industry, as well as the role played by e-commerce in poverty relief and rural revitalization.

Sumayyah Hosany and two of her fellow Africans took part in a livestreaming session to promote the agricultural products of Xingxian.

She says she thinks the county has shown them what is important and how e-commerce platforms can be used.

Last year, online retail sales in rural areas jumped to 1.79 trillion

yuan (\$277.27 billion) from 180 billion yuan in 2014, providing a vital driving force in lifting farmers out of poverty.

With 3,224 people now in residence, the Liuyegou relocation site not only provides the poor with new homes, but also infrastructure, such as tap water, electricity, heating, gas and the internet.

There are also health and sports facilities.

"I hope every country in the world, even the Western countries and African countries, can emulate this," says Obaoye-Ajala.

China fully completed its poverty-alleviation relocation programs by the end of 2020, with all 9.6 million people involved having moved into new homes and shaken off absolute poverty.

XINHUA

International Education Column

If you are interested in this, please contact: i.education@chinadaily.com.cn



IT ALL STARTS HERE. BERLIN | LONDON | MADRID | PARIS | TURIN | WARSAW

Bachelor in Management (BSc)

Leading in a changing world starts with choosing a cross-cultural journey

- Live in three different countries during your three-year programme
- Empower yourself through multiple disciplines
- Experience the business world first-hand

3 years

6 possible urban campus locations

50+ different nationalities

Next application deadline 30th July

www.escp.eu/bachelor

University for Foreigners of Siena

International University (Siena, Italy)

- Specialised in Italian language teaching
- Bachelor, Master and PhD programs
- Foundation Year
- Marco Polo and Turandot projects for Chinese students
- Italian language courses (free mover)
- Partnership with Chinese universities



Info at: cinasiena@unistrasi.it

Università Stranieri Siena



#15

Full-time MBA ranking 2021

The Economist

A triple-accredited US business school





Choose a graduate degree program with the power to take you further.

- Masters Programs
- Global One-Year MBA
- Online Masters & MBA programs

Download Brochure


