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## Inside the Mind of an Aspiring Concert Pianist



By Susan Lewis

What's it like growing up aiming for a classical concert career? WRTI's Susan Lewis asked a young Canadian pianist Thomas Torok how he manages the music, excitement, and competition.

Radio script:

Thomas Torok: Hi, my name is Thomas I'm from Toronto Canada and I'm 19 years old. I'll be playing Albeniz Iberia: Evocation.

Music: Albeniz Iberia: Evocation.

Susan Lewis: Thomas Torok came to Philadelphia to participate in the intensive week-long Philadelphia Young Pianists' Academy. It's all part of a path that he began as a young child who was especially drawn to music.

TT: Even when I was 3 or 4, playing with stuffed animals. If there was no music going in the house, the animals didn't have a proper life. When music was on, they could fly and go on adventures and do magical things, but if there was no music, nothing was possible.

SL: A recent high school graduate, Thomas continues to practice, play, and immerse himself in music. A favorite pastime? Analyzing scores!

TT: It sort of relaxes me. When you take a score out and look at the structure of the piece, sometimes it can take hours to get it in your brain.

SL: The key to performing, he says, is to let loose --

TT: Engage yourself fully in the music and not worry about performance or mistakes. Sometimes a mistake can be a liberating moment where you stop caring so much --not in the sense that you give up on trying to play your best but you realize that any level of perfection -- there's no point to it.

SL: So what about life after a performance? After a festival? After a competition?

TT: One thing I've learned is that you can't have one singular goal. If your singular goal is to be the best pianist in the world it's not going to happen. You can't just focus on piano playing. I've been given influences by conducting, as well as composing, teaching. All these different areas, because you never know what's going to take off in a different direction.

Philadelphia Young Pianists' Academy includes over 20 pianists. Thomas and three other students came to visit WRTI and try out the piano in our performance studio.



*When I'm onstage, I think I'm just part of the music. The music brings me to what it wants, to the destination.-  
Huiping Cai, a Chinese student at Temple University and a PYP A participant.*