

## Tammy Wang, '12

*EDUCATION: Johns Hopkins University, BA in International Relations, concentration East Asian Studies, with honors (2007)*

*WORK EXPERIENCE: AsianFanatics.net*

*LAW SCHOOL ACTIVITIES: University of Chicago Law Review, Immigrant Child Advocacy Project Clinic, APALSA, Admissions Committee, Law School Film Festival*

I fell in love for the first time when I was four. That was the year my mother signed me up for piano lessons. I can still remember touching those bright, ivory keys with reverence, feeling happy and excited that soon I would be playing those tinkling, familiar melodies (which my mother played every day on our boombox) myself.

To my rather naïve surprise, however, instead of setting the score for Für Elise on the piano stand before me, my piano teacher handed me a set of Beginner's Books. I was to read through the Book of Theory, learn to read the basic notes of the treble and bass clefs, and practice, my palm arched as though an imaginary apple were cupped between my fingers, playing one note at a time. After I had mastered the note of "C," she promised, I could move on to "D."

It took a few years of theory and repetition before I was presented with my very first full-length classical piece: a sonatina by Muzio Clementi. I practiced the new piece daily, diligently following the written directives of the composer. I hit each staccato note crisply and played each crescendo and every decrescendo dutifully. I performed the piece triumphantly for my teacher and lifted my hands with a flourish as I finished. Instead of clapping, however, my teacher gave me a serious look and took both my hands in hers. "Music," she said sincerely, "is not just technique. It's not just fingers or memorization. It comes from the heart." That was how I discovered passion.

Beethoven, Mozart, Mendelssohn: the arcs and passages of intricate notes are lines of genius printed on paper, but ultimately, it is the musician who coaxes them to life. They are open to artistic and emotional interpretation, and even eight simple bars can inspire well over a dozen different variations. I poured my happiness and my angst into the keys, loving every minute of it. I pictured things, events, and people (some real, some entirely imagined—but all intensely personal) in my mind as I played, and the feelings and melodies flowed easily: frustration into Beethoven's Sonata Pathétique, wistfulness into Chopin's nocturnes and waltzes, and sheer joy into Schubert. Practice was no longer a chore; it was a privilege and a delight. In high school, I began playing the piano for church services. The music director gave me a binder full of 1-2-3 sheet music, in which melodies are written as numbers instead of as notes on a music staff. To make things a bit more interesting for myself—and for the congregation—I took to experimenting, pairing the written melodies with chords and harmonies of my own creation. I rarely played a song the same way twice; the beauty of improvisation, of songwriting, is that it is as much "feeling" as it is logic and theory. Different occasions and different moods yielded different results: sometimes, "Listen Quietly" was clean and beautiful in its simplicity; other times, it became elaborate and nearly classical in its passages. The basic melody and musical key, however, remained the same, even as the embellishments changed. The foundation of good improvisation and songwriting is simple: understanding the musical key in which a song is played—knowing the scale, the chords, the harmonies, and how well (or unwell) they work together—is essential. Songs can be rewritten and reinterpreted as situation permits, but missteps are obvious because the fundamental laws of music and harmony do not change.

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Feb. 18, 2008

Holly McPherson  
Atria Senior Living Group  
853 Tamalpais Ave  
Novato, CA 94947

Dear Ms. McPherson:

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I would like to be considered for a position in which someone of my background could make a contribution. I will contact you soon to arrange for an interview. Should you require any additional information, I can be reached using the contact information listed above.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Nantz

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