

Dear Lang Lang,

“A Journey of a Thousand Miles begins with a single step.”

There are so many ways I can relate to you. Where to begin? You’re Chinese. People from other countries may not know but Chinese people have this sort of connection, pretty much because we all feel and think pretty much the same way because of our similar backgrounds. You admire and traveled to Germany. I once was a German citizen since I was born there. You called my home country “the enchanted land of Beethoven, Bach, and Brahms,” and you described it as “exotic,” that you never felt so free and happy before, beneath the blue sky and between the wildflowers. This surprised me, and you gave me a sense of pride, you know? Finally you moved to the U.S. and opened a door to a world I’ve never really took notice before. I mean, I moved to America, too, when I was twelve. But you mastered your way through the enormously different culture as prodigiously as you are on the piano—I was stunned. We recently had to write an essay in social studies about American identity and I just decided to work in your words. It fit perfectly. At the same time you strengthened my senses of my other motherland, China. There have been times when I asked myself “Why can’t I just be German,” “or American?” in my case now. Today I know that I have the privilege of languages and most importantly, having different perspectives. The thrive of the Chinese to be Number One will pay off and indeed gets you to the top, for you are a real-life example for the world to see.

I have to say that I play the piano too, and I’ve also been to competition. Naturally, I didn’t practice as much as you did and I’m afraid I won’t be able to make that up, but that’s okay because I believe I won’t have a career as a musician. However, your book actually literally made me go into the endless depths of classical music and explore for the first time this universe of happiness inside it, although I’ve been playing the piano for many years! I, of course, have heard of you before by chance since Chinese parents just know you and my piano teacher back then was a Lang Lang fanatic. But after I read your book, I was thrilled! I constantly asked my mom why I didn’t go to that concert in Berlin when I was like 10 years old (the only one I can remember), and when there’s the next appearance of you in Boston. But I also was active—I started playing the piano three to four hours a day. I sang along my pieces and didn’t care how my voice sounded. Suddenly I wanted the world to see my happiness. You had a huge impact on my attitude. You yourself are a warm funny person. And then the word came to me—inspiration. But not one of those complicated depressive ones, one of the light-as-a-feather smiling ones. You’re an inspiration to me just like to all the other music lovers in this world, or those who became one, and I’m grateful for it.

You’re right, your journey is still only beginning—that’s what I hope too.

Sincerely,

*Mingmei Quan*