

Seattle Cellist Involves Music in All Aspects of Life

Julie Cho of Local 76-493 (Seattle, WA), an internationally recognized cellist with the Tacoma Symphony Orchestra, always looks to improve her career as a musician, whether it is moving to another country for a job opportunity or playing with community orchestras in her spare time. “The doors are still opening in front of me,” says Cho. “I want to make a lot of experiences as a musician, and right now, I am focusing on my career in Seattle.”

As a child, Cho began her music studies after seeing her sister play the violin. Her parents did not play any instruments, but they instilled

When Cho made the move to Germany, many things struck her about her new environment, mainly, how pervasive the music scene was. “In Korea, if you wanted to go to some concert, you had to go to a designated place, at a certain time to hear music; you had to pay a lot,” she explains. “In Germany, you could hear music everywhere—churches, restaurants, every evening in small halls; it was nice.”

Her time at school produced many fond memories and a sound music education. Cho loved taking advantage of master classes and playing in front of professionals to gain experience. “Of course I was very nervous playing in front of those famous musicians,” says Cho. “If you do it often enough you get used to it; after awhile, I pretty much enjoyed it.”

After Cho received her Professional Performer’s degree (Konzert Examen) and Soloist Diploma from the Folkwang Hochschule in Essen, Germany, she returned to Korea to start a career playing in orchestras and ballets, and teaching at a university. But, after several years, Cho thought it was time to move on. “I had success, but somehow I was still thinking about making new experiences as a musician,” says Cho. “If you stay in just one place, it’s hard to make yourself improve.”

Following her sister’s footsteps, Cho decided to move to Seattle, Washington, where her sister lived with her family. Cho had visited them several times in the past, and grew to love the city. “I thought, well I’ve lived in Europe and Korea, now it’s time to make my career in my homeland,” says Cho, explaining that she was born in New York City and lived in the US for a brief period of her childhood.

Cho auditioned for Tacoma Symphony Orchestra and got the job. Tacoma Symphony members first introduced Cho to the AFM and what it offered to musicians. “In Korea, they don’t have much protection for musicians, so I was really impressed and surprised that we have this protection from the union,” says Cho.

Expanding her career, Cho joined the faculty of the Seattle Conservatory of Music in the Chamber music program, the Music Center of the Northwest, and took the position of sectional cello coach at Newport High School in Seattle. Cho especially likes teaching at the high school because she has an opportunity to connect with students who play music as a hobby. “They have a very active high school orchestra and I’m so glad that many people are sharing music everywhere, even though it’s just a hobby or activity for them,” says Cho.

Cho also enjoys playing with community orchestras. “In Germany and Korea, there aren’t many community orchestras so I was really impressed that there are so many in the US,” says Cho. “I think music is not only for professionals; there are so many people who love to play who aren’t professionals, and it’s fun to play with them.”

Besides classical music, Cho has an intense interest in jazz. She recently played a solo recital where she performed a range of music from classical to tango. “I played a jazz piece by French composer Claude Bolling, with piano, bass, and percussion—that was the audience favorite,” says Cho. “I enjoy so many types of music; I’m always looking to improve myself.”

Since Cho has already lived in three different continents as a working musician, one might think she wants to try another country or part of the world. For now, Cho is content in Seattle, but she is quick to say she is open to new experiences. “I still have connections in Korea and Germany, so who knows?” she says.



Cellist Julie Cho of Local 76-493 (Seattle, WA) plays with the Tacoma Symphony Orchestra and with community orchestras in her leisure time.

a love for classical music in their daughters. Cho had difficulty playing the violin and soon grew frustrated since she found it difficult to improve on the instrument. “The violin didn’t match my character,” says Cho. Her sister encouraged her to try other instruments. At the time, the girls attended the same performing arts high school in Korea and Cho inevitably tried her hand at the cello and loved it. “I just felt that the cello’s sound is almost the same as the human voice; it makes me very calm,” Cho says. “It is a very dark and deep sound, like velvet.”

In high school, Cho decided to continue studying cello at the conservatory level. Renowned cellist Johannes Goritzki, conductor of the Mendelssohn Philharmonie Düsseldorf, taught a master class in Korea and encouraged Cho to study at the Robert Schumann Hochschule in Düsseldorf, Germany.



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