Twitter Thread by ZhangZhang

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Music can certainly transform destinies, it has certainly given myself and my family a chance of a better life. I have never forgotten my roots, nor the deep gratitude to all who participated in nurturing me over the years. Here is a true story ■■

early 1950's. My father was. 12 year old boy whose family just arrived to Beijing. They lost everything during the war, and came to the capital to start a new life. It was a big family KF many children, my father was 2nd of three brothers with a few little sisters behind■■

They were very poor in those days, the Beijing looked down on their country accents and bad clothes. The older kids used fo to the market and collected thrown away vegetable pieces to bring home. My grandparents were educated, but 1 salary was not enough to support everyone. ■■

There was a old neighbor who lived alone, he had a radio, and often listens to music on it. My father would sit under his window to listen, eventually the neighbor invited him in, seeing how he loved music. ■■

One day when my father was about 12, the neighbor said he heard of a new school that just opened, where they will teach music. The school is free, and offered full room and board.
My father liked the idea, especially because it would mean one mouth less for his parents to feed.■■

So my father decided he would go and have a look, without telling his parents. He arrived to the entrance examination bare foot, with a rope tied around his waist serving as a belt. The other students were all well to do, accompanied by parents, some even came in automobiles ■■

When the examiners saw this little boy with no shoes and no parents, they asked him kindly if he was coming for the entrance exam? He said in a thick country accent why yes, he wanted to give it a go, if the school rally does provide room and board? ■■

The other children were all very nicely dressed, girls with ribbons and smart dresses, boys with shiny leather shoes and clean hair. My father did not let that intimidate him, he sat there surrounded by these pretty children and waited for his turn■■

Some of the children already played quite well, the piano, the violin, the flute, or they could sing. When my father's turn came. He stood in front of the long table of examiners and waited. The director asked him: what do you play? ■■

He answered: I don't know how to play anything. They asked: well, can you sing? He said: no. The teachers looked at each other, finally one gentleman said: is there anything you can show us so we can see if you are musical? ■■

My father said: well, I can whistle.
The teachers said: very well, please let us hear you whistle, anything you like. He did. Some tunes he heard from the radio of his old neighbor. The teachers were al smiling. When he finished, they said: welcome to our school! ■■

Eventually this bare foot kid with poor clothes and dirty face, became one of the most celebrated violinists of China's during the 1970's. Leader of the national model orchestra, he even performed for Nixon in the Great Hall of The a people in TianAn Men. ■■

The school is the Central Conservatory if Music in Beijing. An institution which nurtured the best classical musicians of China since 1950. There were many artists from Europe who came to perform and even teach, as brother socialist countries helping each other. ■■

One professor came from to China from Hungary to educate top Chinese violinists. She lived in Beijing for 3 years, accepting only 2 pupils. My father was one of them. Mme. L gave daily lessons of many hours, her own master was the great Leopold von Auer. ■■

Before the cultural revolution arrived, the school was vibrant, receiving artists from Russia, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania. Choirs, orchestras, dances. The best artists from Eastern Europe came ■■

This was how post war China educated its first generation of classical musicians, by offering opportunities to all children, regardless of social class and back-round. With the right educational structure, one do not have to be born to a privileged family to become a musician. ■■

My father benefited from a open and generous policy of the early 1950's China eager to build a new society. Sadly today the very same school is no longer ran on the same principles. But it's history is testimony that when our music schools offers opportunities to all■■

When parents encourage children to venture into this universe, where teachers nurture with bienveillance and dedication, many children may discover a true potential within for a fulfilling life in Music. I believe music is good for all humans, of any age, in every region of the■

Music belongs too all humans, every people have their own songs and dance and stories. As a child I dreamt of becoming a DaoMaDan of the Peking opera, later I loved baroque, also contemporary music, many of my friends were composers, the creation of a new piece is fascinating ■■

Now days I have the chance to play with a marvelous jazz guitarist Leopoldo Giannola, from whom I try to learn the art of improvisation, bossa nova, swing, Piaf, Mancini... while also playing great works of@Prokofiev, Mahler, Ravel, and always Bach■■

If I am able to live a fulfilling life as a musician today, it was thanks to many people over many years. It was also thanks to the educators on that morning in 1955, who smiled as my father whistled the only tunes he knew, they gave him the chance of a life time■■