

Michigan born cellist to perform twice in May

By STEVE HART
Special to The Oakland Press

As a small child, Erik Ásgeirsson was given his grandfather's violin as a gift. He couldn't recall this early childhood moment, but relatives have since shared tales of him kneeling on the floor and sticking the instrument between his legs, playing it like a cello. At age 5, Ásgeirsson started actually playing the cello, later to be touted as a "child prodigy" among spectators.

Seventeen years later, Ásgeirsson is 23 and touring the world as a traveling cellist.

His love of the cello has spanned more than half a decade, turning a child prodigy into a master of his instrument.

Ásgeirsson studied with Irina Tikhonova and Paul Wingert in the early developmental stages of his life, later working with Thomas Landschoot and Erling Blöndahl Bengtsson at University of Michigan. Ásgeirsson also attended Eastman School of Music, graduation "with highest distinction" in 2008. He also studied under Maria Kliegel and Steven Doane among many others.

But like any true artists, there is always room for development.

"Mastering the cello is a lifelong process and I'm happy with my development so far," Ásgeirsson said. "The better you get, the higher standards there are. The best artists are never completely satisfied with their own development. There is always something to play more beautifully."

Ásgeirsson's musical ability has awarded him the chance to travel the globe, playing festivals all across Europe and in widespread venues across the U.S. Residing in Colone, Germany, Ásgeirsson said he is pleased to be surrounded by a thick concentration of musicians and humbled by the opportunity to meet a variety of artists while on the road.

"I'm fortunate to work with musicians all over the world," he said. "You get a lot of people throughout Europe and you see the best sides of different traditions and different schools. It helps me to further develop my own voice. Of course it's extremely nice to be in southern Italy for music concerts with all the tomato patches, wines and sunsets they have."

The West Bloomfield Township native enjoys performing alone, but understands when playing with others the musical range and options are expansive. He is greatly appreciative when it comes to sharing the stage with other musicians, mentioning chamber music as a big passion of his.

"Chamber music is very inspiring because when several good musicians come together and play it forces everyone else to play at a higher level. You react, listen and match sounds. There are so many more options in chamber music. The range has completely expanded and it's a wonderful feeling."

Who better to share the spotlight with than his very own mother, pianist Pauline Martin. Ásgeirsson's mother has shared the stage with his mother before and enjoys their passion for music.

"It's wonderful to play with my mother, she's a fantastic pianist. We've been playing for years and years. During rehearsals we don't have to talk that much. Sometimes there's a little bit of pressure and when I come home we have to work on a professional level."

Ásgeirsson will be playing the second of two shows with his mother this month on May 10 before going back to Europe. Wherever he is, Ásgeirsson is always aspiring to learn from his fellow musicians and expand his knowledge of the art form.

"Music has played such a large role in my development as a person. It's great to be able to share emotions with the audience and other musicians and to tell stories in a way that some people aren't able to," he said. "To be able to share an experience with listeners is fantastic. Every day and every concert is a different experience, but almost always inspiring. I hope the audience will leave our concert feeling changed, like they just came out of a really dramatic movie, whether happy or sad, but somehow moved."