

# 10-year-old violinist's advice: 'Just have fun'

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If Kye Richardson's violin could talk, he imagines it would be a strict disciplinarian, instructing him to practice often and play well. What about while in front of a crowd, as Richardson was as one of the winners of the Big Bend Community Orchestra Concerto Competition last February?

"I would imagine it saying, 'I hope you enjoy the music,'" quips Richardson.

The 10-year-old virtuoso followed up his win at BBCO's 2018 competition with another first prize award this past January at Tallahassee Youth Orchestra's Concerto Competition. Kye was looking forward to performing with TYO in concert this May, but the performance has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Instead, he will perform in TYO's first fall concert of the season, date still to be determined.

Kye started on the violin four years ago under the instruction of Dr. Valerie Arsenault.

While his classes at Gilchrist Elementary School have gone virtual, he still adheres to a practice schedule that includes extracurricular online lessons from his current teacher, professor Corrine Stillwell.

Before the pandemic, Richardson had just started learning viola in his elementary school string class, and says he enjoyed lending a hand to his fellow fifth graders.

"Some of them were learning violin, so if someone needed to tune their violin, I would help them," Kye said.

While in quarantine, his house is filled with music as he practices with his father and older sister. Kye says he's playing many songs that his sister used to play and has welcomed her help and advice.

Most recently, his dad assisted him with his vibrato, which Kye says is a technique that adds "characteristics to the music to make it very beautiful." Meanwhile his lessons with Stillwell continue to instill good habits.

"I love taking lessons with such an excellent teacher," Kye said. "She's taught me how to practice slowly so you can play it fast. If you play it fast, then you're not going to be able to play it clean, or you're not going to have good intonation."

For Kye, achieving flawless intonation, or playing his violin in tune, is a huge part of his playing experience.

"It takes a lot of work," he adds. "You can't just pick up the violin and play something perfectly in tune."

Kye enjoys the variance of sounds the violin can make, from lighter tones to rich, deep sounds.

His favorite pieces include Edouard



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Lalo's "Symphonie Espagnole," which prominently features the violin. He also enjoys a challenge like fast and staccato string arrangements of Italian baroque composer, Vivaldi.

Kye played Vivaldi's "Concerto in A Minor" for the BBCO concert last winter. He says the key to playing the fast piece is to stay relaxed in the arm and focus on the movements of the bow. Richardson works in his designated "music room" for two hours every day, practicing scales, etudes and bow exercises to achieve clarity and improve his muscle memory.

When he needs inspiration, he does a quick internet video search. Before a concert, Kye will listen to his piece being played by an online violinist and strives to emulate their concentration and focus onstage.

He says he often watches his favorites, Augustin Hadelich and Itzhak Perlman. Kye was selected for Perlman's music program, Suncoast Super Strings in the first violin section in Sarasota.

Kye was also named the first prize winner for the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition this past fall and was slated to perform at their now postponed event this April. Kye enjoys the feeling of being onstage with a large group because it allows him to hear how his violin fits into the larger sound.

"It was really exciting when I won because I knew I got to play with an orchestra," Kye said. "You get to show people how you play the piece, and it is nice being able to share the music with everybody."

After a performance, Kye analyzes



**Kye and his sister Blake. While in quarantine, his house is filled with music as he practices with his father and older sister.** LILY RICHARDSON

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10-year-old violinist

his playing so that he knows what to go home and practice next. But, he adds, sometimes he just enjoys going out afterwards to celebrate.

"A lot of times I like steak, not only after performance, but I like steak a lot," says Kye said.

Last summer, he attended Manhattan School of Music's summer program. Richardson says the experience solidified his dreams of becoming a violin soloist and moving to New York City one day. For now, with every bow stroke, he follows the same advice he gives his peers.

"When you play the violin, just have fun," Kye said. "Don't force yourself to play like someone else plays, just play how you play."

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*Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture ([www.tallahasseearts.org](http://www.tallahasseearts.org)).*