

A growing passion with each stroke

Dameer Gustafson's journey through playing the violin and the connections it brings him

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“ I felt music is a strong passion for me, I've actually been really thankful to reach out to other people, not just our friends from high school, but people from nursing home communities and just minority cultures from the People City Mission.”
-Dameer Gustafson (12)

A drop of sweat slid down his forehead gathering at the tip of his brow, and as he played the final note it shimmered, falling from its resting place in perfect synchronization with the stroke of his bow. As the droplet hit the ground, he heard a splash of applause that soon turned into a roaring torrent of hoots and hollers mixed with a standing ovation. He was finished. Dameer had seen what his future held and he was going to take it.

Unbeknownst to many, Dameer Gustafson has a deep passion for the musical arts that started in fourth grade when Gustafson's mother placed their ticket in the raffle in an attempt to get a violin for a year. That's when Gustafson's head popped up as a smile formed on his face and his eyes grew wide.

“To my surprise, I actually got it and that's where the music journey started,” Gustafson said.

Along his journey Gustafson has learned and played many pieces, carefully honing the skills of bowmanship and fingering. Yet, there is one piece he can always look back on “Plink Plank Plunk.”

“It was a plucking piece that I did back in seventh grade and I remember one of my best friends [Kenneth Ou] and I at the time just absolutely love playing that, and we had a blast, just making fun of it,” Gustafson said.

Gustafson has played with many talented musicians and made many friends on his journey. Through playing music with others, Gustafson's friendships were strengthened, and six years after the first “Plink Plank Plunk” playthrough, Gustafson and Ou have many laughs they are able to share.

“I've had the privilege to just

hang out with him, and to be able to share my passion and music with him,” Gustafson said.

However, his journey has not been completely free of obstacles.

“There are many obstacles with playing the violin, you have to get positioning right, posture, notes, especially when they're high in the register,” Gustafson said. “Bowing technique, and doing stuff with both your hands is quite a challenge for me, but I've overcome that throughout the years.”

To get where he is today, Gustafson has had a great teacher and many others who have shown him strong support. His number one supporter and private teacher, however, is his grandma. She has been with him since he started his journey playing violin: from giving lessons, going to concerts, and even playing alongside him, she has always been his biggest supporter and instructor.

“She's been teaching me private lessons, and she was also the one who helped me get into multiple honors orchestras throughout high school. She has helped me in private lessons weekly, and she's really continued to help me [with] getting into college and just thinking about the actual lifestyle [that] a musician goes through day by day,” Gustafson said.

As he looks towards the future, Gustafson is diving head first into music education. He is going to continue to pursue his passion at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln by entering the Glenn Korff School of Music. This will allow him many opportunities and options post college in the field of music.

“I plan on doing that as my career, teaching either



Photo courtesy Dameer Gustafson

elementary, middle, or high school students to develop their passion for music too,” Gustafson said.

Gustafson will never stop playing music, but in his future he sees himself on the other side of the symphony in a role that few get to obtain, a professional conductor. As a conductor, Gustafson would allow the young and old to feel a sense of bliss as the symphony plays gracefully with the directions from his movements.

“I've met a lot of conductors over the past four years who've actually had the luxury of traveling across the United States and Europe and even Japan,” Gustafson

said. “It just sounds like a really cool journey just to be part of music and just to share that with other people around the world.”

As he has grown further in his passion for music over the years, to the point where he wants to follow it as his career, Gustafson has learned there is more than just the hum of a string and a stroke of a bow. To him it's a way to reach out to others, and a way for him to connect with God.

“It's a way for me to connect with God more and have a [close,] personal relationship. It has helped me with my spiritual walking, in a weird quirky way, but I feel that it's really drawn out to me and that's why I've continued to do it,” Gustafson said.

Gustafson has played on many stages and has numerous stories from countless hours of practice, but his most memorable one is junior year All-state Orchestra. In a time when fellowship was difficult, the All-State Orchestra provided him an opportunity and a place to be with other musicians and play in front of the shining lights with a live crowd. It was a momentous event for Gustafson where his only option was to do well.

“Being able to reach out to friends from other high schools, and being able to play on the Lied Center Stage was the highlight

of the century,” Gustafson said. “[It was] very nerve wracking, especially when you have a lot of people show up and you know it's the Lied stage, you have to do something good.”

Late night stars and early morning sunrises, raw fingers and sore arms, the nutty woody smell of an instrument, are what it takes to progress with music and make it to the big stages, while having strong support is what keeps Gustafson's fire burning and his passion flowing.

“It takes a lot of dedication and a lot of hard work, and I would totally recommend a private teacher. If you have a grandma that can help you with music, go for it because, honestly, my grandma has been my number one supporter in that. So, definitely find something you're good at, [it] doesn't even have to be classical music. Find motivation, develop the passion, and ride with it,” Gustafson said.

With each stroke of the bow his passion grows deeper, and with the support of his grandma, Gustafson continues to pursue his passion of music, he'll be going to the Glenn Korff School of Music at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and one day he wants to orchestrate music around the world bringing the sweet hums and soft vibrations of a symphony to all who can hear it.

