

- News
- Nation
- World
- Election 2008
- Business
- Health & Science
- People & Places
- Books
- Music
- Arts & Entertainment
- Diversions
- Opinion
- Blogs
- News/Talk
- Morning Edition
- All Things Considered
- Day to Day
- Fresh Air
- News & Notes
- Talk of the Nation
- Tell Me More
- Wait Wait...Don't Tell Me
- Weekend Edition
- Saturday
- Weekend Edition
- Sunday
- More Programs A-Z
- Radio
- Podcasts
- News Feeds
- Tools and API
- Desktop
- Mobile
- Newsletters

- Music
- All Songs Considered
- From the Top
- JazzSet
- Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz
- Mountain Stage
- World Cafe
- World of Opera

FROM THE TOP

Share this page using one of the following services:

- Del.icio.us
- Digg
- Facebook
- Mixx
- Reddit
- Stumble Upon
- Yahoo! Buzz

What is this?

From The Top Interviews Hilary Hahn

Listen Now

[56 min 42 sec] add to playlist



From the Top, *September 10, 2008* - Violinist Hilary Hahn's own history might well make her the perfect adult guest artist for this show, and many

Violinist Hilary Hahn is an inspiration for many teenage classical musicians.

Christopher Huang

From the Top musicians consider her a hero. She was only ten when she was noticed as a gifted violinist and entered Philadelphia's Curtis Institute, and even though Hahn is an internationally renowned performer and recording artist, she is still young enough to remember what it was like to be a teenage classical musician.

Here, Hahn answers some questions about her life and the state of classical music today, and offers advice to young performers:

People often talk about classical music losing relevance amidst today's chaotic and technology driven world. What are your thoughts about the state of classical music today and where it's going?

I think that's all a bunch of hooey. What I see is people finding a new freedom in their exploration of all genres of music. Through the Internet and technology, anyone can now seek out any artist, composer or undefined niche of music they find interesting. All on their own, without even having to stand up or go anywhere.

We have to remember, despite – or perhaps thanks to – all of the hoopla about classical music's so-called demise, that this genre has a stronger grassroots following than many that are considered more mainstream. Who's building and filling 1200-seat-plus concert halls? Who successfully sells season subscriptions to concert series? Who boasts local organizations of performers, and concert presenters in nearly every town? Who brings groups of young musicians together to rehearse and socialize every week? Who's developed community-based, artist-driven outreach programs? Think about it: Classical music! Can jazz, bluegrass, indie rock, folk music, electronica, or hip-hop claim the same? We're lucky!

Yet, this isn't a competition; we should all be exploring as many genres as appeal to us, and we should support the growth of artists and artistic organizations – both within music and outside of it.

I can't tell you how many times I've heard from a non-classical artist, "You have it so good! Comfortable seats for your audiences, your own dressing rooms backstage, nice food, clean venues, great acoustics and quiet, attentive listeners – man, I wish I had that *half* the time." Maybe it's time to be more positive about all that classical music has accomplished, as well as its proven longevity.

As a young touring artist, what advice do you have for *From the Top* performers as they grow in their own careers?

What I've always been told by people who would know is, "Don't do anything before you're ready." This doesn't mean to avoid risks or not push yourself; it means to always be as prepared as possible for the next step. I agree with that advice.

As a young performer, what you need to be doing is building your technique and musicality, not promoting your abilities – unless you're ready to take on all that will result from such an approach. Once you start the ball rolling, it's very hard to stop it.

The two points that I always say are most important to a musician of any age are consistency and preparation. That doesn't sound like fun, I know. But doing a consistent amount of work every day and being prepared for everything that comes along will let you experience the most enjoyable elements of music-making. So, no matter how small the performance, always practice in advance as thoroughly as you can, and take the time to warm up and concentrate during the hours before you go onstage. If you've done all that and you're still unhappy with your performance, then there's nothing to be ashamed of; you did the best you knew how, and that's an accomplishment in and of itself. Be proud of yourself. With continued work, you'll figure out how to do better next time.

When did you know that you wanted to pursue a career playing the violin?

Once I'd met some musicians and heard some great recordings, I knew I wanted to see what I could do with the instrument. I never made up my mind to be a musician, though; I've always had a lot of interests and just figured I'd give music my best shot first. I put a lot of work and time into it. I wound up sticking with violin because it was the strongest current in my life. I've continued to pursue other interests in my downtime, but I'm glad I'm a musician. It's the perfect career for me.

If you didn't play the violin, where would you be right now?

Who knows what I would have done with the time I spent practicing if music hadn't been on my radar? I'm sure I would've been equally busy; I have a way of filling any free time with things I'm curious to pursue.

Early career daydreams were: fireman (at 3), astronaut (at 5 or 6), paleontologist (at 7), archaeologist, anthropologist and veterinarian. Now, I'm pretty sure I would have wound up as a visual artist or teacher. Or, maybe a lawyer. Or a social scientist. I'd definitely have spent a few years as a whitewater rafting guide – not a paddle guide but an expedition guide, on a raft with oars. I did a little training for that last summer and loved it.

Share this page using one of the following services:

[Del.icio.us](#)

[Digg](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Mixx](#)

[Reddit](#)

[Stumble Upon](#)

[Yahoo! Buzz](#)

[What is this?](#)