

Get to know your *Symphony*

Fall 2010

Marco Gensch: *Nothing better than music*

When he was a toddler, Marco Gensch wanted to reach that violin on a wall of the family room, just to touch something he wasn't supposed to.

Good luck getting it out of his hands now.

The 20-year-old aspiring professional musician practices for hours per day, and loves nearly every second.

For nearly two years, Gensch has played with the semi-professional Kettle Moraine Symphony, only recently being bounced as its youngest member. He was thrilled to join an orchestra so committed.

"Let's just say compared to the younger groups we don't mess around," he said. "Really, their objective is to get together to play wonderful music. They're just really great musicians."

That's pretty much been Gensch's objective since he started playing since he was 5. In more than 10 years of private lessons, he has missed only one – because he had a friend over and got distracted.

Gensch's work has paid off in the forms of countless awards and honors, from concerto contests to high school solo ensemble (he memorizes his pieces).

Much of his success could be attributed to Gensch's attitude toward practice. Like a long distance runner who can't get enough, Gensch can't play enough.

"I literally like it. I feel really bad when I don't have time to practice," he said.



One time, he practiced nine hours – "with breaks" - at Slinger High School. Now in college, he's a regular at the University of Wisconsin-Washington County's practice rooms, up to five hours per day. He squeezes in hours of work before class starts at 10 a.m. and again late at night, sometimes in stairwells after rooms are locked.

"I meet a lot of janitors," he said. "I become friends with some."

For most of his senior year in high school, Gensch didn't want to go to sleep. He would stay up and practice or compose

music to the shock of his parents come morning.

When others are playing video games, which Gensch calls a waste of time, he prefers toying with a metronome.

“It’s fun to pump up the speeds,” he said.

Gensch’s musical passion has spread to other instruments, but violin remains his passion. In high school under Slinger’s legendary band director, Dave Hanke, he played drums and bass guitar, claiming he knew how to play the latter so he could join jazz band.

He had never played bass guitar, but he quickly learned and became “hard core,” getting into funk, samba, Latin and rock. He partly taught himself from watching the Red Hot Chili Peppers’ bass player, “Flea.”

Not surprisingly, Gensch comes from a bit of a musical family.

Gensch’s mother used to play flute, still plays guitar and is learning cello. His dad played piano since he was 12, a skill Marco hasn’t quite picked up.

“I just make it seem like I can play. I know where everything is,” he said.

Voice is not an option.

“I could not sing for the life of me. Even in the car, it’s a wonderful skill to have,” he said.

Of all the instruments he likes, Gensch sticks to strings. He said horns would give him headaches.

“I personally say I’m a bower, not a blower,” he said.

Gensch bows on an 1859 full-sized violin, given to him by his grandfather, “the kindest man” he ever knew.

When he practices at his Town of West Bend home, both of the family dogs howl to match pitch and one tries to attack the bow. The family feline has a different reaction.

“The cat tends to lie in my case, which is kind of a compliment,” Gensch said.

Gensch dabbles in writing music, mostly

just single-line melodies. Peter Gibeau’s music theory class at UW-WC has provided perspective.

“It’s just fun because this is a side of music I didn’t really know. When you understand it, what you’re playing – what’s going on – it just makes it so much more enjoyable,” he said.

It’s not that Gensch hasn’t tried anything else. But soccer, skiing, tennis and running cross country just didn’t give him what music did. He tried sailing when he was young - he lives on a lake - but lost a race to an impressive female sailor who started late.

When Gensch sits in class, he said he gets an “overpowering feeling that there’s nothing better in the world to me” than music.

Talented, inspired and dedicated as he is, Gensch still gets nervous when he performs alone, something he says he’d like to “correct.”

Gensch already shared some of his talent through his recording own holiday music CD that he sold last December at shops in Cedarburg, Port Washington and the Town of West Bend. At \$15 a piece, he made \$527. Customers often told him his work was better than the stuff they’d normally buy.

Gensch said Johann Sebastian Bach is his favorite composer because he could creatively make three notes exciting. Gensch’s favorite type of music is classical, but he said he listens to everything: rap, country, rock, techno, bluegrass and “some arrangements” of Lady Gaga.

Gensch’s all-time favorite violinist is Itzhak Perlman. He saw him live once and called it “watching a human gift.”

Gensch someday hopes to play with a symphony in Carnegie Hall and present his own gift.

“The ability to sit down and practice is definitely there,” he said.