

Pint-sized Emelene already knows her way around the violin — and local pubs



Peter Lee/Record staff

Peter Lee/Record staff Emelene Rosen, 8, performs on the violin with the group Tethera at the Cambridge Farmers Market. In the background is Brad McEwen. Other members of the group (not shown) are Paul Morris, Phil Cowles and Gwen Potter.

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By Kevin Swayze, Record staff

CAMBRIDGE — At eight years old, Emelene Rosen is already hanging out in pubs and making toasts with her friends gathered 'round the table.

It's not just the fact she's a mean violinist, playing folk music by ear. She's also a bright-eyed little girl who would put many an adult to shame with her conversational skills. And she never forgets to bring her own pub mug when musicians invite her over for a meal and drinks.

"I only drink milk or maybe a juice. I don't like beer," she says, grinning.

Mom and dad are always nearby, but they say Emelene has no fears interacting with her extended musical family, asking questions, learning and sharing songs — sometimes to last call.

“She’s got a lovely personality and she’s very fun to be with and she’s certainly a very gifted musician,” says Gwen Potter of Waterloo, a violinist who busks with Emelene at the Cambridge Farmer’s Market on Saturday mornings.

“The people at the market are always thrilled to see her play so well and I think the donations go up whenever she’s there.”

Not that Emelene is perfect, says mentor Gwen. She sometimes loses concentration and doesn’t stretch her fingers enough — troubles that continued instruction and maturity will surely remedy.

After nearly three years of lessons, Emelene is an enthusiastic musician who’s only now learning how to read sheet music.

Emelene showed a musical interest early in life. Dad Mike Rosen remembers how a two-year-old Emelene would make it clear what music she wanted to listen to while travelling in the car. When scanning radio stations, she would say “stop, stop, stop” when she heard a classical song.

Mom Alexa Liebrechts placed Emelene in Kindermusic classes as toddler, where she thrived. Alexa didn’t think about formal lessons until the day Emelene visited a Sukuki music school open house in Guelph almost three years ago. Emelene picked up a violin and bow and held it correctly in her little fingers — as if she’d been playing for years.

Today, Emelene plays classical, English Folk and Jewish Klezmer songs for dance and celebrations. And she’s starting to compose some of her own works, too.

Emelene starts Grade 4 at Highland Public School in September. Last year, she played Bach for her class. She has her eyes on a spot in the Cambridge Community orchestra.

Mike and Alexa are both teachers in Cambridge public schools. They're convinced Emelene will have a music-filled life, but don't want to push her down any path. Maybe Emelene will be a professional musician when she grows up, or a music teacher.

"Whatever she does, I want to see her flourish." Mike says.

Emelene interjects: "I'm going to do all those things, but I want to be paleontologist, too."

Why not? A little folk music would welcome around the fire after a day of digging for dinosaur bones in the wilds of southern Alberta.

Emelene already knows almost every tune in the Mill Race English Session Tunebook, said Brad McEwin, founder Cambridge's Mill Race Folk Festival.

"For her age, she's impressive now and she'll be quite an amazing musician as an adult," he says.

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