

DOVID FRIEDLANDER Going the Distance

With a mom who was a dancer in the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, classical music was everywhere when Dovid Friedlander was growing up. “My mom always played classical music — in the house, in the car, everywhere we went,” says the North Carolina Symphony Associate Concertmaster, who began violin lessons at age three.

But just as influential in his early musical life were the rabbis Dovid heard singing at synagogue every week. “You listen to these rabbis sing from their hearts and you feel the connection — an even deeper connection than there is with playing notes,” he explains, adding that he always “aspires to be more vocal” in his violin playing, with phrasing and sound quality. (He’s quick to clarify that you’ll never actually hear him sing!)

Our earliest influences often remain with us for a lifetime — and that is the case, quite literally, for Dovid; he studied with NCS Concertmaster Brian Reagin for several years in Pittsburgh, beginning at age eight. “You never forget your first good teacher,” says Dovid, who joined NCS in 2005 and recognized his former teacher immediately. More than a decade later, the two still share a stand at the Symphony.

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Having a teacher you truly connect with is essential in any serious musician’s training. So when Dovid’s teacher at the Eastman School of Music, William Preucil, took up a position with the Cleveland Institute of Music, Dovid picked up and went to Cleveland, too. After finishing his undergraduate degree and a year of graduate studies, he won positions with the San Antonio Symphony, Columbus Symphony Orchestra, and finally the North Carolina Symphony.

Dovid loves the spirit of teamwork that comes with orchestral playing. “When everything is really gelling well, the orchestra is like one organism,” he muses. “It’s very fun and comforting when everyone in the orchestra is playing together, phrasing together, and enjoying themselves. We’re all helping each other, listening, and adjusting.”

Dovid also keeps up with chamber music as a curator of the Classical Hang series, which presents concerts in a relaxed atmosphere in Raleigh. As a soloist, he has performed with numerous orchestras — but



The entire Friedlander family is musical: Dovid is NCS Associate Concertmaster; his wife, Tracy, is a horn player; and their daughter, Violet, is learning violin and piano.

there is always something especially gratifying about soloing with your own symphony. “There’s more of a comfort, playing with an orchestra and a conductor you already know,” he says. “When you’re playing with people you’ve known for what seems like your entire life, you just understand what’s going on.”

Since NCS travels all over the state, Dovid notes that the biggest challenge is in adjusting to multiple performance venues. He remembers being soloist in Mozart’s Violin Concerto No. 4 in his first year with the Symphony and performing it in about five different locations, all with unique acoustics. Just before Valentine’s Day, he’ll be featured in NCS concerts in both Raleigh and Chapel Hill, performing the violin solo from Act III of *Swan Lake*. “You couldn’t pick a better composer for romanticism than Tchaikovsky,” Dovid asserts. “This piece has a beautiful, lyrical melody, but it’s also very fun and technical and exciting.”

Dovid is always up for a challenge, both on and off stage. Up until a few years ago, he regularly participated in triathlons — about 40 of them altogether — and only stopped so that he could spend more time with his family. Dovid met his wife, Tracy, when she was a substitute horn player at an NCS Summerfest concert in 2005; their eight-year-old daughter, Violet, plays both violin and piano (and is beginning to lean toward the violin!).

Even if his days of training for races involving more than 30 miles of biking, running, and swimming are passed, Dovid still very much keeps up with his first love, biking, which he has been passionate about since he was a kid. “My brother and I used to come home from school every day, throw our bookbags down, and go biking in the woods,” he remembers. He adds, nonchalantly, that these days he might go out and bike 40 miles in the woods with a group of friends. Dovid is adamant about health and fitness, which he says has been helpful in keeping up with the physical demands of orchestral playing, as well. “You only have this one body — you might as well take care of it,” he says.

Plus, like so many musicians, Dovid has a deep desire to continuously improve. “I like analyzing things and trying to get better at things,” he says. “What I like about these sports — biking, running, swimming — is the similarity to playing the violin. It’s that same idea of trying to get better at something, at an individual level. It’s just you against yourself.” 

Dovid Friedlander is soloist in Valentine’s Romantic Classics, February 7-9 in Raleigh and Chapel Hill. For tickets and details, visit ncsymphony.org or call 919.733.2750.

