

Soaring Above

Virtuosity demands repetition and lifelong learning, says violinist.

Adam Stone

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Violinist Mark Peskanov studied among some of the former Soviet Union's most accomplished music teachers before coming to the United States from Odessa in 1973. That classroom knowledge formed the foundation of his art, but it only got him part of the way there.

"The best study I have found for myself is to perform," he said.

Mr. Peskanov, a 50-year-old virtuoso, will continue his lifelong learning on the stage in a performance with the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra on Tuesday, Oct. 16, at 7:30 p.m. at Beth Tfiloh Synagogue, 3300 Old Court

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Road in Pikesville.

As genius fiddlers go, Mr. Peskanov, who lives in New York, is a pretty busy man. He has played festivals in Aspen, Boulder, Grant Park, the Hollywood Bowl, Meadowbrook, Tanglewood and Wolf Trap. He serves as artistic adviser and principal guest artist with the Woodstock Mozart Festival.

He also is president and director of New York Bargemusic, a unique year-round series of performances held on a barge moored just under the Brooklyn Bridge.

Plus, did we mention that the man is considered a genius? "As a violinist, he is one of the major artists of his day, a consummate virtuoso," said Markand Thakar, music director of the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra.

"He also has an extraordinarily ebullient personality offstage, and that is communicated through his instrument. He is remarkably expressive."

As a little boy, Mr. Peskanov said he sang all the time. By the age of 7, he was auditioning for music schools. He started playing with Isaac Stern shortly

him with praise: "Mr. Peskanov has it all — technique, temperament and taste. Word of mouth should ensure that he never again plays to an empty seat in New York."

To win that kind of praise, it takes more than simply hitting all the notes. For one thing, Mr. Peskanov said, that

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after hitting American shores.

Mr. Peskanov received the first Frederick R. Mann Award following his performance with the Philadelphia Orchestra. He won the Avery Fisher Career Grant and Carnegie Hall's first Isaac Stern Award.

The New York Times fairly slathered

caliber of playing demands a kind of practice that rises to the level of near-endless repetitions. "You are always in the process of preparation," he said.

Beyond that, one enters into the realm of the ephemeral. How is it that

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Violin virtuoso Mark Peskanov: "You are always in the process of preparation."

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two players can perform the same piece of music flawlessly, yet one moves audiences to tears while the other has us checking our Blackberries?

"It's the awareness. It's how much you see and hear and feel in the music," Mr. Peskanov said.

When a performer shares the stage with other players, he may discover *something* in the music that was never there before. Mr. Peskanov has performed alongside such classical music luminaries as Yo-Yo Ma, Mstislav Rostropovich, Jean-Pierre Rampal and Yefim Bronfman. Each such teaming, Mr. Peskanov said, becomes a new experience.

"You are making music," he said, "you are there and you have this communication going."

Performing with others also helps round out the violinist's musical persona. At the same time, Mr. Peskanov's immersion into other aspects of the music business has given him a fuller appreciation for the process of getting great music onto the stage.

"At first, I looked to have engagements, to perform," he said. "Then, maybe 12 years ago, people started asking me to put together concerts, to present concerts, and that was a very different experience because I had always been on the other side, as

a performer. So eventually, it made a perfect circle. One becomes part of the other. It's a continuing process. It never stops."

In much the same way, Mr. Peskanov said his learning process never stops. Take, for instance, Beethoven's Violin Concerto, which Mr. Peskanov will perform at Beth Tfiloh, along with the theme from the Academy Award-winning film "Schindler's List."

The Beethoven piece "is a great mysterious piece, still a great mystery to me," he said. "It's impossible even to imagine that any one individual person could possibly come up with anything like that." □