

# Hitting the High Notes

When Luke Hsu's mother handed him a violin at the age of 4, he didn't fiddle around like a typical preschooler, but went on to astonish the world with his passion for music

*Written by Tassie Hewitt | Photography courtesy of Luke Hsu*

Luke Hsu graduated from Cinco Ranch High school in 2008 and has played in concert halls all over the world



Violinist Luke Hsu lives in London and performs at famous concert halls throughout the world, but this 2008 graduate of Cinco Ranch High School credits his hometown with giving him the space he needed to reach his dreams.

## More Than Music

As a child, Hsu watched his mother, Yueming Song, give violin lessons in their home. "She was the first one who really got me interested in the violin," says Hsu, who fell in love with classical music at a young age. "When I was 7 or 8, I was very enamored with Bach's *6 Sonata and Partitas*. I remember hearing my mom practice it. Even at that time, there was something that captivated me."

When he was 10, Hsu began taking lessons more seriously. "I think the main reason I became a musician was because of my first teacher, Fridell Lack. She taught some of the great Houston talents," says Hsu, whose passion to play professionally intensified under her instruction. "She's 95 now. She said I would be the last student she would take, that she saw a lot of things that were special in me, and wanted to take me under her wing."

From that point on, Hsu made music his priority. "Ever since my encounter with Bach when I was young, and with Fridell Lack, it became quite clear," he says. "When you go to someone like her, you

feel like your sole purpose in life is music.” Hsu continued to play and later participated in the orchestra at both Beck Junior High and Cinco Ranch High School.

## Reaching a Crescendo

The magic of the music was just beginning. Hsu continued his studies at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University and the New England Conservatory. He is currently at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

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“I’ve always had this persistent curiosity for the music that I play, and the love that I have for it,” says Hsu. “What appeals to me most about music is the opportunity to react to something that is captured by sounds. There’s always a transcendent transformation that happens. There’s this personal journey, this story.” His international solo and chamber music career is now renowned throughout North America, Europe, and Asia.

Hsu’s musical journey has included playing at some of the most celebrated concert halls in the world, including Carnegie Hall in New York, Jordan Hall in Boston, and Wigmore Hall in London. “My favorite concert experience is whenever I put 100% of myself in it musically and physically,” says Hsu. “I can’t pick a favorite hall. If I give it all to the music, I’ve accomplished it.”

He has won numerous competitions, but considers one of his greatest achievements to be winning the Wieniawski Violin Competition in 2016 in Poznań, Poland. “It’s one of the biggest competitions in the world that gave some legendary names their careers,” says Hsu. “It’s an incredible honor to even participate, but my greatest achievement is to have this attitude of being able to grow and always seek more in whatever music I play.”

## Music Is Life

With his hectic schedule, Hsu’s greatest challenge is to achieve a balance between his passion for perfection with his need to live his life. “If I have a performance, I can’t falter,” says Hsu. “There’s always this pressure. I sometimes feel like a slave to my instrument.”

That instrument is a J.B. Guadagnini violin, which Hsu nicknamed “Ex Parma.” It was made in 1765 and worth \$1.1 million. “The bigger value of it is the sound it can create,” says Hsu. “The tone is golden. It helps me explore with more colors and more sounds. I feel very lucky to be playing this instrument.”

Hsu plans to stay in London and continue sharing his passion with audiences worldwide. “My love for music is a way of life,” says Hsu, who strives to find the emotion, expression, and feeling of each piece, and reveal that to his audience. “I’ve always felt in service to the music. There’s so much I’ve yet to discover. There’s so much to learn.” KM

*TASSIE HEWITT is a freelance writer who plays the keyboard (on her computer), and believes music is the universal language of the soul.*

## Virtuoso Venues

Luke Hsu has performed at...

CARNEGIE HALL - NEW YORK

KENNEDY CENTER - WASHINGTON, D.C.

JORDAN HALL - BOSTON

JONES HALL - HOUSTON

WIGMORE HALL - LONDON

TEATRO CARLO FELICE - GENOA