# Music in His

*Developing his talents has become a personal responsibility.*

**By Charlotte Wood Wilson**

When you were three or four years old, perhaps you wanted to be a doctor, an astronaut, or a firefighter, and those aspirations probably changed from year to year. Maybe one year you even wanted to be a baseball player.

Will Hagen, a 17-year-old from Salt Lake City, Utah, *was* a baseball player through his childhood and most of high school, but he's known for almost his entire life what he really wants to be—a violinist. And being a violinist isn't just something Will wants to do, it's something he feels he's meant to do.

## Balancing Act

Will started playing the violin when he was almost four years old, and since then the instrument has been a major part of Will's life, sometimes making it hard for him to balance his other responsibilities. Though he had been playing on his high school's varsity baseball team for several years, Will decided to give up the sport his last year of high school to concentrate on his music. His music career has become more serious, and he spends a lot of time traveling for lessons and concerts, which can make it challenging to keep up in the classroom.

After playing the violin for 13 years, however, Will has a better idea of how to manage his time and priorities. "I do what's important first. I try not to get too bogged down in one thing."
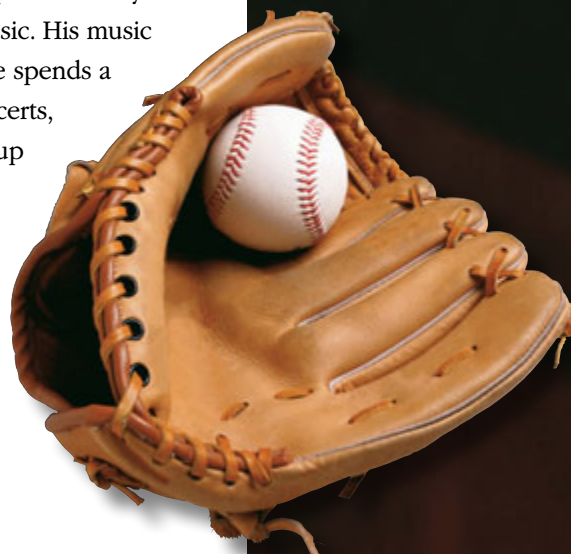
# HEART

With his regular teen-age life and his music life often pulling him in different directions, he finds that his membership in the Church is what keeps him on track. "Being a member of the Church is one thing that keeps me steady. The Church is a wonderful constant in my life."

## Discipline in Action

Playing the violin as seriously as Will does takes a tremendous amount of discipline, which he says is the hardest part about playing the violin. "It's hard

### USING YOUR TALENTS

Don't know what your talents are or don't know what to do with them? Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Seventy gives you three tips:

- "Seek earnestly to discover the talents the Lord has given you."
- "Use your talents to build up the kingdom of God."
- "Acknowledge God's hand in your success."

(See "Parables of Jesus: The Parable of the Talents," *Ensign*, Aug. 2003, 34.)

## BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Will spends four hours practicing each day. When learning a new piece, he says, "You have to play it really, really slow first. Make sure you can play it in tune. Setting the foundation for it is important." Will has to start slow before he can work on detail and technique. In many ways, the way Will practices mirrors the ways in which we grow in the gospel. We must start with the most basic components, and once we have those under control, then we can move on to more complex and refining practicing. We must learn "line upon line, precept upon precept" (2 Nephi 28:30).



*Will Hagen playing with the Utah Symphony Orchestra in his early teens. He now travels throughout the country playing with other symphonies.*

to practice slowly," he explains. "It's hard to practice every day." It also takes discipline to balance his social and school life and his music life "because they're so completely different."

### Speaking a Different Language

Will was first attracted to the violin after hearing people play the instrument in a Church meeting. "I've always felt that I'm meant to play, because I've always had a very personal connection to the music." He says that the techniques associated with string playing distinguish the violin from other instruments, like the piano. "With the piano, you don't have vibrato, you don't have slides, and those slides and vibrato can make it sound more human. The violin is a great instrument. It's really expressive, and you can really sound like you are saying something."

He sees music as more than just notes on a page. While few classical composers have been LDS, Will believes "that many were inspired by God in some way, and

there's a good connection there." He continues, "I treat the music like it really is more than a song."

With such clear talent for the instrument, Will could easily let his ability get to his head, but he keeps his motivation on track: "I just love the music. That's what I'm in it for." He recognizes the power music has to influence people and tries to stay in tune with the Spirit when he performs. "Music is very, very powerful. I pray every single time before I go on stage. It's really strengthened my testimony of prayer, because prayer really does work. Many times I've had prayers directly answered, and it's strengthened my testimony."

### Magnify Your Talents

Will has a bright future ahead of him as he continues to develop his talent on the violin. He's learned that through dedicated effort and continual prayer, the Lord will help him magnify his abilities. We, like Will, need to follow Paul's counsel and "neglect not the gift that is in [us]" (1 Timothy 4:14). *NE*