



# Hitting Key

# Notes

## Violinist adds sizzle to corporate events

By Rachel Naud

When Grenville Pinto was seven years old, his mother walked him across the street from his Catholic school into the doors of the public school to check out its music program.

Years later, those little steps would prove to be a career-shaping move.

Even at seven years old, Pinto's mom knew he was living his life to a different tune than the rest of the boys his age.

More interested in music than in anything else, Pinto was already showing promise in the piano but his mother thought he should try something else.

"My mom thought I used to bang a lot on the piano," laughs Pinto. "She thought I was a little rough so she thought 'save my instrument. Get him off the piano and on to a violin.'"

Musical talent was something of an inherited trait for Pinto. Born in Hamilton, Ont., Pinto came from a musical family. His mother played and taught piano, his father sang and his two sisters were fluent in piano (in fact the two are professional pianists and accompany Grenville regularly).

So from the public school came the private lessons and by 12 years of age, it was no real surprise that Pinto was

playing violin at weddings and church functions.

Not wanting to limit his musical education and talent, Grenville went on to classically train under the Royal Conservatory of Music and was a member of the Hamilton Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. While continuing his musical studies, he also earned an Honours Bachelor of Commerce Degree from McMaster University.

Today, Grenville resides in Toronto and performs professionally across North America.

Never one to turn down a gig (Celine Dion had the same mantra, says Pinto), Pinto has entertained everywhere from swanky receptions and charity functions to millionaire's private homes and senior facilities. But lately he's also been hitting a key note with another class - corporate events.

"At corporate events you have mix of people coming together under one roof," says Pinto. "You need glue to keep them

together. That's where music come in. It's the common element that people's senses are drawn towards. I come in and have mass appeal."

Part of Pinto's appeal is that he's not a stereotypical violinist. Sure, he plays the classics by the likes of Mozart and Bach, but he also rocks out to AC/DC and Bon Jovi. In fact, any meeting planner would be dared to try and find a song that Pinto doesn't know how to play. His extensive song list is posted on his website, [gpinto.com](http://gpinto.com).

"It can be challenging keeping up-to-date on recent music," says Pinto. "But I credit weddings for that. It forced me to learn genres from different age groups and cultures. I have to cater to everyone. I love music so much. It has opened my mind to a lot to different cultures, which are all part of someone's organization. Employers have to respect people's cultures and I have to do the same thing with my music."

Pinto admits that performing at





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corporate events was somewhat of a career fluke. People would hear him playing at weddings and other celebrations and would tell their bosses who were looking for a way to spice up their next big event.

And, although it wasn't a planned career move, some of the Pinto's most memorable performances have been at corporate meetings and events.

"Once, I played for this insurance company," remembers Pinto. "My set was just supposed to be for 15 to 20 minutes. I ended up playing for over an hour. People started throwing out songs and telling me what to play. This was something that was supposed to be a dry meeting. I was to play couple of songs, introduce the speeches and then let the people get out of there. But they didn't want me to leave and didn't want to leave themselves."

Music is a uniting force, which is why it can not only be entertaining but beneficial to a corporate meeting or event. Think about it. A room full of meeting delegates that is void of any music is a stale atmosphere. Now toss in a violinist to play classical tunes softly in the background and you have a warm, welcoming experience. Now toss in a violinist who's cranking out tunes by Rihanna and Madonna and you've got yourself a party.

"There are very few people who aren't moved by my music," says Pinto. "I try and select music that will inspire. So for instance, if there's a table made up of a young group of web designers, I'll play a song they are used to hearing from the Black Eyed Peas or Sean Kingston or Journey. Just something they hear on the radio. It moves them, it excites them and there's that kind of connection." ■