

LIFE

Editor: Bruce MacKenzie > Telephone: 250-380-5346 > E-mail: features@tc.canwest.com ■ ARTS, C5

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WEB EXTRA: Party girl

Event planner Debi Lilly reveals how to entertain like Oprah and Wolfgang

PROFILE

Math, music and medicine

Former NASA mathematician Mark Lupin balances family life, concert tours and dermatology practice

GRANIA LITWIN
Times Colonist

Mark Lupin has five violins, five degrees, 10 lasers, three children, one wife and a crazy-busy schedule.

But luckily the Victoria dermatologist — who has worked as a mathematician for NASA's space program, has a second specialty in neurology and is a concert violinist — also has energy to burn when it comes to fuelling his passions for math, music and medicine.

The mania for music started first, when his parents placed a toy violin in his hands at age five.

"I fell in love with it and a month later they gave me a real violin — 1/8th size," recalled Lupin, who was born in Oxford, England, and moved with his family to Nova Scotia at four.

At first he kept dropping the violin, so his parents tied it to a string around his neck until his arms got stronger. Now the only catch is carving out enough time to play and perform.

On a typical day the dermatologist, who founded Cosmedica Laser Centre here in 1998, is in the gym by 6 and the office by 8 a.m. He aims to be home with his family by 5:30 p.m. and when the little ones go to bed at 7:30 he plays his violin till 9:30.

The dedication pays off.

Not only does he have a successful practice, but the 48-year-old specialist also just returned from a concert tour of London and Monaco, following a rare gig in Cleveland with a group of 80 musicians from around the world — all doctors. But the story of this physician musician started long before that.

Lupin debuted on television at seven, played with Edmonton Symphony from age 10 to 17, was concert master of the Canadian National Youth Orchestra at 15, won many Canadian national awards, and at 17 joined the musicians' union in England. He and his grandfather (a professional violinist) played side-by-side in the National Philharmonic there, for artists such as tenor Luciano Pavarotti.



Mark Lupin recently performed in London and Monaco. He and his children, from left: Olivia 8, Alex, 12, and Benjamin, 6, play violin and piano.

But before that, he majored in music and mathematics at Indiana University and won a scholarship to study in California with the renowned Jascha Heifetz. Lupin and one other student went to Heifetz's house in Beverly Hills twice a week for lessons, "and on non-teaching days practised from 7 a.m. to midnight — for two years. Heifetz was a very demanding teacher... there was enormous pressure and high expectations."

Lupin finished his math degree by correspondence — taking double honours degrees in music and math — then moved to London, and became co-leader of the BBC symphony orchestra. He was 20.

But one day he developed a touch of tendinitis. "I couldn't play for three months and realized I couldn't depend on music for a living." So it was back to Dalhousie, in Halifax, for

a master's in math while continuing to study and perform "in the background."

In his spare time he did mathematical modelling for Canada's double-hulled entry in the America's Cup, and contract work for NASA's space program, doing modelling for Canadarm.

About this time he decided to become a physician, and now that his arm was better, put himself through University of Toronto medical school by working for NASA and playing with the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra. "I'd take my texts to concerts and study in intermission."

After doing a residency in Vancouver, he decided to specialize in neurology, but three years later, having finished those studies, switched to dermatology. Three more years passed.

By now he had married a University of British Columbia cardiology nurse

called Catherine — "Dating wasn't one of my skills, so I was very blessed to find my life partner" — and they had a son.

"We wanted our kids to grow up in a smaller city," recalled Catherine, who also had to put her foot down when her husband began talking about a master's degree in statistics.

"I told him — no more degrees. He'd already been at university for 17 years." (He still does math on the side for fun, and is working on two inventions for energy-efficient pro-pellers.)

She became his full-time medical office manager and admits their life is brim-full.

"We have to be very organized," she said with a chuckle. "Our kids come first and we maximize family time. We don't watch TV. We cycle, go tenting together; our kids have a strong work ethic. They're all book worms. Family din-

ner at 5:30 is a priority. It sets the tone of the evening and they all fall asleep listening to Mark practise. It makes our house sing."

The parents have a date night every week, "we go out for dinner, a long walk, to the opera," and a goal-setting session every week, too.

"Mark is an incredible, remarkable person with a lot of motivation. He gives his heart and soul to his kids and patients, and we're a very close couple. I always admire people who master the art of balance and I think the secret is: You thrive when you're happy."

Lupin said his wife is "totally supportive" of his playing, and an amazing partner.

So when the late Walter Mony, former head of strings at the Victoria Conservatory, suggested he apply for the new World Doctors Orchestra in Cleveland, he leapt at the idea. Lupin was asked to be con-

cert master after organizers heard him play.

Lupin was the sole physician from Canada.

After two days of rehearsals in early February they had a pre-concert at Cleveland Institute of Medicine. "In the atrium where patients were in wheelchairs with IV poles... it was very emotional. But this is what I love, bringing music and healing together."

Next day it was off to Severance Hall, home of Cleveland Orchestra, and an audience of about 2,000.

"The concert was a great success and raised about \$50,000 for health care and education in the Third World. It was a rare and great pleasure to indulge my passion for music, because there are only so many hours in a day and my biggest thrill now is family time.

"I have been so lucky to do all these things." glitwin@tc.canwest.com

PHOTOGRAPHY

Wait a minute: Polaroid film could soon reappear



HANDOUT
Polaroid image of Austrian businessman Florian Caps.

PETER O'NEIL
Canwest News Service

PARIS — The Polaroid instant camera's enormous popularity spanned a generation, taking picture-making from darkrooms to the backyards, bedrooms and beach parties of more than a billion users.

The 1960s ad, now viewable on YouTube, captured the phenomenon, showing a young, bikini-clad Ali Mac-

Graw frolicking on a beach with the now gigantic-looking Polaroid Swinger, snapping shots with her young companions that instantly developed in the palms of their hands.

But the current location of most of those clunky cameras — covered in dust in aging baby-boomers' attics and basements — explains why the attempt to revive this environmentally unfriendly dinosaur of

today's digital era has been affectionately dubbed The Impossible Project.

"Everybody said it was impossible," Austrian businessman Florian Caps, 39, told Canwest News Service.

"But instead of threatening us, it's become a big challenge. The Polaroid camera still has the power and magic to make the impossible happen."

Caps got the financial backing to buy Polaroid

Corp.'s factory in the Netherlands after the company, which has been in bankruptcy protection and was sold earlier this month, announced in early 2008 it would stop making the film due to declining sales.

Working with a staff of 15, including a former senior Polaroid Corp. engineer, Caps hopes to start production and distribution of a new version of the Polaroid film by the start of 2010.

Caps recognized the potential market in 2005 when he established a website, www.polanoid.net, where more than 12,000 registered users post their Polaroid photos online.

The Impossible Project's goal is to create a new version of the Polaroid film and to market it to an estimated 10 million niche users who adore their Polaroid camera for mostly artistic reasons.



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