

Violin virtuoso David Garrett's secret to success - the 'P' word

By Han Wei Chou | Posted: 05 October 2011 1514 hrs



SINGAPORE: How do you become one of the fastest violinists in the world?

"Practice," said German virtuoso violinist David Garrett, who once held the Guinness World Record for Fastest Violin Player and has made fusing hit rock songs with classical music his calling card in the music industry.

Garrett picked up the violin at the tender age of four, became a soloist at eight before running away from home to study music at the prestigious Juilliard School in America when he was just a teenager, even doing a spot of modelling to pay his fees.

He went on to carve a name for himself as a crossover musician, playing hard rock songs such as Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and Metallica's "Master of Puppets" on the violin.

"I think it is a good way to introduce young people to classical music. And it works.

"I see a lot of young people at my classical concerts nowadays," said Garrett of his crossover music.

The talented musician makes it all look easy but Garrett believes that constant practice is the key to his success and had made him the musician he is today.

"I practise about three hours a day now but when I was younger, I practised at *least* six hours a day," said Garrett in a warm husky voice, during a phone interview with channelnewsasia.com.

"I can't complain. It's (playing the violin) something I love. Some people spend eight hours working in the office."

The 31-year-old will be performing at a private showcase in Singapore at Avalon on Thursday, to promote his album "Rock Symphonies", before attending an album signing event at the Paragon Shopping Centre the next day.

Garrett expressed that he is excited to meet his Singapore fans again – he visited Singapore once before in 2007 - and promised to put his best foot forward at his showcase.

"It is going to be very fun! We'll have a good time. There will be something special!" he enthused.

Vagrant virtuoso

Garrett's Singapore stopover is but one of many, many stops on his touring schedule, which sees him performing at venues across Europe and the US with nary a break.

The gruelling tour schedule has made him a bit of a 'vagrant virtuoso'.

"I do have a home in New York, but I only stay in it for about two weeks a year," said Garrett with a sigh.

"It is strange, the hotels I stay at are more like home than my own apartment.

"Because I stay at hotels all the time, the people at the hotels become like family. I have some favourite hotels that I go to all the time," he added with a chuckle.

But wherever he may go, his violin is his constant companion.

The musician revealed that he actually owns four violins but uses his US\$5 million (S\$6.5 million) Stradivarius violin for most of his performances.

"I am willing to pay for it because it produces the best sound.

"It doesn't sound very different from the cheapest violin I own outside but in a concert hall, with no amplification, you can hear the difference," said Garrett, before unveiling his next great project - to dream up a way to cross rap with classical music.

Just how will he do it? Even he doesn't know.

But that isn't going to stop him from trying.

"I like to challenge myself all the time! You don't know it can't be done until you try it," said Garrett with a laugh.