

Léonie Sonning Talent Prize 2017

Jonathan Swensen



Life makes music swing

It takes equal portions of pleasure, hard work and self-discipline to create a top-level musician, Jonathan Swensen explains.

For eight years, a cardboard sign in a plastic cover has been lying in cellist Jonathan Swensen's drawer. He got it at the Menlo music festival in California when he was 13. He kept it because it reminds him that you cannot become a talented musician without hard work and self-discipline.

It was my first great music experience on the highest possible concert level, it was very challenging. It taught me the meaning of self-discipline and hard work while maintaining the joy of music at the same time. I got a new mindset in relation to practising, and I understood that practising is also work, Jonathan Swensen explains. He has realised that you have to use your individuality and own mindset to venture into music and understand what has been written.

Not allowed to play

Music has always been a part of Jonathan's life with a mother, who is a violinist, and a father, who is both a conductor and violinist. At the age of three, Jonathan conducted Sibelius' symphonies with a chopstick. At the age of six, he sat in the concert hall while his father conducted Elgar's cello concerto with Ralf Kirschbaum as soloist. And this was the first time he asked to play the cello. But, contrary to expectation, Jonathan was not allowed to play the cello. And his parents never paced him into music. On the contrary. Jonathan's wish was met with the question: *If your teacher tells you to practise every day, would you do it?* But Jonathan was seven before he could answer yes to that question, and he has been practising ever since.

Important to get out of the practice room

Music is so much more than tones. You can express a lot of things more beautifully through music. Both the good and the bad contribute to music, Jonathan says, emphasizing how important it is to get out of the practice room and experience other things.

You should live and party if you want to, because it's life itself that makes music swing. »Feeling« is important, as my jazzy friends say, Jonathan says, and he enjoys both to party and to work.

Just before a concert, Jonathan concentrates on breathing deeply into his abdomen. Because, at the beginning of every concert, there may be a little voice making rude comments.

It gives friction and force to my play. It is good, but to ensure that it doesn't get out of control, I make sure to breathe into my belly. From there, I get my energy, Jonathan says.

Jonathan Swensen, cello

Born: 1996, raised in Gentofte.

Studies at the Royal Danish Academy of Music under Tøke Møldrup. Winner of Øresunds Solist 2015. Recipient of the P2 Talent Prize in 2016.

Scholarship

To be spent on studies with Torleif Thedeem and on a new cello bow.