

**Five Strings:
Get to Know In-facility Artist Caryn Lin**



You might say that Caryn Lin’s musical career is similar to her five-string electric violin. Just as each string contributes differently but importantly to the whole sound, so Caryn’s career is the result of five formative experiences, each one pivotal in creating what her audiences see and hear today. Let me deconstruct this “instrument” to help readers anticipate the unique and exciting style of Caryn Lin.

#1: The “Irony” String

Ironically, Caryn began her musical career with rejection! After deciding at age eight that her best friend looked “cool” playing the violin, Caryn begged her mom to start lessons. For acceptance as a beginning student, the instructor required candidates to “sing back” the notes he played on the piano. It seemed like a simple task, but when Caryn failed to echo accurately, she was denied a place in his studio. Caryn’s tears led to some “conversations” between mom and the teacher, and soon Caryn was given the opportunity to take those lessons she so earnestly desired. Then, in an ironic twist of fate one year later, this once-doubtful teacher admitted that Caryn was, indeed, “very talented” and even “needed private lessons” to accommodate her special gift. Thus, Caryn’s journey into the world of music began.

#2: The “Training” String

Throughout her adolescence, Caryn studied privately with Philadelphia Orchestra violinist, Larry Grika. Not surprisingly, this time was not without challenges. In school, Caryn was teased for her unusual and devoted commitment. But her love of the instrument trumped the barbs of her classmates, and she persevered. Years later, she graduated from Northwestern University with a degree in Violin Performance. Although years of classical training had molded her into a superior musician, she knew even then that she did not really want to play in an orchestra for the rest of her life.

#3: The “Epiphany” String

After a series of gutsy decisions and sheer will, Caryn was invited to move to Germany and take master classes with violin virtuoso, Susanne Lautenbacher, whom Caryn just happened to idolize. After studying German and earning money by teaching, cleaning, and babysitting, the starry-eyed coed was on her way to Europe. However, after only a few weeks into the classes, Susanne declared that her young protégé needed to change her technique completely. Was Caryn willing to erase all those years of practicing and perfecting her individual style, and to begin again? Her heart said “No.” She faced a truth that she had submerged for years: she never really wanted a career as a classical violinist!



#4: The “Discovery” String

After this career-altering epiphany, Caryn turned her efforts to discovering who she was as a musician. Leaving her would-be mentor but staying in Germany for four more years, she

explored many musical venues: street jamming, American country bands, folk groups, to name a few. During this time, she heard a five-string violin and knew immediately she just had to play it. The first discovery! But the real turning point for Caryn occurred on her very last night in Germany. Celebrating both her experience abroad and her return home, Caryn happened into a group of musicians using an “echo box” or “digital delay” system, technology that causes sound to echo or repeat. She was transfixed! Here it was...the second discovery! Together, these fortuitous discoveries would inform the musical style that defines Caryn today.

#5: The “Purpose” String

Back in the States, Caryn tried her hand at composition, and very soon thereafter, an avid listener offered to fund the production and advertisement of her music. Five CD’s followed. By this point, she had identified her instrument: the electric violin. She had developed her sound: layering recorded music, one sequence on top of another with the use of a “JamMan”, or “looper box.” But something was missing. She wanted some purpose for her music. Five “strings” were needed to make her “instrument” whole...to make it viable. For a long time, Caryn had been thinking about helping others through her music. Could this be the final piece that would provide focus for her creative talents? Indeed it was, and the program titled From Bach to Rock was born.



When Art-Reach audiences experience Caryn Lin’s unique and exciting program, they will be enriched on many levels. They will be educated about Bach, the acoustic violin, and the electric violin. They will be entertained by listening to “looping”, unusual sound effects, and Caryn’s husband, Bruce Rogers, “rocking out” on the electric drum and electric guitar. They will be engaged by interacting with Caryn as she invites volunteers to help create both electric violin and

drum “looping”, and as she scours the crowd with her wireless microphone, wreaking havoc with sound-effect fun. They will be inspired by her stories of overcoming childhood “bullying” in order to pursue her music and reach unexpected heights. They will be motivated through clever power-point productions to find their own dreams and work hard to realize them, even if others try to discourage or distract along the way.

In just forty-five minutes, the entire From Bach to Rock program promises to stimulate all audience members, from kindergarteners to college seniors and beyond. Five year-old Beth told Caryn that she “loved that creepy, weird music you played.” Third grader Thomas concluded, “You’re better than Beethoven.” Two high school seniors, Jasmine and Kisha, quietly confided, “We thought this was going to be really boring, but...it was actually really fun.” Caryn enjoys the challenges of exciting all ages of listeners, and she particularly enjoys the rewards of inspiring people with special needs. Her enthusiasm pays off. Elizabeth Calabria, Principal of Bellmawr Park School called her program “the most captivating assembly we ever sponsored”, and Celestine Berg, PTA President at Bret Harte Elementary, agrees: “Her performance was...one of the finest character education messages that I’ve ever seen in a school performance.” As The New York Post reported, “Lin’s only limits are those of her electric violin.”

Art-Reach is thrilled that Caryn Lin is sharing her five strings with us! To request a performance from Caryn Lin, please submit an [In-facility request form](#) to the [Art-Reach Programming Department](#).

By Barbara Speece

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