

Violinist gets vocal with his music career

By KATHRYN KATES
Special



PETER DE SOTTO

You can excuse Port Credit's Peter De Sotto for fiddling around with his career.

This unorthodox violinist with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO) began his musical career at the tender age of 8 as a strolling violinist with his father, Mario, at local restaurants and banquet halls. At 20, De Sotto was playing with jazz and rock and roll bands, when he decided to pursue formal training under the tutelage of Toronto symphony master Steven Staryk.

De Sotto has performed as a soloist with the Mississauga Symphony, and once won their annual concerto competition.

But the 35-year-old's career path took an unusual turn five years ago.

While strolling and playing one evening at a restaurant, De Sotto belted out a song request from a patron to great response from an enthusiastic audience.

A tenor was born:

"Singing came naturally enough to me, so I

decided to study voice," he said.

Now in his 11th year with the TSO, De Sotto took a year's sabbatical from the orchestra to study voice at the prestigious Julliard School of Performing Arts in New York City.

De Sotto and his wife of nine years — oboe and English horn player Cynthia Steljes — are members of Quartetto Gelato, a foursome that churn out classical music that sounds unpretentious.

Quartetto Gelato are booked for 60 concerts this year, including a Dec. 18 Christmas concert at Roy Thompson Hall. The quartet's repertoire includes tangos, operatic arias, Gypsy music and show pieces.

In December De Sotto will sing his first opera, Offenbach's *Orpheus And The Underworld*, conducted by Mark Dubois at Toronto's St. Lawrence Centre for the Performing Arts.

When De Sotto isn't performing with Quartetto Gelato or the TSO, or playing jazz with string ensemble Quintessence, he and his wife love to relax onboard their 40-foot steel trawler that's docked at the Port Credit Yacht Club — conveniently located across the street from their home.

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