

Tickling ivories has taken him from A.C. hotels to world tours

Lance Wiseman of Wyncote has even performed before the emperor of Japan. He started playing at age 5.

By Paul J. Lim
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WYNCOTE — When Lance Wiseman was a boy, his parents frequently took him to Atlantic City, where the family spent weekends at some of the old Victorian hotels near the Boardwalk.

But with all the attractions and distractions the city had to offer — from carnival rides to pinball arcades — he rarely ventured outside.

He loved those hotel lobbies.

"Every time we'd go on vacation, all I'd do was go straight to the lobby and look for the piano and just start playing," said Wiseman, who has remained a resident of Wyncote. "I used to love the fact that people would start to congregate around me to hear me play. I ate it up."

At the age of 37, Wiseman still loves to play, although he longer hangs around Atlantic City hotel lobbies.

He now tours internationally as a classical pianist.

He has performed in such concert halls as Wigmore Hall in London, and had a special engagement recently in Tokyo before Emperor Akihito. Next month, he is to make his New York debut at the Weill Auditorium at Carnegie Hall.

With every chord he strikes while performing Mozart's *Sonata No. 14* or Chopin's *Polonaise*, that little boy who hammed it up in Atlantic City continues to make himself known. The piano has come naturally to him since he was 5.

"We had this old piano in our house, and I used to just go over and improvise on it," Wiseman said while seated behind an \$80,000 Boesendorfer baby grand in his home, the carriage house behind his parents' house.

Improvisation turned to lessons, and lessons led to concerts — the first before the Beethoven Society of New Jersey when he was 7.

After graduating from the Performing Arts High School in Philadelphia at age 16, he was accepted by the Juilliard School in New York, which he entered as the school's youngest bachelor's candidate that year.

"I knew from the very start that I wanted to be a concert pianist," said Wiseman, who earned a master's degree from Juilliard as well.

He recognizes that he is not classified among the best known pianists of his generation. By his own admission, he does not have the name to draw people to the box office.

But, he said, he is getting there.

Early in his career, Musical America named him one of its "Young Artists to Watch." A recent London Times review said Wiseman was "in his element in sturdy Bach and even more in the



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Along with this grand piano, Lance Wiseman has many antiques at his Wyncote home.

starkly uncompromising challenges of Copland's 1930 *Variations*."

He is known for the meticulous detail he brings to the music, the attention he pays to the intentions of the composer. That attention to detail is part of his personality.

It can be seen on a tour of his home, filled with 19th-century antiques. With the enthusiasm of a 5-year-old displaying his marble collection, Wiseman will point out the detail in paintings or the craftsmanship of the pot-belly stove in his reading room.

Some of his antiques are gawdy.

"But look at the details," he said. "Look how fine it is."

By exposing him to different cultures, history and the importance of detail, the piano has served as a gateway for Wiseman, who retains the boyishness of a school-age child — and some of the awkwardness.

"When I was a kid, I was kind of shy," said Wiseman, who lives alone. "And the piano helped me climb out of that shell."

It was an ice-breaker. People would gravitate toward him through his music.

As he prepares for his Dec. 11 engagement in New York, he hopes that people never stop.