



STRINGS OF *the soul*

He's been hailed a prodigy, a phenomenon, a virtuoso, basically one of the finest cellists on the face of the earth. But 19-year-old Santiago Canon Valencia still sees himself as "a normal kid".

Writer: **Ben Cameron** - Photographer: **Supplied**

Raised to be a genius, his parents still made sure his feet stayed firmly planted to the ground.

"My parents always found a way to balance the life of being a musician and also the life of a normal kid, which is very important," he says.

Speaking to *Bendigo Magazine* from his family home in Bogota, Colombia, Santiago

says he was destined to be a musician when his mother Rocio first put a cello in his hand at the age of four.

"If it wasn't music, it would be some kind of art form," he says.

"My family were all musicians, dad plays the clarinet, mum used to play the cello, and she was the one who got me into it.

"Music was always around our house. I

don't think I'd be able to, or want to, do something different.

"It would have been fine if I wanted to be an accountant or something, but it was meant to be, I believe."

He's thankful his mother started him on his musical journey at such a tender age.

"Lots of people think, especially with music, the younger you start the better," he says.



"I can now say I've been playing cello for almost 16 years.

"I believe the younger you start the quicker you put up things. Not when you're like two though (laughs)."

Valencia gave his first concerto performance with the Bogota Philharmonic at the age of six, recorded his first CD 10 years later - which was internationally acclaimed and performed concertos with orchestras in Australia, New Zealand, China, South Africa, Canada and Hungary.

And while he's played the cello almost as long as he's walked, he believes you can never totally master your craft.

"I believe, with pretty much anything, you never really stop learning," he says.

"I don't think I'll ever get to the point where I think I've learnt everything and mastered everything.

"There's always something to learn.

"On average I'd spend about six hours practicing."

Per week?

"Per day," he says.

Luckily he has other hobbies, such as photography and drawing, to take his mind off the music.

"I love music but sometimes it's nice to do something different," he says.

"I have friends who I have known since I was six, who have nothing to do with music."

Pressure has come with high praise, however.

"I always want to cause a really good impression, whether it's a first impression or a second impression," he says.

"The pressure lies in always wanting to

create a performance that is really engaging for everyone that they are going to remember.

"Whether I am called a prodigy or not a prodigy, what matters to me is when the performance comes that I deliver something very special that they will remember for a very long time, hopefully."

He admits his is a blessed life.

"I'm always thankful for all the opportunities that I've had," he says.

"What I chose is what I love. I guess I am good at doing what I love so, so I feel very lucky.

"For me it's like a dream come true that I can just do my thing and people really like.

"I couldn't imagine myself doing anything different now."

Santiago Canon Valencia plays The Capital on April 9 for the Strings of the Soul Tour. ■