

# return to form



Amalya Lehmann's busy playing schedule includes lessons, music group, rehearsals and coaching sessions.

## Amalya Lehmann plays again, thanks to the performing arts specialists at Union Memorial.

Placing her fingers on the strings of her violin, Amalya wondered if she had forgotten how to play.

"I was eager to get back to playing; it had been so long," she said. "The muscle memory was there...it was an amazing feeling."

It was a feeling Amalya hadn't experienced in almost four months. For a budding musician who was used to practicing multiple hours a day, the layoff was devastating. The culprit: A painful wrist injury that led to surgery to repair a stressed ligament. The pain became so disabling it was increasingly

difficult for Amalya to write, much less play the instrument she has enjoyed since she was three years old.

"I wanted to be able to use my hand and was willing to do whatever it took to get back to normal," said Amalya, a freshman majoring in music at the University of Pennsylvania.

That's when Amalya went to see Dr. Raymond Wittstadt, a hand surgeon with The Curtis National Hand Center at Union Memorial Hospital. Dr. Wittstadt discovered that the triangular fibrocartilage complex

(TFCC) of Amalya's left wrist was stretched out of position. The TFCC is a small piece of cartilage and ligaments on the little-finger side of the wrist and is important in rotation of the wrist.

"The ligament was being stretched by excessive rotation while playing," said Dr. Wittstadt. "At first, we tried conservative treatment with splinting and therapy but it only helped a little."

At the time, Amalya was practicing for her final certificate exam at Peabody Preparatory. But the pain made practice unbearable.

### SAFETY FIRST WHEN USING LAWN MOWERS

More than 16,000 people each year suffer hand injuries when using a lawn mower. Many injuries are caused by hands coming into contact with a jammed or rotating blade, such as while trying to unclog blades. Remember these lawn mower safety tips:

- **Don't toss the instructions.** Read through the instruction manual before first using a new lawn mower, paying special attention to safety guidelines. And keep the manual handy. Get comfortable with operating the mower so that you can stop it in case of an emergency.
- **Be careful with blades.** Lawn mower blades can move up to 200 miles per hour. Never use your hands or feet to unclog blades. Turn off the mower and use a stick or broom handle to clear any obstruction.
- **Protect yourself.** Wear gloves, boots, goggles and long pants.
- **Let safety features do their job.** Never remove or disable any of the mower's safety devices. Check safety controls regularly and, if necessary, repair or replace them right away.

The evaluation, treatment and rehabilitation of the hand takes unique skill and training. The performing arts program at The Curtis National Hand Center brings together specialists who understand the unique demands of the performing artist. Several of our physicians and certified hand therapists focus their practice on treating and returning performers to their craft, and have been sought after by many accomplished musicians and artists for their specialized care.

In Amalya's case, Dr. Wittstadt performed a delicate procedure that repaired the ligament and reattached the TFCC to the bones of the wrist, restoring normal stability. This was followed by intensive therapy under the careful guidance of certified hand therapist Lauren Valdata.

"It was an extremely structured and gradual return to play, from wound care and splinting to conditioning, strengthening and endurance," said Valdata, a physical therapist who has been treating musicians for 30 years. "No pain with play is always our goal."

It wasn't long after Amalya held the violin again that she returned to her previous form. And it was just in time to reach two milestones: getting through college auditions and completing her senior recital.

"I'm very proud of how far I've come," Amalya said. "I knew my wrist could be fixed and trusted that Dr. Wittstadt and Lauren would help get me through it."

No matter what your hand injury, choose The Curtis National Hand Center. Call 410-554-2266 for a physician referral.



### MEET DR. WITTSTADT

Dr. Raymond Wittstadt is a fellowship-trained hand surgeon with extensive experience treating injuries related to performing artists. To request an appointment, visit [unionmemorial.org/destinations](http://unionmemorial.org/destinations) or call 1-877-346-7846.