

Gary Bartig named 2015 Outstanding Alumni Awards winner for Southeast Technical's Red Wing Campus

Attending the string instrument repair program in 1991-1992 at Southeast Technical marked a turning point in Gary Bartig's life. A musician himself, he played mandolin and fiddle in old-time string bands in his native Wisconsin, but at that time his day job was as a copier repair technician. When he came to Southeast Technical, his intense focus and attention to detail made a full-time career in the world of musical instruments a possibility.



Gary E. Bartig, 2015 Outstanding Alumni Awards winner, Red Wing Campus

"Today, Gary's instruments are played in bluegrass, country, Celtic, folk, rock, and even classical music settings on stages around the world, making an international impact on music," said Chris Schabow, Southeast Technical Foundation director, when introducing Gary at the 2015 college graduation ceremony on May 13. "We can be justifiably proud of Gary Bartig and his accomplishments in the world of music, and are happy to name him one of this year's Outstanding Alumni Award winners."

Instructor Lisbeth Nelson Butler remembers Gary's student days. "He was an excellent student, consistently scoring at the top of his class. He was a hard worker and has been successful in the field."

After graduating from Southeast Technical, Gary Bartig set up as a violin repair tech at a shop in Minneapolis. Inspired by the initial concepts of his friend and fellow luthier Scott Zumberg, who died in 1993, Gary refined the design of a unique portable upright acoustic string bass. He established the business [G. Edward Lutherie](#) in 1996 to manufacture and distribute the instrument, and has since perfected what is considered the preeminent portable upright bass in world, the [Eminence Portable Upright Bass](#).

Though he initially had little startup funding, with a solid business plan and many years of persistence, Gary's innovative ideas in design, manufacturing and distributing the Eminence have established G. Edward Lutherie as a solid and respected leader in its field.

But Gary says he doesn't consider himself an instrument maker. "I really am more of an entrepreneur. I design instruments and arrange to have them built for me. I do the set up for each instrument that I sell, but I am not making them by hand."

The Eminence bass is the instrument of choice of many professional musicians, particularly for touring, as it breaks down and can be fit into a golf bag flight case. Today you will find Gary's basses on tour with well-known bands like [Modest Mouse](#), Emmylou Harris, [Yonder Mountain String Band](#) and Vampire Weekend; they are played by Grammy Award-winning performers including [Esperanza Spalding](#) and [Byron House](#). One of Gary's Eminence basses is in the collection of the Musical Instrument Museum in Phoenix, AZ.

However, Gary was not content to rest on the laurels of one innovative instrument; he has since gone on to design the [Dahlia 5-string and London 5-string violins](#). These violins add a low 5th string

to the traditional violin without compromising playability or appearance, extending the instrument's range to cover that of both the viola and the violin. Like the Eminence bass, the Dahlia5 and London5 have gained enthusiastic acceptance among professional and amateur musicians alike.

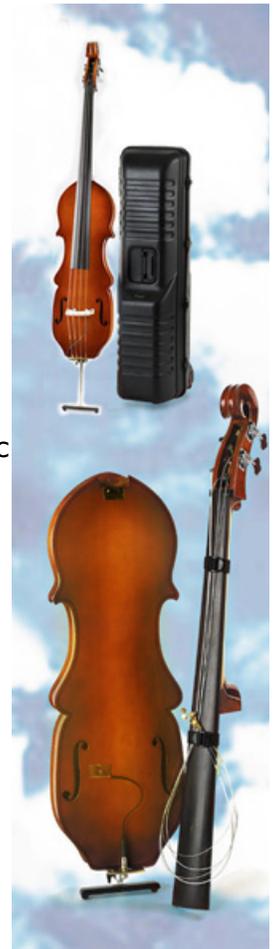
"I was very excited to learn recently that two of my 5-string violins are being played by students in the Berklee World Strings orchestra," Gary says. "These are musicians who could be playing instruments that cost much more, but who have selected the London5 and the Dahlia5."

Gary has always had an interest in the challenging field of amplifying acoustic stringed instruments, which led him to branch out into a separate business, Acoustic Electric Strings. In 2009, Strings Magazine named Gary's acoustic-electric violin design one of the Top Ten new products of the year.

He has invested years of research and development into creating electric violins which project the most faithful sound possible without causing feedback, even in arena sized rock concerts. For example, famed violinist [Jessy Greene](#) travels with her acoustic-electric Dahlia5 on tour with the Foo Fighters, Wilco, The Jayhawks, Glen Campbell and many others.

Currently Gary has been working on prototypes for an ultra-short scale octave mandolin. This instrument is tuned an octave below a violin/mandolin and features a string scale short enough that mandolin/violin players can play it using standard fingerings. He currently has prototypes in solid electric and classical nylon strung acoustic versions.

Gary Bartig learned the art of lutherie here at Southeast Technical, but has gone on to expand his career by becoming a successful inventor, a patent holder, and an entrepreneur, making him an inspiration to the Class of 2015. Congratulations, Gary!



The Eminence portable acoustic upright string bass is designed with a removable neck so it can fit into a standard golf bag flight case.