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Macomb Township drum phenom to play L.A. gig

Micki Steele / The Detroit News

Macomb Township -- Julian Pavone has been playing the drums his entire life: The 6-year-old music wonder first grasped a pair of drumsticks when he was just 3 months old.

Julian, who rehearses daily for one to two hours in the basement of his parents' home, will perform songs Friday made famous by the late rock legend Jimi Hendrix, Kid Rock and other famed musicians in front of roughly 200 schoolchildren in Los Angeles at the Grammy Museum.

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"It feels great just doing what I practice," said the first-grader, who attends University Liggett School in Grosse Pointe Woods.

The performance, part of the museum's Backstage Pass educational program, is aimed at making a connection between artists and students to showcase careers and opportunities in music, said event coordinator Nwaka Onwusa.

"Being so young, Julian is a great encouragement to the youths," Onwusa said. "No matter how young you are, you can still make a difference."

The little drummer, who has made dozens of television appearances, including "The Oprah Winfrey Show" and "Good Morning America," will play about a dozen tunes and dance to Michael Jackson songs.

A few of Julian's friends will join him on stage. Local DJ Ricky Bledsoe, who uses a wheelchair, will mix music for Julian's performance, as photographer Frank Britt, who has two digits on each hand, captures it with his camera. The two men are clients of the Macomb-Oakland Regional Center, a nonprofit that provides support services for people with disabilities, where Julian was recently named global ambassador.

"He's representing people with disabilities and showing that they have abilities too," said the center's spokesman, Joe Dzenowagis.

Julian's shoulder-length hair bounced as he beat his custom drum set and later moon-walked across the carpet of his basement music studio with choreographer Ty Brown to prepare for Friday's concert.

Bernadino Pavone, Julian's father, said he always knew his son would play drums, starting when the boy's mother was pregnant with him.

"I would play music on my wife's stomach all the time," said Pavone, 45, who also is a drummer. "When he got big inside her stomach, he developed this rhythmic kick."

Though Julian loves the drums and will continue playing, he said he has a few more ambitions.

"I want to be a soccer player," he said. "Oh, and sing and dance."

msteele@detnews.com

(313) 222-2620

Julian Pavone, 6, rehearses in the basement of his parents' Macomb Township home for a show at the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles. (Micki Steele / The Detroit News)

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