

Since her solo orchestral debut at age 15, Ilana Setapen has been flourishing as a violinist with a powerful and original voice. She is hailed by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel as a violinist with “a sparkling sound” and “the kind of control that puts an audience completely at ease.” She is currently the Associate Concertmaster of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra.

In recent seasons Setapen has had solo performances with the Milwaukee Symphony, Festival City Symphony, the Boca Raton Symphonia, and the Amarillo Symphony, among others. Since winning her job in the Milwaukee Symphony in 2009, she has been offered a solo every season. She held the Assistant Concertmaster position of the Grant Park Music Festival Orchestra in Chicago for 6 years. She is also a favorite guest concertmaster with the Chicago Philharmonic. In recent summers she has made guest appearances at the Olympic Music Festival on Bainbridge Island, and she spent two summers on the faculty of the Luzerne Music Center summer festival in Lake Luzerne, New York.

Setapen has won top prizes in many competitions including the Irving M. Klein International String Competition, the Pasadena Showcase Competition, and the Kingsville International Competition. At the age of 21, she became concertmaster of the Riverside Philharmonic in Los Angeles. She has also held concertmaster positions with the Juilliard Orchestra, the Colburn Orchestra, the American Youth Symphony, the National Repertory Orchestra, and the USC Thornton Symphony.

Also a committed chamber musician, Setapen is in demand as a collaborator throughout the midwest. She is a frequent guest on the Frankly Music Series and the Rembrandt Chamber Players of Chicago. She performs as the violin/viola duo Bowing Rogue with her colleague Margot Schwartz. Her talent has led her to collaborations with such distinguished artists as Ron Leonard, Lynn Harrell, Toby Appel, Cynthia Phelps, Joseph Kalichstein, Robert DeMaine, Paul Coletti, the Fine Arts Quartet, Stefan Hersh, David Geber, and Joan Tower. Solo and chamber music performances have brought her abroad to China, France, Brazil, Holland, England, Monaco, and Italy.

Setapen grew up in Amarillo, Texas. She comes from a musical family: her father is a conductor and her first violin teacher was her mother, Carol. She was a student of Robert Lipsett both at the University of Southern California and at the Colburn Conservatory. She received her Master of Music Degree from the Juilliard School as a student of Donald Weilerstein and Ronald Copes. She also loves to teach and has a private studio in Milwaukee. Ilana plays on a 1624 Amati on loan from Frank Almond.

In her spare time Setapen enjoys spending time with her husband and young son, cooking, and swing dancing.