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America's Most Colorful Newspaper

F-M trombonist slides to success

By Elizabeth Doran
Staff writer

He was just a small child when his dad propped him up on his shoulders and wandered into the music store, where the clerk looked over and informed young Andrew Friedrichs he looked just like a trombone player.

"I guess it was because I was buzzing my lips or doing something goofy, but it was ironic that I later picked trombone to play," said Friedrichs, now a senior at Fayetteville-Manlius High School.

Friedrichs, who began playing the trombone eight years ago, today joins an elite group of 20 high school musicians selected to take part in a prestigious, national arts program in Miami.

The 17-year-old Fayetteville resident is the only Upstate New York student chosen to attend the all-expenses-paid program. He has a chance to win up to \$10,000 and is eligible for scholarship money as well.

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Jim Commentucci / Staff photographer

ANDREW FRIEDRICHS, 17, a senior at Fayetteville-Manlius High School, has been selected to play trombone in a national arts program.

Want to hear him?

You'll find a sample of Andrew Friedrichs' audition at blog.syracuse.com/indepth

Inside: His essay on why he loves to play the trombone/A-4

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FROM PAGE ONE

Trombonist is eager to learn from others in national program

TROMBONIST, FROM PAGE A-1

At YoungARTS Week at University of Miami, Friedrichs will attend classes, showcases and performances, be mentored by artists and then perform at a gala. Part of the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts, the event provides recognition and awards to gifted high school seniors in the performing, literary and visual arts.

"I really think the best part of the trip will be meeting other student musicians and learning from them," he said. "I want to become familiar with everyone else, and not just with the trombonists. I can listen to, and get some new ideas from string and wind players."

Friedrichs is among 142 students chosen from among 8,000 applicants across the U.S. in nine arts disciplines to attend the event. Friedrichs said his music teacher, Jennifer Greene, urged him to submit an audition so he submitted a tape with five pieces. He also was sent a duet to practice, which he'll perform with a tubaist in Miami.

Friedrichs, whose father, John, is a bass clarinetist with the Syracuse Symphony Orches-

tra, chose trombone after attending an instrument fair because he liked the way it looked and sounded.

"I think it makes the coolest sound, which is a really rich, sonorous tone that's satisfying and full," Friedrichs said. "And I thought it was cooler than the trumpet because it had the slide."

Friedrichs typically practices three to five hours a day. He's applied to five colleges, including Eastman School of Music in Rochester and The Juilliard School in New York City, and wants to become an orchestral trombonist.

"I practice as much as I do because I want to get really good," he said.

He plays in a jazz quintet with friends, which performs locally and has produced a CD. He also plays in all the school ensembles and with the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra Youth Orchestra.

"I like practicing because it's like an experiment," he said. "I can get creative and see how good I can get."

Elizabeth Doran can be reached at edoran@syracuse.com or 470-3012.

In his own words

Making music is a precious gift

This is Andrew Friedrichs' personal statement about instrumental music that he submitted as part of his application to be selected to attend YoungARTS Week Jan. 7-13:

I felt the prickle of cold metal on the edges of my lips, my fingers touching the smooth lacquer of the slide. My heart beat hard against my chest. It was time to begin. I took a deep breath but it was shaky and shallow from my tense, eddying stomach. I closed my eyes, ready for a beautiful, sonorous, crystal clear tone to emanate from the other end of the horn —

"Blat!" I looked up timidly. Did I really make that horrible sound? Could it be possible for such a noise to come from a beautiful instrument like this? I put the mouthpiece to my lips again thinking that maybe I did something wrong. I took another breath in as air whooshed past my lips, formed tightly to the mouthpiece. I blew forcefully into the chunk of metal trying to imagine a great, powerful sound, only to be disappointed once more by another guttural noise. I looked up at the man peering over my right shoulder.

"No! No, that's good!" said Mr. Beyel, the middle school band teacher. It was the day of the instrument fair and I had left my math class to try out instruments, but I was beginning to feel as though my time would have been better spent in the math room.

I moaned, "I can't even make a normal sound."

"Not many kids can when they pick up the trombone for the first time. And besides, that was very good."

"Good enough to play in the band?" My heart stopped as I waited for the verdict.

"Certainly!"

I was elated. My emotions had taken an unexpected turn. Overjoyed, I looked down at the trombone, the long, smooth piece of metal lying in my hands. I was going to play the trombone. The words resonated in my mind — the trombone, a brass instrument. It was cool, and looked neat with the slide, undoubtedly the most enjoyable way to change pitches. But that was not really why I liked it. I liked it because it gave me the ability to make music.

It gave me a gift so precious, so enjoyable. It was the mere love of the music, the universal language, which I embraced that day as I half-ran back to the classroom I had left earlier, now with no regrets for any class time missed.

Nothing much has changed since that day. Each day I pick up the same tubular piece of brass and bring it to my lips in a monotonous pattern. Each day I listen to the sounds of Joe Alessi and James Markey in frustrated awe, wondering if I will ever sound like them. Each day I take a few more steps into the ocean of music, immersing myself in its wonderful, endless possibilities of notes, rhythms, sounds and songs. Each day I think about what will happen to me, one trombone player, in 20 years, when I am out of college and looking for a job, and I then remember why I picked up the trombone that day at the instrument fair.

I didn't choose the trombone because I wanted to make loads of money — no 10-year-old does that. It was a surprisingly simple decision — I chose the trombone because I loved music. If I lose that love at some point in my life, then there is no point in playing the trombone and I would have been better off spending 45 more minutes with a lesson in long division.