



SAMANTHA BRIX PHOTO | Melaina Badalian practices the French horn in her home earlier this week. Ms. Badalian was one of two Shoreham-Wading River students selected to play at the National Association for Music Education's All-Eastern Honors Concert in Baltimore, Md. earlier this month.

Abigail Fayette wakes up at 5:15 a.m. every weekday and picks up her violin to squeeze in a half-hour practice before she leaves for school. The Shoreham-Wading River junior practices for another two hours after school, and then for another hour before she goes to sleep.

Ms. Fayette and Shoreham senior Melaina Badalian, who plays the French horn, were in the company of many who share a similar dedication to music when they were selected among 650 high school students from 12 states across the east coast to perform in the biannual All-Eastern Honors Concert in Baltimore, Md. earlier this month.

"In this small community sometimes it's hard to find a group of people who have this amount of dedication to music," Ms. Fayette said. "Meeting people who do exactly what you do every day and have the same passion and dedication for music as you do is really incredible."

Ms. Fayette, 17, practiced with the symphony orchestra and Ms. Badalian, also 17, practiced with the concert band for more than 20 hours over the course of two days in preparation for the concert, hosted by the National Association for Music Education. The two were selected to play in the concert based on their performance at last May's New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) competition, where they were graded on their performance of a prepared piece of music, scales and sight-reading.

Ms. Badalian grew up listening to her mother play the French horn and, drawn to the deep sound of the instrument, began playing in the school band in fourth grade.

"Once I started playing I just fell in love," Ms. Badalian said this week, gesturing to her silver Yamaha French horn.

She also plays trumpet in the high school jazz band and saxophone in the Shoreham-Wading River Community band, but says her first love is her French horn. In the fall she'll attend Queens College where she'll double major in French horn performance and Music Education.

She wants to pursue a career as both a French horn performer and high school music teacher, and is already gaining teaching experience giving private lessons to fifth and sixth grade French horn players.

Ms. Fayette, who picked up the violin for the first time when she was 3 years old, wants to attend a music school and become a violin performer. She dreams of one day attending Juilliard and has already gotten taste of the demanding school in the Juilliard School Pre-College Division, which she has attended for the last seven years.

And she's had plenty of performance experiences. She and her mother, father, brother and two

sisters, who all play string instruments, are often hired to play at local weddings.

Both young musicians said playing in the All-Eastern Honors Concert reaffirmed their commitment to their practices.

"Every time I play with a group like that, it solidifies my dedication to playing music," Ms. Fayette said.

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