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Lower Makefield teen's skill on trombone earns him Carnegie Hall honor



By Chris English

Pennsbury High School graduate Noah Stein has been named to the Carnegie Hall Weill Music Institute's National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America.

Playing the trombone puts everything right in Noah Stein's world, and is also taking him around it.

The Lower Makefield resident and 2018 Pennsbury High School graduate was recently named to the Carnegie Hall Weill Music Institute's National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America.

The group of elite musicians from across the country has been rehearsing extensively at the State University of New York at Purchase and will perform a concert Thursday at New York's famous Carnegie Hall. It then embarks on an international concert tour that will take the group to Shanghai and Beijing in China, Taipei, Taiwan; and Seoul and Daejeon in South Korea.

Stein, 18, is one of seven Philadelphia Youth Orchestra members to be selected for the Carnegie national group. He's the only musician from Bucks or Eastern Montgomery counties picked for the National Youth Orchestra.



Pennsbury High School graduate Noah Stein practices on his trombone on a recent day at this Lower Makefeild home. He has been accepted into a prestigious Carnegie Hall music program. [David Garrett/Staff Photojournalist]

"It's really incredible," Stein said of the honor. "It's the kind of thing that I can't quite believe, honestly."

His journey on the trombone has been a progression toward excellence since he started playing the instrument in the fourth grade at Pennsbury's Quarry Hill Elementary School.

"I think I've always loved music," Stein said. "When I was a little kid, my parents took me to the Philly Pops and that was awesome."

"I don't know why I chose the trombone. It didn't really call out to me. There wasn't any specific reason other than I remember wanting to play the trumpet, but I couldn't play it because the mouthpiece was too small and I couldn't make a noise on it. So I guess I figured, why not the trombone? I guess it's close enough. I started on it and kept playing and got hooked."

Stein's musical talent is not inherited. His mother, Debra, played the flute for one year in school before giving it up, and his father, Brian, was much more into sports. He was a standout high school soccer player and played for two years at Ursinus College in Collegeville, Montgomery County.

"The opportunities Noah has had through music far outweigh anything I ever got from athletics," Brian Stein said. "He's played in all different kinds of orchestras and groups at all different levels, and his music has already taken him to Italy and Australia, and now it's taking him to Asia."

He gives the Pennsbury School District and its emphasis on music programs a lot of credit for Noah's success.

"Pennsbury starts them out in music at an early age," Brian said. "I think 90 percent of the kids are playing in a band in the fourth grade. They don't all stay, but that start is important."

Debra Stein said her son even brings his trombone on family vacations so he doesn't lose practice time.

"He is so dedicated and passionate about his music," Debra said. "He lives for it."

Noah said he doesn't let occasional teasing from friends stop him from listening to hours upon hours of classical music, particularly the trombone. Some of his favorite trombonists are Nitzan Haroz and Matthew Vaughn — his private music teacher — of the Philadelphia Orchestra, Joseph Alessi of the New York Philharmonic and Demian Austin of New York's Metropolitan Opera Orchestra.

As a change of pace, Noah also likes rap and hip-hop, especially Kendrick Lamar and J. Cole.

Stein plans to major in music at college. He has a full scholarship offer from one college and partial scholarship offers from others but said he didn't want to disclose which colleges until he's closer to a decision.

While he also plays the baritone and euphonium, the trombone is Stein's main instrument and the one he hopes carries him into a career as a professional musician.

"Absolutely, my goal is to win a job in one of the professional orchestras somewhere in the world," he said. "That's the peak of music."