

Mozart, Stravinsky, Brizendine

Senior displays talent far beyond his years

CHELSEA CALLAS

Contributing Writer

Taylor Brizendine, senior, has perfected 20-30 pieces of music and hopes to become a composer in New York. The first step? Gaining admission to the music school which accepts only two composers worldwide per year: the Curtis Institute of Music.

Although Brizendine currently plays the bassoon, his passion lies in composing. He has started, hated or not finished anywhere from 200-300 symphonies (he isn't quite sure of the exact number), but has also completed around 20-30 pieces of which he is very proud.

"If you try to write the letter 'A' absolutely perfectly, and don't stop until it's perfect, over time that's a lot of A's," Brizendine said, answering the question of why has he written so many pieces.

Although Brizendine has a vast talent for composing, he receives help from his friends, Jeff Cumpston, Band and Orchestra Director, his Portland Youth Philharmonic group, and his private music composition teacher, Tomas Svoboda. Svoboda, according

to Brizendine, is one of the best composers of the 20th and 21st century.

Svoboda also taught Cumpston who agrees with Brizendine's assessment. After seeing Brizendine's immense amount of talent and intelligence in writing music, Cumpston handed him over to his previous composition teacher.

As for Brizendine's family, he says they are very supportive of his music. Although his mother, Lisa, has no music background, his father, Don, plays the drums in gigs at clubs in downtown Portland in addition to his full time job.

Brizendine has been involved with music since he was in second grade, starting with the piano, switching to the tenor sax, and now the bassoon; a recommendation of his current band teacher, Cumpston. He also participates in an exclusive youth music organization called the Portland Youth Philharmonic.

Along with his drive to compose great pieces of music, Brizendine also loves the feeling of accomplishment after writing a piece. He

confesses that it takes a lot of discipline for him to sit down and write sometimes, especially when he is being paid to do so.

Brizendine has already started a composing career. He says sometimes when he has to sit down and write to meet a deadline it feels forced,



Taylor Brizendine pieces together a composition on the piano. The senior, who has a deep passion for music, has been perfecting his art for the last ten years and hopes to be admitted to the Curtis Institute of Music.

Photo by Malia Chong

but he does his best to stay inspired.

"I try to see the good things in nature. If you're too

critical, nothing is inspiring," Brizendine said.

Along with nature, Brizendine is inspired by other composers' work, other music, and people, but says it's not always a specific thing, but all different things at different times. One of his greatest inspirations, though, is Cumpston, his instructor and the teacher of Symphonic Band, in which Brizendine plays.

To Brizendine, Cumpston is not only a great teacher, but also a great friend. Brizendine has spent almost four years, nearly four periods a day with Cumpston, and even more if you count Brizendine and Cumpston's out-of-school relationship which goes as far as Brizendine baby sitting Cumpston's children.

Cumpston says Brizendine is doing amazing things and the reason lies within his personality and spirit. He says Brizendine's great sense of humor, open mind, creativity and free spirit come through in the music he writes and help to make it great.

"I've never had anybody write composition like Taylor," Cumpston said.

Cumpston acknowledges that Brizendine, along with many other talented band students, go unnoticed. "If they're not on stage acting and singing they get overlooked,"

Brizendine agreed.

Brizendine has high aspirations for his future, including attending Curtis, one of the leading music schools in the world which offers scholarships to all 160 students it accepts each year. After graduation, he plans to be a composer in New York City because of his yearning to be in a big city.

Cumpston also has high hopes for Brizendine but says his future will depend on which college he gets into and what professional music connections he makes. Cumpston believes Brizendine's passion, talent and intelligence will take him to where he wants to be.

"Taylor's gonna be the real deal," Cumpston said.

One of Brizendine's favorite things about music is that it can be practiced in so many different ways. He says, for example, with a painting you can either "look at it, or paint it," music can be written, played, listened to, conducted, etc. He appreciates individuality in music, but also thinks music theory is important. Another favorite is the constant improvement he experiences.

"When it comes to music, there's nothing I like more than learning new things and improving what I've done," Brizendine said.

Gay/Straight Alliance makes voice heard

HILLI CIAVARELLO

Staff Reporter

The Gay/Straight Alliance club is geared towards promoting the tolerance of members in the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community. In past years they haven't been as vocal but this year's new president Angela Oliverio and vice-president Taylor Brizendine, seniors, are hoping to make that a thing of the past.

"Homophobia is a major issue at West Linn that affects everyone regardless of sexual orientation. We are trying to create a presence in the school and claim a voice," Oliverio said.

Their goal this year is to create a safe and accepting atmosphere, by reaching out to the school

and the community. The members of GSA have tried to make their voices heard by attending many different national events involved with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer [LGBTQ] community.

"Our club is about celebrating diversity regardless of orientation.

We've tried to make GSA more active this year by being involved with the LGBTQ community," Oliverio said. Events like National Coming Out Day, Ally Week and the Cascade AIDS walk have helped the club be more vocal in and outside of school.

The Cascade AIDS

more than 300 pledges signed.

"I like to think it raised awareness. Most people signed them, but there were some people who weren't as open minded to it," Brizendine said.

The Day of Silence demonstration is also at the top of the list for GSA

members this year. This annual nationwide demonstration, in its 11th year, is held on April 18. It speaks out against LGBTQ bullying in schools and the community. With anticipation for the Day of Silence mounting, comes concern stemming from the repercussions felt two years ago after West Linn was mentioned on the national conservative radio show, *Lars Larson*.

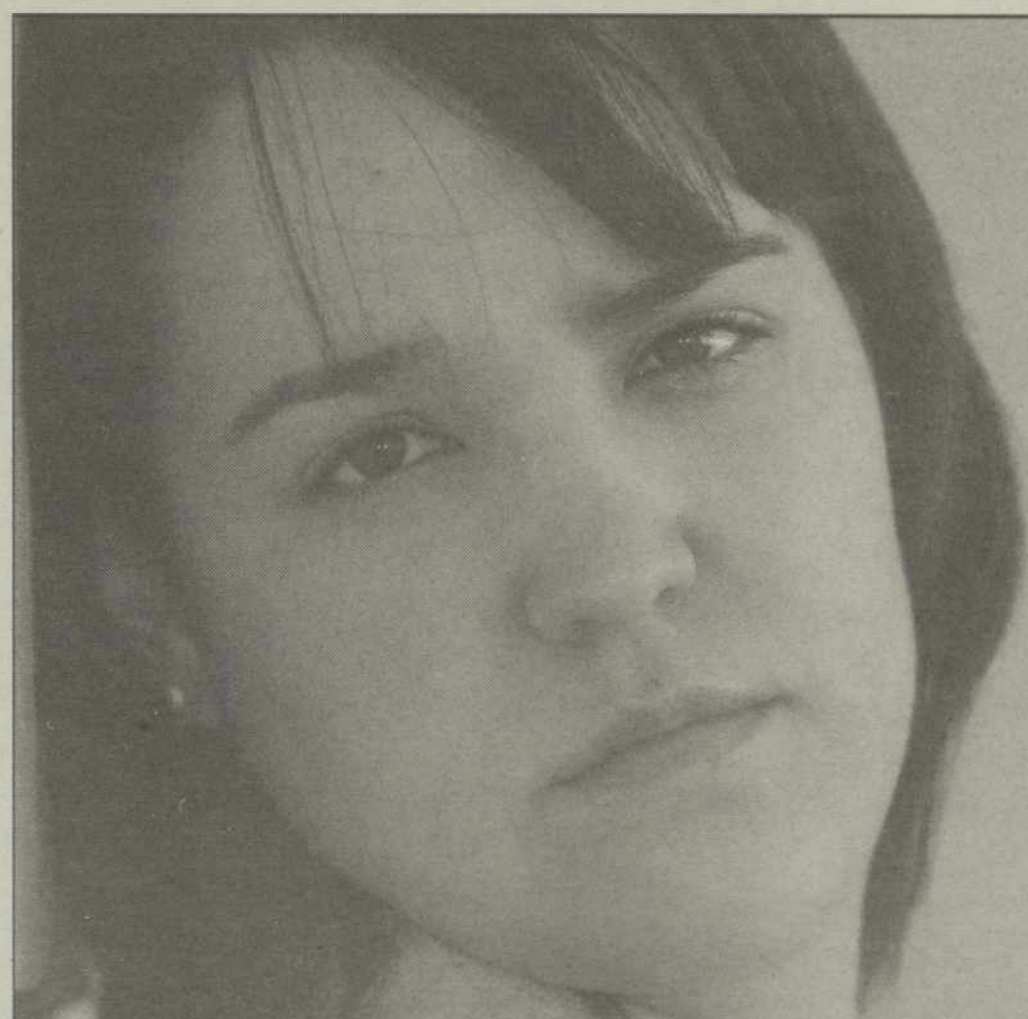
"My excitement for the day outweighs any concerns. We hope to make the Day of Silence a very big deal this year with many participants. My hope is that many people will participate and the silence will be felt throughout the school. We must end the discrimination," Oliverio said.



Angela Oliverio, president, talks with GSA members Anna O'Kain and Ariel Heston, seniors. The club plans to be more active in the community, participating in events like Cascade AIDS Walk and Ally Week.

Photo by Malia Chong

walk, attended by 15 GSA members, took place in downtown Portland on October 13. Ally Week was held the week of October 14-20. It was a national event in which students and teachers pledged to end anti-LGBTQ bullying and harassment in K-12 schools. At WLHS, it was a huge success, with



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