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Student Spotlight

Student: Brian Cole, a Phoenixville resident, is in his senior year at Interlochen Arts Academy in upstate Michigan.

Achievement: Cole switched to Interlochen, a boarding school for art and music students, to focus on the trombone after his freshman year at Phoenixville Area High School. He was one of 141 finalists selected from 7,300 high-schoolers across the country who applied for spots in youngARTS week, held in Miami this past January (all expenses were paid by the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts).

Cole, who won \$1,000 at youngARTS week, was one of many students to earn cash prizes for their talents (\$500,000 was awarded).

"I support him all the way," said Doug Cole, Brian's father. "Partly because I always wanted to be a professional musician when I was younger." Brian's decision to attend Interlochen came after attending a summer camp there. "He came back from that camp and said that's what I want to do for my career, and he hasn't changed his mind since," said Doug.

Question: When I call your cell phone, I don't hear ringing, I just hear random music. So I assume that between the musical phone ring, and the fact that you moved away from home to attend an arts academy, that music plays a large part of your life?

A: (Laughing) Yeah, I just went down to the Verizon store and picked, I think I ten total songs, a few classical, and a few jazz. So yeah, it does.

Q: Why the trombone?

A: I kind of started in fourth grade; it was actually just pure random choice. There wasn't anything that triggered me, I just picked it and stuck with it. At first it was just a hobby, but after playing for a couple of years I started to really enjoy it.

Q: Are there songs that you can rock out to with the trombone? Maybe play some ACDC, or Rolling Stones?

A: No, not so much. It's mainly classical for me, but I'm also in the jazz band.

Q: What's high school life like at Interlochen?

A: It's a pretty small school, with a student body of about 450. It has creative writing, dance, voice, theater, visual arts, but the majority of students are here for music. There still are prerequisites. I'm taking a literature class right now, but everything else is music, with orchestra and jazz ensemble.

Q: How was youngARTS week? Was it beneficial playing with other young prodigies, or were you more intimidated than anything?

A: It was intimidating at first, because I didn't know these kids, and just heard them play, and they all were so good. After I got to know them, though, it was fine. None of them were cocky, and they were all easy to get along with. It was fun.

Q: Sunny Florida in January instead of Michigan. That must have been nice.

A: Yeah, it was awesome. It was the first week we were supposed to be back in school, so I got Florida instead of coming back to Michigan, which was great.

Q: So do you hope to turn pro in trombone? Would you consider playing in a horn section for a band, or do you want to stick with the classical stuff?

A: I'd like to be really versatile and have a bunch of options, be it playing in an orchestra, or teaching. I'd also like to keep jazz alive though, playing in an ensemble, or something.

Cole and a few of his Interlochen classmates were recorded in action for the radio show *From the Top*, which showcases young musical talents. You can hear Cole's trombone skills on *From the Top*'s show at 12:30 p.m on Saturday, airing on 90.1 WRTI-FM.

Will Hobson