

# DeForest looking for his next stage after trumpet talent began at age 7



Dixon teen Maxwell DeForest has played trumpet since the age of seven. Now 18, he's currently applying to several prestigious music schools and is involved with four orchestras in the region, including the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra. (Courtesy photo)

By: Jeff Helfrich

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## Dixon musician: 'Hearing the crowd react, stand and clap is just the best'

DIXON — Maxwell DeForest wanted a trumpet for his seventh birthday.

Eleven years later, the Dixon teen is now applying to prestigious music schools including the likes of The Juilliard School in New York and The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. He joined the Rockford Youth Symphony Orchestra at age nine and the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra when he was a freshman in high school.

"Starting to play trumpet at seven is a lot younger than most," DeForest said. "I was told, 'Ah, he'll try to play it for maybe a month or two and he'll quit.' I was young at the time when I auditioned for

CYSO and many in it were juniors and seniors. Some were sophomores and there's a few freshmen in it now. But it's weird looking back now that I was once them. They're very little. I toured with CYSO around Europe to Leipzig, Berlin, Prague and Vienna. I had a blast doing that."

DeForest has been a finalist each year at the National Trumpet Competition. He's also a part of community orchestras at Northern Illinois University, where he's taken trumpet lessons since he was eight, along with the Kishwaukee Symphony Orchestra in DeKalb.

DeForest credits his trumpet trajectory to the support of his teachers, including his first, Jim Green, who was the only one that would take him on at the young age of seven. DeForest has also learned under NIU Professor Dr. Mark Ponzo, RYSO Conductor Linc Smelser, RYSO Principal Mark Baldin and Dr. Karl Sievers, a retired Oklahoma professor who teaches him remotely.

DeForest's parents, David and Carla, own DeForest Dental in Oregon and spent time over the years driving him to lessons and performances in DeKalb, Rockford, Chicago and more. Carla put 398,000 miles on one of the family vehicles.

"The most difficult part was that Maxwell spent an extensive amount of time in the car," Carla said. "But he enjoyed playing. It was the car rides he didn't like. He enjoys the music aspect of it, even though he might not want to get up for an early audition or recital. He comes home sometimes at 11 p.m. or midnight because the rehearsal in Chicago went to 10 p.m. This is why we do all of that, because he is auditioning at the best schools in the world and he's got a chance."

Maxwell's college application process started in July of last year with essays. He narrowed his desired music schools to a list of 12 or 13. Most of the schools request a professional recording for applications. He got a call back from each school he applied to and he'll perform for those schools in person across the country in coming weeks.

Carla called the rigor of the application process "unbelievable." Maxwell called the music craft "one of the most competitive out there." His trips will include San Francisco, Frost School of Music in Miami, Berklee College of Music and New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, The Juilliard School in New York and Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

"Everyone at my high school is talking about their college plans and committing," Maxwell said. "And I'm still auditioning. I won't know for another few months. It's a lot right now and really busy. I'm doing auditions left and right. I like the teacher the most at Juilliard. His name is Chris Martin and he's the principal trumpet of the New York Philharmonic. He played the Lincoln solo in the movie Lincoln. That was really awesome and him being my favorite teacher makes Juilliard my favorite school. I like the professor at Curtis Institute of Music as well. Curtis is more exclusive and Juilliard and will only take less than five students this year. They take 2.2 percent of students each year."

Maxwell's career plans include securing a trumpet performance degree in school, sitting in a chair in a major orchestra and teaching at a major university to young people like him.

The chance to tour in Europe with the CYSO was Maxwell's favorite opportunity that his trumpet talent has brought.

"It was so much fun," Maxwell said. "It was such a busy schedule, but I really felt like a professional musician and I really liked it. Sure, it was busy and tiring. But I think back and it was one of the greatest times ever."

Maxwell attends high school at Newman Central Catholic High School in Sterling. The school doesn't have a band program, so it allows him to practice trumpet three hours a day between classes as an elective. He's also performed the national anthem at Newman sporting events and plays the piano, another talent of his, at school masses.

When he's not playing music, Maxwell has spent time on Newman's cross country team and enjoys playing video games online with friends and being outdoors.

Maxwell often struggles with the question of why he chose the trumpet as his instrument. His best answer is that he enjoys making music and challenging himself. He believes he's lucky because of the fact that he can play any style, such as jazz, classical or pop.

"I don't want to be limited to a typical style," Maxwell said. "I don't want to be just a jazz player, classical player or pop player. I want to do everything. I don't want to be limited in my abilities. I want to be able to please every audience. I think that's my ultimate goal, just being able to share my music with everybody."

Carla called Maxwell's trumpet career "a family commitment." She said the rest of the family rarely sees him on Sundays because he's gone all day. She believes the opportunity to perform is what drives her son.

"I love the audience," Maxwell said. "Hearing the crowd react, stand and clap is just the best."