

The Evangelical Covenant Church

Covenant Teen Lives the Dream: Carnegie Hall

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Most musicians can only dream of performing at Carnegie Hall, but a teenage Covenanter recently had the opportunity.

Sophomore Lauren Asimakoupoulos and two friends were among 76 people chosen from across the country to perform with the National Wind Ensemble at the legendary venue on May 25. She was one of the youngest of the musicians, who were chosen from among high school, college and graduate students.

“I was petrified!” Asimakoupoulos says. “I felt so honored to be chosen for this ensemble containing some of the most brilliant musicians I have ever heard.”

Asimakoupoulos plays flute with the worship team at Mercer Island Covenant Church in Mercer Island, Washington, where her father, Greg, is the pastor. She also participates year-round in flute and concerto competitions.

The director of bands at Mercer Island High School, where Asimakoupoulos attends, encouraged her to audition for the ensemble. The 10-year-old ensemble was founded to identify talented wind musicians in high school and colleges from across the country and offer them intensive training in New York

Ensemble members practiced a week before the concert. They performed pieces by Wagner, Bach, Penn and Bernstein.

Before her trip, Asimakoupoulos familiarized herself with the history of Carnegie Hall and the notables who had performed on its stage. “So, entering into this powerful music venue was breathtaking,” she says.

The flutist said musicians had to adjust to the Carnegie Hall acoustics. “At first in rehearsal, it was very hard to get used to the hall because it is one of the most resonant

halls in the world,” Asimakoupoulos explains. “This pretty much means that playing a short note is impossible because it will ring on forever! But after several hours of practice a day, we learned not only the notes that were put before us, but also how to come together to create a common sound that truly was music from our hearts.”

But learning the notes and adjusting to the acoustics was just the beginning. “One can only teach so much technical lines and phrases,” Asimakoupoulos says. “But the love for the music is something that cannot be taught. And looking back on that amazing week, I can say without a doubt that each and every person I met in the ensemble had the same passion for what they played, just as I did.”

The passion and skill were both evident – and the performance received rave reviews. The evening was extra special for her parents. It was their 25th wedding anniversary. “Our daughter's concert was the highlight of an event-filled week,” Greg says.

As for Lauren, she says, “I will never forget this awesome experience.”

