Seeking a critical prize

Wellington woman competing for first-ever Rubin Prize in Music Criticism

Joe Dilworth
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OBERLIN — Many Oberlin College students spend their January semesters bolstering their resumes and savoring their free time.

Meghan Farnsworth, however, will be doing what she loves and competing for a $10,000 prize in the process.

Farnsworth, of Wellington, will be competing for the first-ever Rubin Prize in Music Criticism today through Saturday.

Farnsworth is one of 10 Oberlin students selected to review four concerts in as many days.

The writing will be evaluated by professional journalists and participants will be required to meet specific submission requirements concerning deadline and length.

The event promises to be stressful and demanding.

“I don’t think I’ll be able to sleep,” said Farnsworth, 22, a musical studies major.

Farnsworth has been infatuated with music from a young age. She remembers watching her father play guitar for his band “Synergy” and, by age 7, she was training as a singer with the Oberlin Choristers.

As her music talents blossomed, Farnsworth began to take interest in journalism. Last January, Farnsworth took an internship with ClevelandClassical.com, working as a New York City correspondent. Earlier this month, she returned to New York to work as an intern for the “Hechinger Report,” a publication of the Teachers College at Columbia University.

Farnsworth will put her experience to use on the first night of the competition when she will review a performance by the Cleveland Orchestra.

She says the thought of being judged by successful critics is both intimidating and exciting.

Farnsworth is looking forward to working with one critic in particular. She considers Alex Ross, a staff writer for The New Yorker, an inspiration.

“He’s unlike any other critic I’ve ever read before,” she said. “He’s an amazing writer and an amazing person.”

Farnsworth also said she is excited about being reunited with the other members of Rubin Institute Fellows group. Though they are all striving for the same award, Farnsworth insists that there is no negativity in the competition.

“It’s been really great,” she said. “Everyone’s really respectful and really smart. It’s a great batch of people.”

Following graduation, Farnsworth hopes to live in New York City working as a freelance writer or landing an interesting job.

She hopes to attend graduate school to earn a degree in journalism or arts administration, perhaps at Columbia University.

Farnsworth says that a $10,000 prize would certainly help push her closer toward achieving her goals.

Contact Joe Dilworth at 329-7155 or jdlworth@chroniclet.com.