

## Student achievement

### Hitting all the high notes

The absolute best of the best.

That's how Albany Pro Musica describes the company Albany High School senior Ariel Hellwitz is keeping these days. She is one of 12 Capital Region singers selected for the organization's prestigious high school apprentice program.

"She is an incredibly talented student," said Albany High choral director Brendan Hoffman.



A gifted soprano from a talented musical family, Ariel was chosen from the most competitive applicant pool in Albany Pro Musica's history. It is the most recent honor in a rapidly expanding resume for Ariel, who didn't take up singing seriously until her sophomore year.

Since then, she has made All-State twice and spent two intensive weeks last summer in one of the finest programs in the eastern United States.

Yet, there was a moment during that summer experience, at Crane Youth Music at the State University of New York at Potsdam, that challenged her resolve to continue the hard work that has helped turn her natural gift into a unique talent.

Her first bad review.

"She tore apart my solo," Ariel said. "I was thinking, 'I'll never sing again.'"

Understanding that singing is a subjective craft – "Everyone has a different idea of how a voice should sound," Ariel said – she continued on her musical journey.

"You have to step away and say, 'What can I take from this experience,'" she said.

While singing is her greatest love, Ariel's interests are many. She plays the flute, piano and guitar, and also enjoys literature and conservation. In the spring, she plays rugby.

Yes, rugby!

“It’s a great challenge for anyone and I don’t think you have to be really ‘diesel’ to play,” she said. “You just have to have confidence.”

Ariel is considering music or literature as a major; teaching in an urban school district is her ultimate goal.

She is grateful for the opportunities Albany High has provided her in every aspect, and credits Mr. Hoffman in particular as an inspiration.

“To have somebody make a comment like that, that means everything,” he said. “That’s why we’re here, all of us, as teachers. That’s the goal, to be able to pass that feeling along and to have it continue.”

Ariel hopes for a chance to return the favor some day.