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**ACHIEVER | SARA SOLTAU**

## Manual grad wins jazz society scholarship

**By Patti Smith**

Special to The Courier-Journal

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Sara Soltau's parents were hosts to a violinist from Germany when she was 6 years old.

She remembers being so mesmerized by his playing that she asked her parents for violin lessons.

"I remember telling my parents, 'I want to play just like him,' " she said.

Soltau now 18 and a graduate of duPont Manual High School, was honored as the Louisville Jazz Society's 2007 Jamey Aebersold Summer Jazz Workshop Scholarship winner.

She said she started jazz violin lessons about a year ago because she wanted to expand outside classical music.

As part of her scholarship, Sara got to attend one of two weeklong workshops last month at the University of Louisville, said Nancy Grant, president of the Louisville Jazz Society.

About 400 students from all over the world attended the workshops.

Lessons focused on jazz improvisation and small-group performance and included instruction from more than 70 U.S. performers and educators.

Soltau, who is trained in classical violin, also has studied jazz improvisation at U of L and has played in the jazz ensemble at the Youth Performing Arts School. She is a member of the Louisville Youth Orchestra as well.

Grant said the scholarship selection committee was impressed with Soltau and her desire to learn jazz violin. She said Soltau is the first violinist to be offered the scholarship.

One of the things that makes jazz great is that even though some of the tunes are nearly 100 years old, listeners can often feel like they're hearing them for the first time, Grant said.

"Every time people get together to play jazz, it's new and different because of their skills (at improvisation), and we wanted to encourage a young violinist because we thought she could add something special."

Soltau lives in the Highlands with her parents, Joern and Karin Soltau, and siblings Lenna, 13, and Carl, 8. She will major in music at the University of North Carolina.

Grant said the workshops are designed to challenge students to play at their highest level. Soltau said the experience was overwhelming at first because she quickly realized she has a lot to learn.

But the language barrier between program participants was only a problem while trying to speak. When the music started, Soltau said,

it was as if everyone was speaking the same dialect.

"We could communicate through music," she said. "Especially in jazz, where you're improvising. It's like your own voice coming through."

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