

## **Sara Smith 2019 Celebration Award Winner**

**1)** I first heard about the Celebration of Women and Their Music from my mom who heard about it from her coworker and friend. In addition, my mom has known Deb Jenkins for years and her involvement in music.

**2)** I am a senior in high school so the majority of my days are filled with homework. I'm involved in speech and debate, so much of my time is spent researching and writing cases regarding this year's debate topic and preparing for tournaments. I am passionate about public speaking, debate, policy making, and politics. I'm a 2nd degree blackbelt in Taekwondo and have been fortunate to pursue martial arts for many years.

In addition to speech, debate, and taekwondo, I have been very involved in music. I am a member of the Fargo Moorhead Area Youth Symphony, play violin and sing on my church's worship team, take private violin lessons from Sarah Lang, and most recently I was a member of the pit orchestra for the FMCT production of Sweeney Todd. I'm also in the thick of college scholarship and admission applications. Between all of this my time is pretty well spent. :)

**3)** I plan to continue to play the violin for life. My passion for violin (and music in general) has only grown over the past year. Recently I finished building my own Hardanger (Norwegian) fiddle. I had the amazing opportunity to apprentice master luthier Bud Larsen and learn the art of building a hardanger fiddle. After about two years and 200 hours of work, it is very exciting to play music on a fiddle that I built myself.

**4)** The Celebration of Women and Their Music reinforced my belief in the saying "empowered women, empower women." There is something powerful about musicians and women mentoring and investing in the next generation of women and musicians. It encourages me to know that other women in the FM area care enough to put time and effort into an event like Celebration, giving me the opportunity to share my violin playing with others. Ultimately I hope I can influence the lives of girls the way women such as Deb Jenkins, and others from Celebration, have influenced mine.

**5)** I came away from the celebration feeling very encouraged. I loved meeting the other women and listening to the various types of music. Music has a way of bringing people together and so many women celebrating the gift of music was a wonderful experience. I also know that I am the musician and the person I am today because of the people who have used their time to invest in me... whether it be teachers, conductors, friends, or family. I hope to give back and invest in the lives of other musicians and girls.

**6)** My advice would be to enjoy the time meeting the other participants and mentors. Celebration is a wonderful opportunity to meet supportive women and listen to many different types of music. It's also a wonderful opportunity to consider the impact you can have on the girls and musicians around you.

**7)** One of the highlights of the Celebration for me was connecting with Deb Jenkins. She has such a big heart and it's been a privilege to get to know her. Another connection I made was with one of the celebration photographers. He was very interested in learning more about the Hardanger fiddle I built as, if I remember correctly, he is of Norwegian heritage. I remember meeting him at the rehearsal on the day of the Celebration and it was neat talking to him.

**8)** This month I had the opportunity to play violin in the pit orchestra for the FMCT production of Sweeney Todd. The music is fantastic, the conductor was Brian Cole (one of my all-time favorite conductors), and the other pit members were so much fun. I remember coming home from rehearsals and performances so happy and thankful for the amazing opportunity to play alongside such wonderful musicians. Throughout the play there were specific moments where the beauty and excitement of the music were especially thrilling. I remember one part specifically where the violin and cello had a duet playing this beautiful melody. I believe in the importance of playing music with passion and expression. That specific part of the music lent itself so well to expression and passion. It made me very grateful and excited to play the violin.

