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Laird award helps trumpet graduate at UW-Stevens Point

With a quick smile and shock of curly red hair, Bennett Heinz, of Kronenwetter, is easy to spot.

What really makes him stand out is his trumpet playing.

“Heinz might be the finest overall musician to graduate from UW-Stevens Point in the past 20 years I’ve been here,” said his former professor, Charles Young of the Music Department. “He is a remarkable individual who will be outstanding as a professional musician.”

In recognition of his talent and efforts, Heinz received the 2014 Melvin R. Laird Exceptional Artist Award. The $5,000 prize is given to help an exceptional graduating UW-Stevens Point student succeed in the performing or visual arts. It was established by former U.S. Secretary of Defense and Wisconsin Congressional representative Melvin Laird and members of the Laird Endowment Advisory Board.

Having earned a degree in jazz studies and music performance last December, Heinz has big plans for the award.

“Just as a chef must have numerous knives and utensils and a photographer must have different lenses, successful trumpet players must have different tools to get each job done,” he said. “Two new trumpets will allow me to work in various performing situations that are currently impossible for me.”

Heinz was aided in his purchase by UW-Stevens Point alumnus, Andrew Naumann, a 1997 music graduate and the owner of Schilke trumpets. Naumann made these instruments available at dealer cost. The high-end pieces will serve Heinz throughout his entire music career.

He cites music faculty members Young, Brent Turney and Mathew Buchman as inspirations. Turney worked with him before he was a student at UW-Stevens Point. “That guidance really showed me what path I needed to take,” he said

Heinz graduated with a double major in jazz studies and music performance, and also won the Chancellor’s Leadership Award and multiple scholarships. He has been accepted into this fall’s masters in jazz studies program at DePaul University, and plans to earn his doctoral degree before pursuing a career as a professional performer and educator.

“I am so appreciative of the opportunity to even be able to apply for an award like this,” Heinz said. “It will kick start my career and benefit me the rest of my life.”

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