

HOMESCHOOLED HERO:

Melissa Hart:

shining in the arts

Melissa Hart has a love and passion for performing. At just 23 years old, she operates a private music studio, and is a freelance performing artist in singing, acting, films, and dance. Last year, she performed in *Beauty and the Beast* at Winnipeg's Rainbow Stage and she is currently working in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. She has traveled internationally since 2008 as the soprano solo artist for the Chai Folk Ensemble. In 2007, Melissa was chosen as one of three musicians from Manitoba to participate in the National Artist's Program at the Canadian Winter Games in the Yukon. She was also nominated in 2007 by the Canadian Council for the Arts as one of the top 25 emerging artists in her province.

Warren and Marian Hart home educated both Melissa and her younger brother from kindergarten to the end of high school. For a time, Melissa resisted what was expected of her by her musical family, and pursued education and a career in Political Science. However, while watching a performance of *The Magic Flute* in grade 12, she realized that music was her destiny. In one year, having no previous experience, she had completed all the required prerequisites for university entrance: grades 5 and 6 piano, grades 1 and 2 theory, and grade 7 voice!

Melissa loved the flexibility provided by homeschooling and credits home education for much of her success. Learning how to prioritize and a very strong work ethic taught her how to value and focus on what was important. She feels the way her parents structured her high school years caused her to be more self-directed and disciplined, which have proven invaluable assets both in university and for her career. For Melissa, the lack of peer pressure helped her form her own identity, the one thing she feels is the most important factor



in performing since auditioning involves the ability to sell yourself and stand out as unique.

Melissa was accepted to the Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg where she is completing two simultaneous Bachelor of Music degrees. She began with a Bachelor in Music Education when she was "bit" by the performance bug in second year. The Dean granted her the permission to take on an unusually heavy course load by adding a Vocal Performance degree. Melissa is scheduled to complete her second degree this coming April and has remained on the Dean's honour roll throughout. Next year, she hopes to travel

more and possibly work either with Disney or on the cruise lines. Melissa expects her love for learning will eventually lead to a Master's or Ph.D. degree in either Theatre or Musicology. The ultimate dream for Melissa is to perform on Broadway but until then, she will continue to apply for various performance opportunities. 🎭

Advice Melissa has for those considering the performing arts field is: know who you are, don't compromise, never give up, and keep working for what you want. Melissa would love to correspond with those considering the arts. She can be reached at melissa.hart@shaw.ca