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Sister Sopranos

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Sister sopranos

Two dazzling voices have forged a friendship bound by their passion for music.

Chelsea Janzen '12 and Kayla Wilkens '12 share striking similarities in their musical successes and goals. But the so-called "sister sopranos" have not let their competitive natures affect their friendship.

At Linfield, the sopranos have learned that being successful requires more than just developing one's voice. It takes practice, listening to recordings, studying foreign languages and learning to communicate with the audience.

"Much of what we do is about communication and bringing those words alive," said Wilkens. "As a singer you have to be every inch the musician and performer. You have to know your music. You have to be a historian and know the composer and his intentions."

"I want my music to inspire the audience," said Janzen. "I want them to have a reaction. I want them to understand the music I am presenting."

Janzen and Wilkens attribute much of their success to Linfield's close-knit music program and faculty. They came to Linfield to continue studying with Gwen Leonard, professor emerita of music.

"Though they both have similar energy and brightness for performance, they have developed unique voice qualities and ranges," Leonard said.

Janzen first performed in church at age 3 and Wilkens took the stage at age 4. The two met in high school when they sang a duet and formed an instant bond. Each has received

numerous prestigious awards. Wilkens was recently the only solo vocalist of 10 musicians in the nationally recognized 18th Annual Young Artists Debut concert. Janzen won the Metro Arts competition in 2007 and Wilkens in 2008 and 2012.

Wilkens and Janzen have performed together in various Gallery Theater productions and performed the world premiere of Libby Larsen's "Moabit Sonnets" with the Linfield Chamber Orchestra in 2011. They missed graduation to participate in the *Classical Singer Magazine's* undergraduate university competition in Chicago, Ill.

"We sing so well together because we have been taught the same way," said Wilkens. "We approach singing very similarly."

The natural quality of their voices is what sets the two apart. Wilkens is classified as lyric coloratura and Janzen as soubrette.

"I've heard my voice described as having a lot of gold," said Janzen. "It is deeper, where as Kayla's is silver and higher."

Despite their competitive spirits, they serve as a support system and often help one another with musical techniques. "It's difficult to find people who understand how hard it is to learn to sing," said Wilkens.

Wilkens and Janzen have developed into well-respected musicians, according to Faun Tiedge, department chair and professor of music at Linfield.

"They are rigorous and disciplined in their approach to the music and also seek to make it their own," Tiedge said.

Their hard work has paid off. Wilkens and Janzen are each considering prestigious graduate programs and plan to make music their careers.

The passion for song continues to burn inside Linfield's star sopranos. They have grown as friends and musicians to become an unstoppable pair. 🍷

– Alison Bouchard '12

Chelsea Janzen '12, right, and Kayla Wilkens '12 are friends as well as performers.

