



Davidson Fellow
Saraswathi Shukla

(\$25,000 Scholarship Recipient)



Personal Info

Saraswathi Shukla

Age: 17

Princeton, New Jersey

School, College and Career Plans

Saraswathi will start Princeton University this fall as a prospective history major. She plans to pursue graduate studies and an academic career in musicology.

Davidson Fellows Submission (*Outside the Box - Musicology*) In her project, “Mesmerizing Music: Sound, Imagination, and Communication in the Mesmeric Séance,” Saraswathi conducted an in-depth study of sound and music

in Franz-Anton Mesmer's theory of animal magnetism. Combining history, music, language, and literature, she examined the role of music in Mesmer's therapeutic séances in the context of broader changes in the popular perception of sound in pre-Revolution Paris. The importance of sound in mesmerism indicates that music played a greater role in the history of medicine than previously thought and presents new ways to analyze scientific theories of this period.

Biography

Homeschooled throughout high school, Saraswathi has played piano for 13 years and harpsichord for five years, but only recently became interested in musicology. Studying French language and literature intensively for four years, Saraswathi audited 20 undergraduate courses at Princeton University in music, math, French, Latin, history, and art, as well as four graduate seminars in musicology. Because she was homeschooled, Saraswathi did not follow a standard high school curriculum. Initially, she took private lessons with tutors in writing, Latin, French and music theory.

Her research for the Davidson Fellows Scholarship allowed her to combine her knowledge of history, music, language, and literature into an interdisciplinary study of the role of music in Mesmer's séances and its reflection in the popular culture of late 18th century France. Saraswathi will be presenting her research at two academic conferences this fall.

In her spare time, she enjoys playing harpsichord and piano, reading, playing board games with her family, and learning to tango.

Please see next page.



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(Cont.)

Honors/Awards

- 2008 Davidson Fellow
- 2008 American Fine Arts Festival winner, performance at Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall
- 2008 Golden Key Festival winner, performance at Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall
- 2008 Fundraising concert featuring young musicians from the Princeton area to benefit Autism Speaks and Westminster Conservatory
- 2007 American Fine Arts Festival winner, performance at the German Cultural Center, NYC
- 2007 Golden Key Festival winner, performance at Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall
- 2007 Cecilian Music Club Young Artists' Competition winner
- 2007 National French Exam, first place, New Jersey
- 2007 Fundraising concert featuring young musicians from the Princeton area to benefit Camp Quality New Jersey and The Discovery Orchestra
- 2006 Cecilian Music Club Young Artists' Competition winner, performance at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center
- 2006 American Music Teachers' League, honorable mention
- 2006 American Fine Arts Festival winner, performance at German Cultural Center, New York City

Community Activities

Saraswathi is a classical music disc jockey on Princeton's radio station, WPRB, and, for the past two years, has organized benefit concerts for non-profit organizations featuring young musicians in the Princeton area.

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