



Concert Band Receives Two Highest Ratings at District

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University School's High School Concert Band achieved the highest rating of Superior for both concert performance and sight-reading. The students performed live over the course of three days in a formal concert setting with an audience that included noted experts in the field of band performance. As a result of the judge's critical evaluation, the band earned a spot at the state-level assessments, a first for USchool.

The recognition for USchool's Concert Band is particularly gratifying considering that the number of members technically equaled that of a "wind ensemble." This means that only one player was responsible for a part, versus many. The extra challenge made Band Director David Walker especially proud of the Superior rating accomplishment, he said, since most bands are twice the size which provides some "safety in numbers." In order to qualify for state, judges critique on the basis of six performance fundamentals such as intonation, balance and blend; 11 technical preparation elements such as note and rhythmic accuracy, clarity and precision; and seven musical effects ranging from style and phrasing to dynamic expression. For the sight-reading assessment, the band has only three minutes to review a piece -- without touching their instruments -- before students are expected to play the music from start to finish with no hesitation and minimal errors.

Another impressive characteristic of the USchool Concert Band is that many students strive to master not just a single instrument, but multiple ones so that they can also perform with the USchool Jazz Band, or "double" when serving in the pit orchestras for USchool musicals.

The members of the superior-rated band by instrument are: Victoria Roberts (Piccolo); Kristen Lemes and Victoria Roberts (Flute); Alina Besada and Brandon Vilarello (Oboe); Andres Gomez, Craig Warlen and Alyssa

Woodruff (Clarinet); Sarah Gordon (Bassoon); Zachary Meles and Brandon Vilarello (Alto Saxophone); Logan Hammel (Tenor Saxophone), Eric Sopshin (Bass Clarinet); Garrett Payne (French Horn); David Branse, Nathan Osborn, Natalie Weiner and Andres Zalduondo (Trumpet); Jordan Greissman (Euphonium); Stephen Gaffley, (Trombone); Nick Katz (Tuba); and Rueben Mann and Austin Payne (Percussion).

USchool's Jazz Band also tested well, achieving an Excellent rating. The members of the Jazz Band are: Victoria Roberts, Brandon Vilarello, Eric Sopshin, Danny Sepler, Evan Neustater, Jordan Greissman, Stephen Gaffley, Andres Zalduondo, Jon Lyons, Nicky Crispino, Natalie Weiner, Austin Payne, Reid Wasserman, Nick Katz and Eduardo Zigelboim.

Individually, USchool band members captured 11 Superior ratings and one Excellent rating (out of 12 total events performed by six students) at the Florida Bandmaster's Association District Solo & Ensemble Assessment as well as four Superior ratings and three Excellent ratings at the state level assessment.

In developing students, Walker says that a large band setting can give students a feeling of security in that mistakes may be less noticeable. The solo and ensemble aspect of band, however, ensures that students do not grow to rely on the ability to "hide." and that they perform at all times "at their utter best." Demands further differ with each size combination. Playing a solo requires the student to take full responsibility for learning the music and not just playing the notes, but all the nuances of a piece – correct intonation, tone quality, articulation, etc. A small ensemble like a duet or trio requires the participants to meticulously prepare their individual parts while also understanding the role each instrument plays. Small ensembles also develop a sense of musicality through non-verbal communication with the other group members.

Beyond musicianship, leadership is yet another quality that Walker strives to instill in his Concert Band students. To provide a growth opportunity similar to marching band drum majors, Walker provides an honors credit option for student conductors.

"I have always used band officers to try to develop leaders within the band since a large group needs that kind of support from within," Walker said. "This year I had three very talented sophomores participate in the program, and it will definitely help them evolve their leadership in the years to come."



Individual achievements by this year's University School Concert Band members are as follows:

Florida Bandmaster's Association State Solo and Ensemble Music

Performance Assessment: Jordan Greissman (Trombone & Piano solos) – Excellent (2); Kristin Lemes (Flute solo) – Superior; Victoria Roberts* (Flute solo & Piccolo solo) – Superior (2); Brandon Vilarello (Oboe & Flute solos) – Superior (2) and (Piccolo solo) – Excellent; Victoria Roberts and Kristen Lemes (Flute duet) - Superior.

Florida Bandmaster's Association District Solo and Ensemble District Solo and Ensemble Results: Alina Besada (Oboe solo) – Superior; Stephen Gaffley (Trombone solo) – Excellent; Jordan Greissman* (Trombone & Piano solos) – Superior (2); Kristin Lemes* (Flute solo & Flute duet) – Superior (2); Victoria Roberts* (Flute solo, Piccolo solo, Flute duet, Saxophone duet) – Superior (4); Brandon Vilarello* (Oboe solo, Flute solo, Piccolo solo and Saxophone duet) – Superior (4).

**State Qualifier, achieved "Superior" rating playing Grade 5 (college level) material.*

All-State Band: Victoria Roberts and Brandon Vilarello

All-County Band: Nisha Chaudhuri, Kristen Lemes and Victoria Roberts