

# Press Release

## Symphony Orchestra End of an Era Concert

The Ponca City High School Symphony Orchestra will be presenting their Annual Spring Concerto Concert Friday evening, May 11, at 7:00, in the High School Howell Auditorium. The group is under the baton of Dan P. Larson, Director of Orchestras at the high school. Paula Cochran and Katie Rolf assist each day and teach orchestra at the middle and elementary schools. Andrew Orr has assisted with the wind and percussion section of the Symphony Orchestra. This concert will mark the end of an era. This will be the last orchestra concert in the Howell Auditorium, with the new concert hall opening next fall, and it will mark the end Mr. Larson's long teaching career in Ponca City.

The Po-Hi 2018 OSSAA Sweepstakes Award winning Symphony Orchestra will open with *Poet and Peasant Overture* by Franz von Suppe (1819-1895). This overture takes its title from a production of an 1846 play by the same name. However, it is believed he used it for incidental music on earlier plays, as composers sometimes recycled their music. Suppe sold this overture to a Munich music publisher for around \$25, who subsequently made a great profit on it. The opening section features a cello solo being performed by Cassidy Broome.

*Ase's Death* from *Peer Gynt Suite No. 1* by Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) will be next on the program. This beautiful work is the second movement of the suite and is written for strings only. The story of *Peer Gynt* comes from Henrik Ibsen's Norwegian drama written in 1876. Ase is Peer Gynt's mother. Peer Gynt has been a wayward son, living a troublesome life, returning home to speak to his mother as she dies.

In March, a concerto audition was held to select the senior performers to be featured in this year's final concert. First up will be Brayden Smith on trombone. Brayden will be performing the first movement of *Concerto for Trombone and Orchestra* by Launy Grondahl (1886-1960). Grondahl was a fine violinist, conductor and composer. He wrote three concerti with the trombone concerto being written in 1924. Brayden earned a superior rating on this solo at OSSAA State Solo & Ensemble contest this year and has been principal chair of the Po-Hi trombone section for the past two years.

One more musical work will bring the orchestra to intermission. This will be *Finale from Symphony No. 5* by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), as arranged by Charles Woodhouse. Written between 1804-1808, this is one of the best known symphonies in classical music and one of the most frequently performed. Although the symphony begins in the key of c minor, Beethoven chose to defy tradition and write the finale in a different key (that of C major). When asked about this Beethoven is reported to have said, "Many assert that every minor piece must end in minor....No! Joy follows sorrow, sunshine follows rain." This is in reference to the contrast of the Finale with the somber mood of the symphony's first movement opening.

Recognition of senior musicians and their parents will be done at this time during the program. The Symphony Orchestra has 23 senior members this year, of which 20 are string musicians. This group of musicians helped lead this organization to its sixth consecutive OSSAA Sweepstakes Award, the first time this has happened in the history of the Po-Hi orchestra program.

Opening the second part of the concert will be the other two soloists for the evening. First up will be Cassidy Broome. She has been selected to the All-State Orchestra, was a State Superintendent's Art's Excellence award recipient, and has been principal cellist of the Po-Hi Orchestra and OSU Youth Orchestra for two years. She will be performing *Les Larmes de Jacqueline (The Tears of Jacqueline) for Cello and String Orchestra* by Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880). The final soloist for the evening will be Jenna Wynes, concertmaster of the Po-Hi Orchestra for the past two years and recipient of superior solo ratings at OSSAA State Solo and Ensemble Contest for three consecutive years. She will perform the *Romance* movement from *Concerto No. 2 for Violin and Orchestra* by Henri Wieniawski (1835-1880).

*Russian Sailors' Dance* by Reinhold Gliere, arranged by Merle Issac, will be next. This selection has received wide popularity, although the rest of the ballet is not well known. It is brief, but fiery, and distinctively Russian. Its form is theme and variations, in which the presentation is awkward and heavy to suggest Russian sailors attempting to negotiate intricate dance steps on land after being at sea for several months.

Using the lush and modal harmonies associated with the French Impressionistic period, *Of Glorious Plumage* by Richard Meyer, will be performed next. This beautiful string orchestra selection paints a musical scene of birds, both at rest and in flight. However, there are no birds calls in the selection, as is so often the case in pieces depicting birds.

The Symphony Orchestra will perform its final section of the night with Symphonic Highlights from Walt Disney Pictures' *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*. Music for this was composed by Hans Zimmer, with this arrangement written by Paul Lavender and Robert Longfield. After the introduction, works featured in this fun selection are *Singapore*, *I See Dead People in Boats*, *Up is Down*, and *Drink Up Me Hearties*. This arrangement by Lavender and Longfield has adapted the exciting film score with this well-paced medley that captures the most dramatic moments of the original soundtrack.

It has become a tradition of the string section to conclude the final concert of the year, the final selection the senior class will perform as a member of this organization, with *On a Hymnsong of Philip Bliss* by David Holsinger. This beautiful work is based on the moving hymn *It is Well with My Soul*. Mr. Larson said, "This is one of the orchestra's favorite pieces to perform. They know the history of the hymn and how to bring the music to life. I can't believe there is a group anywhere who performs this selection any better than they do. They play with such heart."

The community is cordially invited to the last performance to be given by this award-winning group of musicians. "This orchestra senior class have been wonderful ambassadors for our community during their time here at Po-Hi," added Mr. Larson. "They are a terrific group of young people." There is no admission charge to the event.

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