

Po-Hi 2016-2017 Orchestra Has Outstanding Year



The Ponca City High School Orchestra has enjoyed a remarkable year led by an outstanding senior class of 20 string musicians. It all began with a performance by the Symphony Strings (top orchestra at Po-Hi) at the Oklahoma State School Board Association Convention on Saturday afternoon, August 27, in Oklahoma City. There were around 2,000 members at the convention and the orchestra received a standing ovation for their effort.

A few weeks later, on September 17, the third annual joint concert with the Stillwater High School Orchestra took place in their Performing Arts Center. Each school performed two selections alone and then joined together to perform two selections. These three years represent the first time our high school has participated in this type of activity.

In November, the 60-member Symphony Strings (top string orchestra at Po-Hi) headed off to Edmond Santa Fe High School for the first Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association (OSSAA) Contest of the year. The group earned all superior ratings at this State String Orchestra Contest. They performed *Introduction and Allegro* by Joseph Bodin de Boismortier, arranged by Robert McCashin, and *The Odyssey (Journey of Odysseus)* by Soon Hee Newbold. This contest has been in place 15 years. Our orchestra has competed in 14 of these contests and earned 13 consecutive superior ratings.

The orchestra was fortunate to have two string members selected to the All-State Orchestra this year. Senior string bass musician, Macy Willett, earned a spot for the second time. Cassidy Broome, junior cellist, also made the honor group. They performed in the All-State Orchestra concert at the Oklahoma Music Educators Association Convention in January. In April, both Cassidy and Macy were two of the recipients for the State Superintendent Award for Arts Excellence.

Eleven students travelled to Winfield, Kansas, on January 24, to participate in the Southwestern College Honor Orchestra Festival. Those participating in the day-long honor orchestra were Alex Bird, Reygan Braga, Christian Branch, Joshua Branch, Cassidy Broome, Louis Gonzales, Tyrese Hinman, Madison Kimbrel, Violet Knowles, Noah Raza, and Hanna Thiry. The Po-Hi Symphony Orchestra was invited to open the concert that evening. Several of the directors, who were from Kansas and had never heard our group, were amazed at the performance level they displayed.

On February 15, the 88-member Symphony Orchestra was in competition at the OSSAA State Orchestra Contest at Edmond Santa Fe. In concert-performance, the group earned all superior ratings performing *Sentimental Saraband* from *Simple Symphony* by Benjamin Britten and *Millennium* by Richard Meyer. In the past 42 years at this OSSAA competition, the Po-Hi Orchestra has earned 37 superior ratings in concert, including ten consecutive years. The strings then headed into the sight-reading room for the second part of the contest. They earned all superior ratings in this area of competition, as well. In the same 42 years, the Po-Hi Orchestra has

earned 35 superior ratings in this part of contest, including five consecutive.

After large group contests were completed, solo and ensemble contests began. Nine ensembles and five solos qualified at OSSAA District Solo and Ensemble Contest for the State Contest held on the Oklahoma State University campus. Four of these solos and nine ensembles earned a superior rating at State to bring the medal count for both contests to a total of 136. Cassidy Broome, Kate Cain, Noah Raza, and Macy Willett were the solos earning top marks at State. Two of the ensembles were 18-member chamber groups. For 16 consecutive years, at least one chamber group has earned a superior rating at OSSAA State Solo and Ensemble Contest. In 52 opportunities, these chamber groups have earned 50 superior ratings (some years more than one chamber group was entered).

With the results from the November and February large-group contests and State Solo and Ensemble Contest, the orchestra earned the 2017 OSSAA Sweepstakes Accent Award. This is the top award given by OSSAA to outstanding organizations. The Po-Hi Orchestra has earned 28 of these distinguished OSSAA Sweepstakes Awards in the past 42 years, including five consecutive years. This is the first time in the long history of the Po-Hi orchestra that the group has earned five consecutive OSSAA Sweepstakes Awards.

The Symphony Orchestra earned the OSSAA Academic Achievement Award Certificate for having a cumulative grade point average between 3.25 and 3.50. The group had a cumulative grade point of 3.463 this year.

For four consecutive years, the orchestra earned all superior ratings from all judges at large group OSSAA contests. Senior string orchestra members include: Reygan Braga, Christian Branch, Brennan Burlie, Trey Cremers, Karina Eguia, Rebekah Gilliland, Randall Golay, Emily Hackney, Olivia Jackson, Violet Knowles, Jarrett Lay, Jayde Nichols, Megan Patterson, Noah Raza, Michael Stinson, Hana Thiry, Matthew Walker, Macy Willett, Jared Wilson, and Mitchell Wilson. Senior members of the wind and percussion section of the symphony are: Brody Anderson, Brady Bookout, Joshua Chrisman, Lacy Hooper, Sarah Quaid, Autumn Thiele, and Matthew Williams. There are many award-winning students and musicians in this group of 27 students. Orchestra directors at the high school are Dan Larson, Paula Cochran and Katie Rolf. Andrew Orr, band director, assisted with the wind and percussion of the full orchestra at every rehearsal and performance.

“This year has been another memorable year for our orchestra program,” said director Mr. Larson. “These wonderful students have accomplished great things for our school and community. I thank them and their parents for allowing me to be a part of their high school lives. I expect to hear great things about the senior class of 2017 in the years to come, in whatever career endeavor they choose. It has been very enjoyable to watch them grow during the eight years in our program, both as musicians and people. There comes a great sense of loss when they graduate and I realize I no longer am their director. I, also, want to thank the Ponca City community for all the support they have shown our entire instrumental music program this year. It

has been terrific.”

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