

SAS Instrumental Music Program Performing Throughout the State

Jamie Lepore Wright, Apr 10 2017

St. Andrew's students made another strong showing in All-State instrumental music ensembles this year. Although slightly fewer Saints participated in All-State ensembles this year as compared to last year (nine this year vs. thirteen last year), several players made key positions in this year's All-State orchestra and band, including concertmaster of the orchestra, which was clinched by Enok Choe '19.

This year's All-State Orchestra festival took place during St. Andrew's Spring Break in early March, and culminated in an evening concert at Tatnall School on Saturday, March 4. Enok Choe '19 served as concertmaster, while Dylan Torrance '18 made fifth stand second violin and played principal second violin on Vaughn Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*. Brando Leggott '18 made principal bass, and Danny Lee '19 made co-principal bassoon, meaning that he played first part on half of the pieces.

Meanwhile, five of the School's top wind players made it to the All-State Senior Band this year, with Daniel Jang '17 making principal oboe and Vincent Chen '18 making fifth chair clarinet. Saints made a strong showing in the saxophone section, with Min Heo '17 as second chair alto saxophone, sitting next to Alex Qian '19 in third chair, while Will Gray '18 made second chair tenor. The All-State Band festival occurred in late March, and concluded with a performance on Saturday, April 1 at Salesianum School.

Each year, Director of Instrumental Music Fred Geiersbach leads a Winter Recital group as an afternoon activity for those students seeking further support and rehearsal prior to All-State try-outs, which occurred in January 2017. Geiersbach notes that the All-State program is a powerful motivator for player improvement, citing gains in students' skills after auditioning for the program.

Concertmaster Enok Choe's experience is a perfect example of this trajectory. This was Choe's second year performing with the All-State Orchestra. Last year, he made assistant concertmaster, and his goal this year, with the encouragement of Geiersbach, was to make concertmaster. In recounting his preparation, Choe described Winter Recital as being very helpful, but nevertheless noted that he was unprepared for the honor of being named concertmaster. "I must say I was pretty surprised," he said.

"It was a completely different experience from last year," Choe continued, "It was nervewracking but also very exciting because you're the only person in the entire room who [could] do this. I was honored—it is a privilege."

A highlight for Choe was learning, prior to making concertmaster, that whomever made it this year would get a four-page solo. The concertmaster's performance solo is often a single page or a few measures of music. The All-State Orchestra had four days to prepare for the concert, and practiced eight hours each day.

"[One challenge] was the pressure itself because you're expected to get every note right and keep yourself together, but I was able to pull through somehow," Choe said.

While Geiersbach was pleased with this year's All-State showing, he also notes that the concert's coinciding with the School's Spring Break does put a damper on student involvement, "I'm hoping more St. Andrew's students will take advantage of this opportunity next year, even though the schedule is not always conducive

to students being able to participate," he said, predicting that the School could probably place 20 members in All-State if everyone tried out. He noted that the School has "a wealth of talent."

"The All-State program is a really authentic opportunity to practice auditioning," Geiersbach said, "something which [many of these students] will have to do in college...it's always fun to see how you stack up in competition."

Saints Jazz Program Expanding

This school year, the St. Andrew's jazz program has been met with increased interest from the student body. St. Andrew's now boasts not one but two Jazz Ensembles. Geiersbach made the decision to form a new ensemble two months ago, in consultation with the existing ensemble's co-presidents and members.

"When I came to St. Andrew's in 2001, we had four saxophones, one trumpet, one trombone, a guitar, piano, bass, and drums," said Geiersbach. "Now the program has grown to the point where we could have two full jazz ensembles." The original jazz ensemble included a massive rhythm section, with six guitarists, four drummers, four pianists, three bassists, and enough saxophones for two full bands. The new configuration will allow more students the opportunity to solo as well as lead, especially for underclassmen, by playing only one or two to a given instrument's part. Geiersbach's goal for next year is to maintain the two ensembles, and perhaps to incorporate auditioning for Jazz Ensemble as well as Orchestra (both of which are currently open to all instrumentalists at all levels of experience). "[It's] part of a larger conversation in my mind about providing the right type of ensemble opportunities for people of all abilities," he said. "I am working on doing a better job of taking care of the beginning and intermediate player."

The original ensemble continues to meet on Monday nights, with the second ensemble meeting on Tuesday nights. "[The] Tuesday night tunes are easier to read and feature more pieces for less experienced people or for those who are starting to work on their reading," said Geiersbach. Aside from some conflicts with sports, the second group has been proving to be a popular success. "They've been having a ball," he said.

The Monday night jazz ensemble has been working on tackling more challenging pieces and developing a tighter sound in preparation for the University of Delaware's Jazz Festival, which took place this past Friday, April 7 on the UD campus in Newark. It was the third time that St. Andrew's has participated in this festival. Although the festival is noncompetitive, the ensemble was given feedback after their performance. The SAS Jazz Ensemble performed Frank Foster's *Shiny Stockings* and a tune called *Uchibeng Wow-Wow* by Michael Philip Mossman.