



Our students will shape and lead the future

News release

April 24, 2015

High school music and choir programs nationally recognized

New York City, Savannah – been there, done that. Next stop? Carnegie Hall.

Cascade, Everett and Henry M. Jackson high schools have something in common this spring – their music or choir programs are all nationally recognized.

Cascade High School choirs



Cascade choir students competed against choirs from across the United States and Canada in New York City as part of the [World Strides Heritage Festival](#) March 26-29. They performed in the steeped-in-history Riverside Church, built by Rockefeller, directly across from the grave of Ulysses S. Grant, and graced by Martin Luther King Jr.

During the festival, a panel of three nationally acclaimed adjudicators judged each choir. The students learned under the direction of some of the nation's best music professionals and experienced the thrill of exploring a new city.

All that AND Cascade choirs won the Choral Sweepstakes Award. Each choir, Del Sonics (Vocal Jazz), Chamber Singers, Voices of Men and Viváce, received a first place Gold Award. In addition, Viváce won the Adjudicator's Award and the Highest Score Award. Student Kim Aoll won the Soloist Award.

The Cascade High choirs performed so well, they were invited to the *Heritage Festival of Gold* and to the *Festival at Carnegie Hall*. Acceptance into the *Festival of Gold* program is reserved for groups who've achieved a *Gold* rating at a World Strides Heritage Performance standard festival.

The *Festival of Gold* and the *Festival at Carnegie Hall* give the most elite choirs, bands, and orchestras the opportunity to perform in some of the nation's most exclusive venues and learn under the direction of internationally acclaimed adjudicators and conductors. Each year's line-up of premiere venues is reserved for the most talented high school choral and instrumental groups. Every *Festival of Gold* group spends extensive one-on-one time with music professionals at the top of their game.

While in New York, students fit in a visit to La Guardia School of Performing Arts. Students extended their academic learning with visits to the 9/11 memorial, Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty and other sights.

"It was an amazing trip and the students had a great time!" beamed Cascade Choir Director [Laurie Cappello](#). You can find photos and recordings of the performances on Facebook at [New York 2015 – CASCADE CHOIRS](#).

Everett High School Jazz Ensemble



Everett High Jazz students recently returned from the [Swing Central Jazz Band Competition and Workshop](#) in Savannah, GA. Chosen as one of 12 finalists from across the country, EHS joined the other bands for four days of concerts, workshops, and coaching sessions before the big competition.

“Being the only band that had never been to *Swing Central* before made us feel a little out of place and like underdogs, but our main goal was to learn as much as possible and feel proud of our performance,” said Megan Vinther, director of bands at Everett High School.

“Highlights included playing with Michigan State University jazz trumpet professor and recording artist [Etienne Charles](#) at the *Jazz on the River Showcase*, and working with [Alphonso Horne](#) and [Wycliffe Gordon](#) in our band clinic along with many other clinicians,” continued Vinther.

“EHS Jazz Band performed well in the competition, with all students feeling very good about their contribution. We got fantastic feedback from all five judges, including a score of 92/100 from Rodney Whitacre on our rendition of *Whirly Bird* by Neal Hefti. Overall, the band placed 10th – outscoring the other Washington school from Bellevue, Newport High School.

“As a ‘rookie’ band at this competition, we were very pleased with our scores and excited to be a part of such a fantastic educational program. Thank you to the Everett community for supporting us and cheering us on!” [Read news release.](#)

Henry M. Jackson High School



Henry M. Jackson jazz band at their performance at Jazz Alley this spring.

Henry M. Jackson High School was also selected to go to Carnegie Hall based on past excellence – *no audition required.*

More locally, the Jackson High School Bands attended the *Mount Pilchuck Regional Band Festival* in Arlington in late March. Each ensemble from across the region performed a 30-minute concert that was adjudicated by three highly-qualified music educators. Each ensemble was assessed using a rubric based on the national standards for music education. Bands are given three separate scores that are averaged into an overall rating.

Scoring is based on a scale of I – V, with a “I” being defined as “A superior performance in every way.”

Here’s a rundown of how the students performed:

Honors Wind Ensemble = I

Wind Ensemble = I-

Symphonic Band = I-

Concert Band = I-

Of all the participating schools, Jackson was the only school to have four large ensembles (55 to 68 students per band). Most high schools had two to three bands. This is the first time all four participating bands have earned scores in the superior category, demonstrating students’ musical growth over an extended period while also having their instrumental music program more than double in size since 2002.

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For more information contact:

[Mary Waggoner](#)

Director of Communications, 425-385-4040