

## Guyer fine arts shining on the big stage

*Students perform at notable locations after state-level successes*



Sophomore cellists Evan Ryckebusch (left) and Dylan Bourey (right) perform at the Guyer auditorium for a recent orchestra concert. Photo courtesy of Nicole Mendyka.

**By Anthony Tosie, [atosie@dentonisd.org](mailto:atosie@dentonisd.org)**

For most musicians and fine arts performers, playing on venues such as Broadway or Carnegie Hall takes a lifetime. For an increasing amount of Guyer High School students, the honor is taking place before attending college.

During the current school year, Guyer fine arts students have performed at several renowned venues, including Carnegie Hall, the Chicago Symphony Hall, Notre Dame Basilica and the Basilica of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré. Guyer has also seen a large amount of students named to their respective fine arts all-state ensembles during the current school year, including a school-record five students named to the all-state orchestra.

Having existed slightly more than 10 years, Guyer High School has seen many fine arts firsts and record-setting performances recently. Last year, for instance, then-senior Katelyn Cave won a regional musical theatre contest that sent her to perform on Broadway. Guyer's fine arts staff attributes such success to the school's environment.

"I feel like the student culture at Guyer has helped our programs thrive," said Michelle Hanlon, the school's orchestra director. "We have some really driven kids who are very competitive with one another. They're all trying to outdo the others while still being supportive at the same time."

An example of students pushing their classmates to succeed, band director Amy Woody said, is junior Abhishek Shah, who plays violin in the orchestra and trumpet in band. Abhishek earned a

spot on the all-state philharmonic orchestra, which had its state auditions before band. His success, Mrs. Woody said, helped spur junior trombonist Connor Wooley to the all-state band, as the two friends pushed each other to become better.

In addition to its record-setting collective performance, Guyer also saw Inki Lee become the school's first three-time selection to an all-state orchestra ensemble after he earned a spot on the group for violin again this year. In choir, junior Kate Gillman and senior Kylie Jensen each earned all-state recognition for the second consecutive year in the alto 2 category. Kate could become the first Guyer choral student to make three all-state ensembles if she earns a spot next year.

Making an all-state fine arts ensemble is an exceptionally difficult task, meaning any support students could provide one another can go a long way. Band, choir and orchestra each have several rounds of competitions to advance through, starting with regional auditions before advancing to area and state auditions.

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**Michelle Hanlon, orchestra director**

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Both band and choir students perform in person in front of judges, while orchestra students record their performances for judging submission. Being recorded doesn't make the process easier, however – the recordings are organized by the Texas Music Educators Association, the group in charge of all-state selections, and are limited to a single take.

The effort to make an all-state ensemble doesn't just begin with the audition process. Music for each coming year's auditions is released annually in the mid-summer, giving students a short break before they have to begin preparations to hopefully make an all-state ensemble. The summer isn't much of a downtime for either students or fine arts teachers – Guyer's fine arts instructors host several camps at the school or in the general area, while students attend camps.

For the marching band, it's even more chaotic, as practices begin in August with long hours nearly every day. Freshmen who have only played instruments in middle school now have to learn marching choreography, and students interested in making all-state band still practice for their auditions months down the line.

Josh Mistrot, a Guyer senior euphoniumist who earned all-state band recognition this year, said the long hours made the ensuing accolades even more rewarding.

"It was pretty fulfilling knowing all the hard work I put in – and the band put in – paid off," he said. "I've definitely learned a lot about leadership and the amount of effort it takes to reach this level."

When asked what changes when a student earns an all-state recognition, Guyer choir director Stephen Evans said the answer is simple: the experience brought back.

“Once you have students who make it [to an all-state group], it really bleeds through to everyone else,” Mr. Evans said. “Those students will start giving an extra push to remain all-state, and they’ll share their experiences with everyone else. And as close as our groups are – band kids work with choir kids, and choir kids are friends with orchestra kids and so on – it really helps all our programs when even one all-state student shares those experiences and what it means to make it to that level, because it impacts everyone.”



The Guyer High School band performs at the prestigious Carnegie Hall in New York City on March 14. Guyer was one of just three high schools to perform that day at Carnegie Hall for the National Youth Concert. Photo courtesy of Karen Scruggs.

As Guyer continues to receive more fine arts honors, its staff has rewarded students by taking them to bigger and more esteemed venues. New York has been a popular location for performance trips among the school’s fine arts groups, though choir students had perhaps a more unique trip: Québec.

For its trip, the Guyer choir program jointly visited the Canadian province with the Denton High School choir program for performances at Notre Dame Basilica and the Basilica of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré. Each basilica is more than 350 years old and sees hundreds of thousands of visitors pass through its doors each year.

Ian Grems, a senior bassist in the orchestra, said the trips are among his favorite aspects of his time in Guyer’s fine arts programs.

“I love traveling and playing in huge concert halls,” said Ian, who was named to the all-state orchestra this year and as a sophomore. “Everyone who goes on these trips plays in one big orchestra – around 80 to 90 people – so you can imagine the amount of sound we produce when we’re in a resonant venue.”

## **2015-16 DENTON ISD TMEA ALL-STATE HONOREES**

### **Band**

- Josh Mistrot, Guyer High School, euphonium
- Connor Wooley, Guyer High School, trombone

### **Choir**

- Kate Gillman, Guyer High School, alto 2
- Kylie Jensen, Guyer High School, alto 2
- Courtney Lawson, Denton High School, soprano 2

### **Orchestra**

- Harry Dearman, Ryan High School, double bass
- Ian Grems, Guyer High School, bass
- Alex Koh, Guyer High School, cello
- Inki Lee, Guyer High School, violin
- Ethan Nguyen, Guyer High School, double bass
- Abhishek Shah, Guyer High School, violin