

FC soloists and ensembles storm into state

After months of preparation students who received gold in their group one performances proceed to ISSMA State



Presley Vanover/Digital Photography

SENIOR AARON NOTTKE leads the trumpet choir during an after school rehearsal on Friday, Feb. 15

Gracie Vanover

Assistant A&E Editor

Destiny Love

A&E Reporter

The blast of trumpets radiates throughout the room. Nervous energy and excitement circulates around the performers and judges. Freshman trumpet player Cadence Wehneman plays along with her choir as they show off all their hard work.

State Solo and Ensemble is the second phase of a festival where students perform pieces they choose themselves. They are then adjudicated by judges from around the state. If a student participates in district Solo and Ensemble and gets a gold in the most advanced group, they move on to state competition.

“State Solo and Ensemble is just like the district level except with higher expectations,” said choir director Angela Hampton. “The judges at state are mostly college professors and they seem to hold performers to a higher standard than at district. At state, performers can earn a Gold With Distinction award which cannot be done at district.”

Many students spend several months working in private lessons on their parts for their state performance in hopes to get another gold. In order to be successful, it takes multiple hours of practice and devotion for student performers.

“I’m in my own vocal lessons once a week, so having one on one time with a professional really helps,” said junior choral soloist Cheyenne Stepp. “But I

absolutely have to practice on my own at least once a day if not more to make sure everything is performance ready.”

Although some students turn to private teachers, some turn to their own program director. This allows them to have conversations and help from a familiar source that can lead to more success while performing.

“[The trumpet choir] rehearsed once or twice a week for a couple hours,” said Wehneman. “Sometimes Mr. Yankey or Mr. Hatchell would come in and give us suggestions and help fix parts of the piece.”

With helpful program directors to give advice, students grow in their musical talent and learn different aspects of being a better musician.

“[I tell them] get to know your piece inside and out,” said assistant band director Briston Hatchell. “[Students should also try to] know everyone else’s parts and communicate.”

There are many challenging aspects of State Solo and Ensemble. Not only do students have to spend several hours a week practicing, but first they also have to perform in front of outstanding musicians and directors who will determine if they are state worthy or not.

“I think what is most challenging personally is that it’s only me. No other voices can support me if I happen to run out of breath or my voice cracks or anything to that matter. I’m a perfectionist so if something doesn’t go how I want it to, I have to keep doing it until it’s perfect and that can

sometimes be really frustrating and difficult,” said Stepp.

Numerous students sign up to perform at Solo and Ensemble, so they can not only showcase their talent but overcome their fears of performance.

“Solo and Ensemble is a really great way to step out of my comfort zone a little bit and see where my voice needs improvement,” said junior choral soloist Camden Hardesty. “Every year, including this year, I’ve been lucky enough to do this and even go to the state solo and ensemble. It’s really nice to have feedback from someone who doesn’t know my voice 100 percent, so I know what I can do even better.”

Even though anxieties begin to overrun some students before performing or while rehearsing, many have developed methods to stay calm and collected.

“When I get nervous I try to slow down my breathing and treat a performance almost like a rehearsal,” said sophomore flute ensemble member Reagan Schneidau. “Seeing my friends in the ensemble calms my nerves as well because I know I can count on them.”

Another great aspect of performing for this competition is being in ensembles with friends you have made through the years in your program.

“I did the trumpet choir because it gave me a chance to grow closer to my section,” said Wehneman. “The music itself was a challenge and by working on it together, we really bonded as a group.”

After making it to state competition, many students become proud and confident in their abilities as a young musician. It also helps students discover that they do not need

“ [Students] know that they are leading the event but that we are available for help and they reach out. I appreciate that. ”

Briston Hatchell
assistant band director

to be afraid of challenges or new experiences in the world of music.

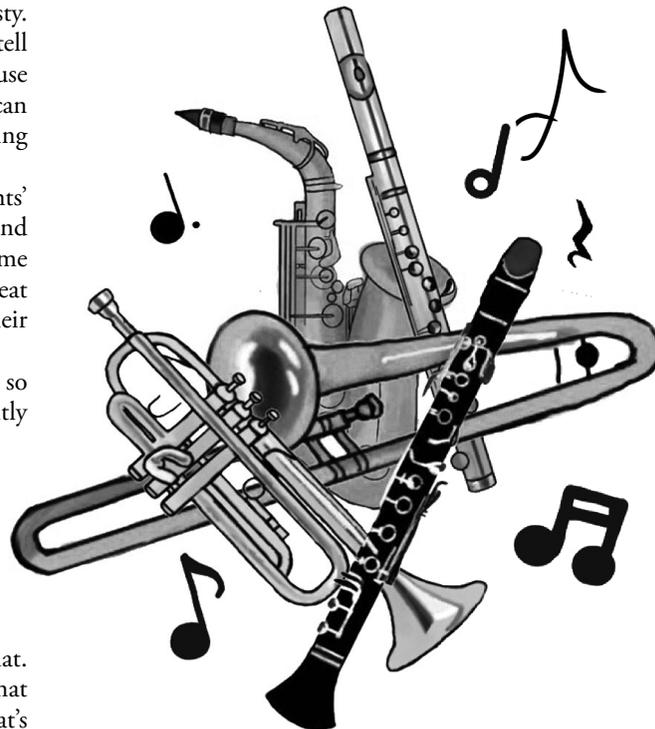
“If you don’t like [Solo and Ensemble], you don’t have to do it again,” said Hardesty. “Just give it a try and don’t tell yourself ‘I can’t do it’ because you never know what you can do until you’ve tried something new.”

Along with the students’ satisfaction, directors and private teachers feel the same gratification and feel a great impact from helping their students.

“The students working so diligently and independently really makes me ecstatic,” said Hatchell. “I feel more proud when the students ask for help. They know that they are leading the event but that we are available for help and they reach out. I appreciate that. We also have some students that do it all themselves and that’s awesome too.”

State Solo and Ensemble can be very intense and it can put a lot of pressure on student musicians. However, after a performance, no matter the outcome, many students feel very satisfied that they accomplished something so challenging on their own.

“Although I complain about ISSMA throughout the year, I really enjoy having that feeling of accomplishment that comes with playing a piece and doing it well,” said sophomore Jade Coxon. “Music is such a big part of me that it’s hard to imagine what life would be like without it.”



Scarlett Hatton / Freelance Artsit

Sam Haney / The Bagpiper