



Coos Bay, OR

Marshfield choir to perform at Carnegie Hall

By Hallie Winchell
May 22, 2006

How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice. Practice. Practice.

But consistently featuring soloists who perform with the state choir championship probably doesn't hurt, either.

The Marshfield High School Concert Choir is in the Big Apple to perform at Carnegie Hall tonight, as part of the Carnegie Hall Concert Series. The Marshfield students join only two other Oregon high schools in performing in a concert conducted by Wallace Long, the director of choral activities at Willamette University.

Seventeen of the 70 concert choir members left last week by bus on their way to Portland to catch a plane to New York City, where they are staying at

the Grand Hyatt Hotel and visiting Carnegie Hall every day for more practice.

The students are excited to take part in a professional concert, which also will feature the Beaverton High School Concert Choir, Sheldon High School Choir and First Christian Church Chancel Choir, of Eugene;

Willamette University Alumni Choir and Willamette University Chamber Choir, of Salem; and River Ridge High School Symphonic Choir, of Lacey, Wash. The students also will perform with professional soloists and the New England Symphonic Ensemble.



Seventeen students from Marshfield High School's Concert Choir will be performing at a concert at Carnegie Hall today. Back row: Jacqueline Examilotis, Roman Watt, Dan Gibbs. Third row: Keith Atherton, Sarah Brown, Ashley Pedersen, Andrea Pocza, Marcus Smith. Second row: Jarod Bassett, Arielle Zamora, Shelby Paulson, Stephanie Allen. Front row: Alicia Johnson, LeAnne Kostic, Miranda Mansfield, Chandler Ainsworth. World Photo by Madeline Steege

practice with at home, but the 17 students also went to Salem Wednesday night to practice with the other choirs for three hours.

“It's just amazing because we live here in Coos Bay, and we're a small town, and it's not very often that students like us get to go sing at someplace that's world renown like Carnegie Hall,” said Jacqueline Examilotis, 18, a senior and choir president. “I feel lucky, because this is my senior year, and I get to do something like this for the last few weeks of school.”

According to Marshfield Principal Robert Line, Ken Graber, the choral director for Marshfield and Sunset

“It's a whole new experience for me, and I'm really excited to do all kinds of new stuff,” said Keith Atherton, 18, a senior who sings the second tenor in the choir. “It's definitely exciting. It's a great opportunity.”

The choir has been practicing even more than usual, Atherton said. The group normally practices twice a week, and members have CDs to

Middle School, has high expectations of his students, but provides incredible support and encouragement to one and all.

“He's spectacular. This is more a product of his continued success in his choir program at the high school, and the kids' desire to set high goals for themselves, to audition and do things they never thought possible,” Line said. “When you have a mentor that is willing to give everything he's got, its pretty easy for you to follow, and to do what it takes. That's exactly what his program does. Those kids would do anything for him. He gives them such support that they are not fearful of taking on something like this.”

Surround sound has never been so literal, or sounded so heavenly. Graber is an animated instructor, part conductor and part coach, he coaxes the right volume and tempo from his 70 singers. On Tuesday, the group practiced their a capella performance piece for a concert held at Marshfield auditorium Wednesday, standing in a circle around the room and up above in the balcony, each voice one part of a single instrument. The power of the group's voices was intense, bouncing strands of song off the acoustics of the auditorium and slamming sweet harmonies into the audience like a velvet hammer.

The talent of Marshfield's choir can be heard and felt in the vibrations of 70 voices raised together in song. The program has seen soloists place at the state choir championship every year since 1982, and for more than 10 years, Marshfield has been one of the only 24 school choirs to compete at the championship.

Although the choir is used to traveling throughout the state to competitions and performances, this invitation for Marshfield's choir is a first in the history of the choral program, for students to go out of state to perform - much less all the way to New York to perform in a famous concert hall. The students were fighting nerves and stress, and relying on their years of training

to keep the anxiety at bay.

Andrea Pocza, 17, a junior who sings first soprano, has been singing since kindergarten and been in the Marshfield Concert Choir for three years. Although she said she was excited to travel to New York, she was trying to remain calm and collected in the face of a nerve-wracking experience, practicing hard but trying not to over do it.

“You get to be seen in a well-known place singing. You basically just put yourself out there,” she said with a shy smile.

There definitely was more time to practice. The students' days are filled with rehearsals and sightseeing, although Graber said the group has some specific things in mind while they're in New York. The group will take a ferry cruise around the Statue of Liberty following their performance, find

some time to tour the Metropolitan Museum of Art and see “The Phantom of the Opera” at the Majestic Theater, he added.

The students will sing a Mass by Joseph Haydn at the concert today, “Mass in Time of War.” The piece will be performed with the symphony and other choirs, under the direction of Long. The choir students will be back to classes on Wednesday.

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