



NHS music groups in tune with top performances in state

by **Bob Baker**

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NHS choral groups following their MICCA performances/ Credit: Cici Hunt

Needham High School music ensembles have been hitting high notes and amassing high honors and gold medals this spring.

The jazz band earned gold at the Massachusetts Association for Jazz Education state finals on March 22. The symphonic band, concert band, string orchestra, chamber orchestra and chorale all scored gold at the Massachusetts Instrumental and Choral Conductors Association's competition on April 4 and 5. The chorus took home silver.

LeeAnn Sutton, Needham Public Schools director of fine and performing arts, explained that ensembles didn't compete against one another. "They're competing against a scoring rubric and a rating," she said. "It's a big deal medal because it means that you're performing at a really high caliber."



Sutton said the development of music skills is a difficult and often circuitous path. “You have to show dedication, resolve and problem solving,” she said.

Similar to sports teams, earning gold is a group effort. “While you may have had some students who stick out and score that goal, in the end, you can’t succeed unless everyone is contributing with their full selves.”


Needham High School sponsors nine different musical ensembles: four bands; three choruses and two orchestras. According to Sutton, the school’s rich musical environment is also a close-knit and supportive community.

Sutton said Needham’s musical success is attributable to many factors including dedicated students, parents and faculty. “Our music faculty is dedicated to providing performance opportunities for our students,” she said.

The young musicians will be taking their talents on tour during April vacation when 127 students travel to Italy. They will be taking the stage three times in Rome and once in Florence.

Sutton said that it is the department’s goal to travel overseas once every four years. The last trip took place before COVID. Although sightseeing is included, Sutton said she is confident that the performances will be the highlight of the trip. The Santo Stefano al Ponte in Florence, the students’ first overseas venue, is a deconsecrated church from the 11th century.

Closer to home, the NHS jazz ensemble will be performing on Boston’s Esplanade May 4 at the Hatch Shell. They will participate in a showcase performance with other gold medal-winning groups. And here in town, the NHS chamber orchestra and chorale will be featured at the upcoming Great Hall Concert Series Saturday, May 3, at Town Hall. They will be performing with the Orion Ensembles.

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