

In The Spot Light

By: Audrey Austin

This past Saturday, January 23, 2023, the District Seven High School Solo & Ensemble event was held at Madison High School. The first performances started at 8:00 a.m. and the last performances were wrapped up around 3:00 p.m. Each of the performances are judged based on the OMEA grading rubric, which consists of a list of playing techniques with a rating scale in every category. Students are given a score on a scale from one to five (one being the best and five being the worst) and are later given a feedback sheet that provides the judge's critiques and comments. Students are designated to a specific "stage" that is lettered A-H based on either their instrument or their vocal to perform. They can perform in both solos or ensembles that consist of three to five people. Students who performed this weekend attend a school somewhere within the District Seven Region. The Ohio Music Education District Seven consists of many schools including those located in all of Lake County, Western Cuyahoga County, and Northern Geauga County.

Perry High School took this opportunity to show off some of their best performances. There were thirty different band students who showed the judges what they had prepared. Students from Perry put in a lot of work in preparation of performing their ensembles and solos and all of their work paid off with great results. The songs performed were often classical music transcriptions. Most of the band members received a Superior or Excellent rating, which are the two highest ratings. Brad Hruska, the Perry High School band director, really enjoys the event because, "everyone who participates elevates their playing abilities by being involved with Solo & Ensemble."

All the band students who participated also expressed that they really enjoyed it. Sophomore Spencer Kilpatrick, who performed a tuba solo, really appreciated the judges he had. He explained that “the judges were very nice even though I was extremely nervous.” They did a very nice job making sure all students felt comfortable so that they can put on their best performance. Freshman Kevin Reginer, also got to participate in a flute solo for the very first time. Kevin loves music, not only does he have a strong passion in playing his own instrument, but he also enjoys getting to watch performances. He said, “I got the opportunity to watch my friends perform beautiful pieces of music.” After all his hard work in preparing his own piece, he shared that his experience was “nerve wracking, but I had a lot of fun and I was happy because my friends were there to support me which made me feel appreciated.” Junior Jeffrey Sandor, was a part of the percussion ensemble and would love to get involved in this event again. For anyone who would like to put this event into consideration in the future, Jeffrey explained, “I would recommend it to anyone who wants to hear some feedback on their singing/playing from someone who knows what they are talking about.”

Band students weren't the only kids from Perry High School to participate in this amazing opportunity. In fact, Perry had twelve chorus students sing vocals that they had prepared. Out of the twelve students there were no vocal ensembles, everyone performed a solo. According to Mrs. Singer the twelve students who sang solos received either Superior or Excellent ratings (1 or 2). The solo songs were selected off a required song list. The majority of the songs are folk songs and art songs. Students put in a lot of time outside of school preparing their songs to make them perfect. Singer shared that she loves Solo & Ensemble because “[her] favorite thing about the event is watching all the students' hard work pay off.”

All twelve kids from Perry that performed vocal performances seemed to have a very good experience similar to the band students. One of these students included senior Zoey Hicks, who has performed in Solo & Ensemble since she was in seventh grade. Performing in this event multiple times has had a big impact on her as a singer. She explained that "...the judges give great advice and everytime I've performed I have gained more confidence in myself."

Sophomore Jonathan Kacsala, got to perform his vocal solo for the first time. Before his performances he was very nervous and didn't know what to expect, but it turned out to be very beneficial experience and he scored very well. He explained that even after being nervous and having a little cold, "I enjoyed getting the opportunity to sing in front of a judge and the judge gave me very good feedback that I can use for the rest of my singing career." He would 100% recommend it to other people who are interested and is looking forward to doing it again.