

# Music majors bring the brass for Prism

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For Florida State University music majors, the week of Prism is something to be celebrated according to junior Emilia Addeo. Classes don't hold to their usual rehearsal schedules so all energy can be poured into the annual show, which features performances from the College of Music's many bands and ensemble groups.

For Addeo, it's another chance to perform with the Marching Chiefs, and she's looking forward to Sunday, Feb. 4.

An assistant drum major for the Marching Chiefs, Addeo knows every move on the field by heart. For the high step, called the chief step, performers maintain their legs parallel to the ground, at a perpendicular angle, with a pointed toe and a pop to the gait. She dedicates numerous hours every week to rehearsals, pep bands, and game days, and though it can be tiring, Addeo says it's always worth the effort.

"You can't be complacent because as soon as you get to the point where you're confident and have learned something new, you can always be better," says Addeo. "You're constantly climbing a ladder and never reaching the top. You just keep going."

In high school, her band director, Jacqui Parsons, was an enormous influence on her decision to study music education. Addeo remarks on how rare it is to have a female band director in the male-dominated field. With Parsons as a role model and her parents' encouragement, she auditioned for several music programs before Florida State.

"As soon as I got on campus I was in love," says Addeo, who quickly joined the Marching Chiefs during her freshman year in the brass section.

As a "rookie" player Addeo was matched with a row leader—a veteran marching chief—who taught her the fundamentals and traditions of the band. She says her leader, Alex Machecek, taught her the greatest lesson of all: to loosen up and have fun.

Coming from a competitive marching background, Addeo appreciated this advice and has allowed it to permeate into every aspect of her day-to-day life. Now in her junior year at FSU, she reflects on growing up in Boca Raton and her first musical aspirations to be just like her older sister.

"I started music in the sixth grade in beginning band because my older sister was a flute player and I thought she was just too cool," laughs Addeo. "During instrument tryouts you go around and



A trio of saxophones at a previous Prism concert at FSU. DEMOCRAT FILES

sample each one and they give you a rating. Clarinet was my lowest score, but the grader said I had long fingers, and if I worked hard, I could do it."

She dedicated herself to the instrument, eventually growing an affinity for jazz clarinet pieces and Artie Shaw, "the King of Clarinet." Her middle school band director would often place Addeo in leadership roles in class, allowing her to conduct warm-ups and planting the idea of becoming a drum major one day.

When Marching Chiefs leadership auditions came around during her freshman year, Addeo made it to the second round of cuts. By the end of her sophomore year, she succeeded in passing and stepped into the role of assistant drum major. Her responsibilities when the band is on the road include equipment organization and rehearsal set-up. On the field, she teaches the rookies and leads the Chiefs. In the stands, however, is where many can see, and hear, her influence the most.

"We have to make calls depending on how the game is going," explains Addeo. "If there's a touchdown we play the mu-

sical cheer if there's a first down we play a different song. We play a good variety according to what we think matches and flows with the game. But of course, we will always play the war chant a million times."

Marching in the "Star Wars" themed show as a rookie was a standout moment, with the rollicking "Cantina Band" music from the movie stuck in her head for months afterward. However, this year's rivalry game against UF topped that thrill. As she took to the stands to conduct, Addeo was met with an uproarious chorus of voices singing her "Happy Birthday." Drinking in the crowd's exuberance, she was delighted by the gesture, though she says that having all eyes on her during the games was a major adjustment.

"You have to learn how to own your self-esteem," says Addeo. "The really great thing about Chiefs is that everyone is really accepting and positive, and I felt really appreciated. If I did make a mistake it was never a big deal and they were always positive and supportive."

Dealing with the pressure of leader-

## If you go

**What:** Prism concert

**When:** 2 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 4

**Where:** Ruby Diamond Concert Hall

**Cost:** \$25-35

**Contact:** For more information, call 850-644-6500 or visit <https://opening-nights.fsu.edu/events/prism>.

ship assisted Addeo in the classroom as she prepared lesson plans for her conducting classes. As drum major, she's gained a confidence that translates into her conducting style, which she terms as "cheery" as she tends to smile often.

Addeo also thinks quickly on her feet, as the drum majors will sometimes be given the music for a new show with little time to practice the nuances. The season's fast-paced pandemonium is something Addeo longs for in the spring semester and is happy to have back during the Prism concert.

In addition to leading the Marching Chiefs, Addeo will perform with the symphonic band and the clarinet studio in Ruby Diamond Concert Hall. She remarked on how the concert bursts at the seams with multi-talented musicians, as the continuous changing of bands onstage leaves both players and the audience breathless by the final note.

"Every act is exciting," says Addeo. "People will start crying when we play the 'Hymn to the Garnet and Gold' at the end. It's a big moment, and for seniors, it's the end of their season and time in Marching Chiefs."

Beyond graduation, Addeo hopes to realize her dreams of teaching as a concert, jazz, and marching band director. She wants to instruct everything from steel drum to special education music courses and puts no limit on what can be achieved.

"I love the teamwork aspect of music, the thrill of getting to play with other people, and to have an end product that makes people feel good," says Addeo. "I love the idea that one day I'm going to be a teacher and influence students and help them find the happiness that I've found through music. When I teach something or help somebody and they make progress and appreciate it that's ultimately what keeps me going."

*Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture ([www.tallahasseearts.org](http://www.tallahasseearts.org)).*