



AMANDA KARIOTH
David LaBarre rehearses with
Chiles Chamber Orchestra
members.

SCHOOL & FAMILY

TLH

LOCAL

REASON TO PRACTICE

CHILES ORCHESTRA BOUND FOR NATIONALS IN PITTSBURGH

AMANDA KARIOTH THOMPSON
COUNCIL ON CULTURE & ARTS

While Pittsburgh may not immediately leap to mind when contemplating significant chamber music destinations, for the members of this year's Chiles High School orchestra, it's a mecca. Despite its gritty, industrial stereotype, Pittsburgh has a vibrant music community and is the location for the 2017 National Orchestra Festival set for March 2-4.

As the result of an application and audition process, the Chiles Chamber Orchestra has been invited to perform and compete at the festival. These emerging musicians are looking forward to giving the rest of country a taste of what Tallahassee arts education programs have to offer.

Last year, nearly two dozen school orchestras from around the nation participated in the festival held in Tampa, including programs from states as far flung as California, Colorado, New York and Washington. This is a repeat appearance for Chiles. Its orchestra attended the festival in 2009 and again in 2014, and Chris Miller, the Chiles orchestra director, feels confident that this year's group will represent our community well.

"The reason we're going this year is because I think this is a particularly capable group," Miller said. "It's entirely possible that they can go there and play to the best of their ability and that will probably stack up pretty impressively."

See Chiles, Page 7C

LIMELIGHT EXTRA

Chiles

Continued from Page 1C

"We went to Nationals my freshman year and we got third place," said 12th-grader David LaBarre, a violinist in the orchestra. "It's kind of nerve-wracking because I want to do just as well if not better than that."

The scale and quality of the programs represented can add extra pressure. "Most of the schools that compete are really huge private schools that require a lot of money to even be able to go there," explained David. "Some of those orchestras have over 150 people. For us to place there would be huge."

With only 36 musicians representing Chiles at Nationals this year, there's an enormous amount of preparation going into polishing the performances, which helps these students advance in their musical technique and expression. Many students, like ninth-grader Jovy Osagie, are thrilled by the idea of hard work and countless hours of practice.

"I was aiming to be an engineer but ever since I started playing the violin, I started digging real deep into music and researching. I started practicing a lot more so I could catch up to other people. I did that pretty well because I was able to get into this orchestra. Nationals is a huge stepping stone for me, it's like putting it to the test. It's the real deal for me."

Ninth-grade cellist James Wi feels



similarly and said "I'm glad I was given the opportunity to play with this orchestra and go to Nationals. I've never really done anything big." For James, the Chiles orchestra program was his first chance to work with highly proficient and dedicated instructors and peers. "I used to live in Virginia and there weren't many music students. This is the first time I've come to a city with actual opportunities."

David added, "There are a few people in this orchestra who are really, really, really good and if you get the opportunity to sit next to them and play with them, you can learn more about how you play and how you can improve." It's in this same spirit of collaboration and continuous development that the National Orchestra Festival organizes its program.

In addition to the performance and competitive components, during the three-day event, students will receive constructive feedback and instruction from nationally and internationally recognized adjudicators and clinicians.

Miller is grateful for the additional experience his students will gain and is pleased with the level of maturity, dedication, and focus this group has demonstrated so far.



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Chiles student musicians prepare for the national festival, to be held March 2-4 in Pittsburgh.

He is proud of "students stepping up to it, calling sectionals on their own, meeting at lunchtime because they need to work on this or that. A couple of students have stepped into the limelight as leaders in fundraising and organizing that kind of stuff. It's nice to see the pieces falling into place."

Getting 36 student musicians to Nationals is not cheap and the Chiles orchestra has been investigating various fundraising opportunities. They were recently awarded an Arts Education Grant from the Council on Culture & Arts to help them get a little farther down the road but they are seeking additional assistance. Members of the

community and local businesses are welcome to contribute in large ways or in small.

Those who are interested in offering support or becoming business sponsors are encouraged to reach out to Miller directly at MillerCh@leonschools.net. Tax-deductible donations can be made to the orchestra's internal account or to the Chiles parent organization.

Amanda Karioth Thompson is the education and exhibitions director for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).