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9680 Citrus Avenue | Fontana, CA 92335 | Phone: (909) 357-5000 | www.fusd.net

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 27, 2023

CONTACT: Lauren Creiman

(909) 833-9853

Fontana Unified Senior Makes History as First Kaiser High Musician Named to All-State Honor Band

FONTANA, CA – When Kaiser High School senior Matthew Basilio was in middle school, he was asked to make a tough choice. Should he continue to play the clarinet, which he had studied since elementary school, or take up the bass clarinet? Basilio’s decision to switch instruments would prove to be momentous, catapulting him into the upper stratosphere of music performers.

Today, Basilio is recognized as one of the top high school bass clarinetists in California after being selected to perform with the California Band Directors Association (CBDA) All-State High School Honor Concert Band. Basilio made his debut performance with the band at the William Saroyan Theater in Fresno as part of the California All-State Music Education Conference in February.

Basilio is the first Kaiser High musician in school history to be selected to the All-State Honor Band, a recognition that included being named first chair bass clarinetist. Basilio is also a member of the Southern California School Band & Orchestra Association (SCSBOA) High School Honor Band and the San Bernardino County High School Honor Band.

“I still can’t fathom it. It’s been really rewarding,” Basilio said. “It took blood, sweat and tears to get into these ensembles, because you’re going up against the best musicians in the state. I’d like to thank all of my instructors over the years, who have inspired me and pushed me to do my very best. It feels great to represent Kaiser High and my community in the All-State Honor Band.”

Basilio was introduced to the clarinet while attending Canyon Crest Elementary School. As a member of the Southridge Tech Middle School band, Basilio was urged by music director Sara Dvorak-Torres to switch to the bass clarinet because the band needed more bass in its wind section.

“Ms. Dvorak-Torres gave me the opportunity,” Basilio said. “My knowledge of the clarinet passed on to the bass clarinet, which gave me a bit of a head start. And ever since then, it’s been a lot of restless nights practicing to get to this point.”

Moving to Kaiser, Basilio began working with Anthony Allmond, who created the Kaiser High music program when the school opened in 1998, and led the program until he retired after the 2021-22 school year. He was replaced by Roberto Ronquillo, an A.B. Miller Class of 2007 graduate who had previously served as a student teacher in music at Kaiser.

“Mr. Allmond taught me that you need to forge your identity through your instrument and be true to yourself, and you accomplish that with discipline,” Basilio said. “But it’s more than just music. In Kaiser band you’re taught to be respectful, kind and empathetic towards others. Mr. Ronquillo teaches the exact same way. They have helped me so much in getting to the level that I am today.”

Basilio’s experience with the All-State Honor Band was transformative. Upon meeting his fellow musicians for the first time, Basilio quickly bonded with his new bandmates. At rehearsals and in his hotel room, Basilio traded stories with the other members of the All-State Band. Basilio’s entire family was able to come up to Fresno to see the performance.

Basilio has been accepted into several colleges, including Cal State and UC schools, and is planning to major in electrical engineering, following in the footsteps of his older brother, who attended UC Riverside and works as a mechanical engineer. However, Basilio said he will not let his years of musical training go to waste, and will aspire to be part of his next school’s music program.

“Mr. Basilio is a gifted musician and has become the prime example of student achievement here at Kaiser High,” Ronquillo said. “Matthew is passionate about his work and fully committed at every rehearsal and performance. His achievements are inspiring to us all as he continues to demonstrate musical excellence through an exceptional musical performance.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

FUSD_BASILIO: Henry J. Kaiser High School senior Matthew Basilio is the first Kaiser High musician in school history to be selected to the California Band Directors Association (CBDA) All-State High School Honor Concert Band.

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