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CONTACT: Lauren Creiman, (909) 833-9853

Bonita High’s Chamber Singers Make School, District History with State Performance

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – Bonita High School’s Chamber Singers became the first choir in Bonita Unified School District history to perform at the California All-State Music Educators Conference (CASMEC), a selection reserved for the most elite choirs in the state.

Each year, the California Music Educators Association (CMEA) and California Choral Directors Association (CCDA) select choirs from across the state to perform at CASMEC after a rigorous audition process. CMEA hosts CASMEC for music educators including professionals in all musical disciplines, from choir and orchestra, spanning from elementary to the college level.

The Bonita High Chamber Singers’ 2025 debut at CASMEC was years in the making, as it applies annually for the opportunity, said Ryan Yoder, who has served as the school’s Director of Choral Music for the last four years. The elite vocal ensemble performed a 30-minute program titled “Echoes of the Spirit” that featured collegiate and professional-level choral works.

“To share our strengths as a program with our community of music educators is so special, and to do it with students who I’ve been able to connect with over the last four years, and to get to see them shine is more than I could ask for,” said Yoder, whose Chamber Singers not only performed at CASMEC on Jan. 16, but also for Sen. Susan Rubio at the State Capitol on Jan. 17. “This was an opportunity to share a glimpse of what we do so well at Bonita Unified as a whole.”

Bonita High’s application to perform at CASMEC included recordings from the last two years, concert programs from past shows, and a school profile.

Once Yoder learned of Bonita’s selection in June 2024, Bonita High began months of intense rehearsals as students practiced after school and on weekends to perfect their CASMEC performance on top of their regular choir work and performance schedule.

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“Preparing was a lot, but part of what made it easy is that all 32 of us were totally bought in and we were all as excited as Mr. Yoder,” said Bonita High senior Christian Weber, who has been in choir for all four years. “We wanted this to be the best year we’ve ever had.”

Yoder prepared Bonita’s concert program and selected songs that included messages or themes on the spirit of music, the spirit of America, and traditional spirituals before closing with a moving performance of Bonita High’s alma mater.

Weber, the baritone section leader for the Chamber Singers and part of the school’s concert and men’s choirs, has been in Bonita Unified choirs for most of his life, starting at Oak Mesa Elementary and then continuing at Ramona Middle School. Now he serves as the choir president for the choir student council, in which he acts as liaison between choir students, program director Yoder, and the larger school and District community.

“No matter what, I know music will be in my life, whether professionally or as a hobby,” Weber said. “A lot of that has to do with the experiences I’ve had at Bonita Unified and Bonita High School, with both being great sponsors and supporters of the arts.”

PHOTO:

BUSD_BHS_CHAMBERSINGERS: Bonita High School’s Chamber Singers made school and District history after being selected to perform at the prestigious California All-State Music Educators Conference (CASMEC) and for Sen. Susan Rubio at the State Capitol.

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