



## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Fontana Unified String Orchestra to Play Carnegie Hall in 2026 After Earning National Festival Invite

**FONTANA, CA** – Seventy-five Summit High School students are headed to New York for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to showcase their musical talents on the iconic Carnegie Hall stage, after the school's Fortepiano String Orchestra earned an invitation to perform at the prestigious National Band and Orchestra Festival in April 2026.

Summit High is one of nine high schools or colleges nationwide selected to perform at the festival. The invitation-only event is coordinated by WorldStrides, an educational travel and experience provider that offers immersive learning opportunities. This will mark Summit High's second appearance at the event after first qualifying in 2019.

Summit High band director James Sharp learned of his Fortepiano String Orchestra's selection after he submitted recordings of its performances. Fortepiano refers to an abrupt transition from loud (forte) to soft (piano) playing – techniques the student orchestra continues to refine and master.

"This is an incredible experience for the students, and I am so honored to have been invited back," Sharp said. "This is a real tribute to the Summit music program and our players, who have worked so hard and pushed each other to do their best. We want our kids to be able to have this experience because it can lead to so many other good things."

The four-day excursion to New York includes not only a performance at Carnegie Hall, but also visits to other iconic destinations, like the Statue of Liberty and a chance to attend a Broadway show. The musicians will also receive feedback from industry professionals who will watch their show and share advice with the performers afterward.

"I am incredibly proud to see our students on a national stage," Fontana Unified Visual and Performing Arts Coordinator Kenneth Bencomo said. "This is a testament to the orchestra's exceptional talent, the dedication of their director, and the unwavering support of their school community. This moment not only offers our students a transformative musical experience, but powerfully showcases the impact and importance of arts education in Fontana Unified."

For Summit High junior and timpani player Gabriel Sanchez, the excursion to Carnegie Hall has turned into a family tradition. His older sister Isabel, who also plays timpani, was a member of the Summit orchestra that played in New York in 2019. Sanchez said he remembers how his sister could barely describe Carnegie Hall's sweeping views and epic stage.

“It was a great memory for her, and she was greatly impressed with the size and scope of Carnegie Hall,” Sanchez said. “Isabel introduced me to the timpani, and once I got to Summit High I received a lot of great instruction from the percussion players.”

Summit High juniors Christian Salivio and Aidan Nuno serve as the orchestra’s concertmaster and co-concertmaster, respectively, responsible for warming up the orchestra as well as assisting orchestra members with finger placement and techniques.

Salivio grew up playing music, mastering the violin, and studying famous concert halls like Carnegie Hall. Salivio said he is honored to perform at such a prestigious venue and is excited to connect with fellow student musicians from across the country who share his passion for music during the national festival.

“One of the best parts of playing these festivals is getting to meet new musicians and make connections,” Salivio said. “Band can be competitive, but it’s also a way for us to come together and share our passion and love for music.”

Nuno began playing violin in the eighth grade and joined Summit’s preparatory orchestra as a freshman. Sharp immediately recognized Nuno’s potential and encouraged him to join the string orchestra. Nuno is looking forward to being adjudicated by industry professionals and hearing their advice.

“When you’re playing a specific piece of music, you’re not really looking at another person’s perspective,” Nuno said. “When you get advice from them, it opens your eyes and can lead you to a new path in the future. This will be a very good experience.”

#### **PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**FUSD\_FESTIVAL1:** Summit High School’s orchestra performs during a recent event. The school’s Fortepiano String Orchestra ensemble has earned an invitation to perform at the prestigious National Band and Orchestra Festival at Carnegie Hall in April 2026.

**FUSD\_FESTIVAL2:** Summit High student musicians play under the direction of band director James Sharp. Seventy-five students will travel to New York to perform on the iconic Carnegie Hall stage as part of a four-day national music festival experience in April 2026.

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