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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kaiser High School String Orchestra and Wind Ensemble Headed to Carnegie Hall for National Festival Performance

FONTANA, CA – From performing in the United States capital to playing for a national audience in Pasadena, the Henry J. Kaiser High School Music Department has earned recognition and invitations to perform at several prestigious events.

Now, Kaiser High's celebrated String Orchestra and Wind Ensemble are preparing for another historic performance – this time at New York City's legendary Carnegie Hall during the National Band and Orchestra Festival in April 2026. Kaiser is the second Fontana Unified school, joining Summit High School's Fortepiano String Orchestra, to be selected to perform at the invitation-only 2026 National Band and Orchestra Festival.

It adds to the resume of the Catamount Pride & Color Guard, led by director Roberto Ronquillo since the 2022-23 school year. In 2019, the entire band and color guard were selected to perform at the Rose Parade. In 2024, Kaiser's musicians traveled to Washington, D.C., to take part in the National Memorial Day Parade, and the following year eight Catamount members earned spots in the elite Tournament of Roses Honor Band and Color Guard on New Year's Day 2025.

"I can't say enough about our musicians. They are dedicated, focused, and eager to learn," Mr. Ronquillo said. "This appearance represents the passion for learning and tremendous growth made by our student musicians. Our Wind Ensemble, our strongest performing ensemble, consistently receives the highest ratings at festival, and our String Orchestra has really stepped up their game and has had their best season yet."

Before coming to Kaiser, Mr. Ronquillo had limited experience as a string orchestra teacher other than serving as a student teacher with his predecessor, Anthony Almond. One of his biggest challenges has been to develop the orchestra program.

"When I arrived, our string orchestra was small and mighty, but not all were at the same level as our ensembles," Mr. Ronquillo said. "Before we could think about performing at an elite level, I had to teach myself how to lead a string orchestra. It was a whole new experience for me. But when you work to build the talent at Kaiser, you realize that all things are possible, even Carnegie Hall."

Kaiser High senior and string orchestra violinist Ryan Amoranto said that Mr. Ronquillo's passion and ability to connect with young musicians has been the key to getting the most from his students.

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“In the weeks leading up to our adjudications, Mr. Ronquillo pushes us beyond our skill level, and that has inspired us to play better with each performance,” Amoranto said. “I’ve watched Mr. Ronquillo grow as a string conductor, and that has been a strong motivator for me to develop my own skills.”

The National Band and Orchestra Festival is coordinated by WorldStrides, an educational travel and experience provider that offers immersive learning opportunities. The four-day excursion to New York includes not only the Carnegie Hall performance, but 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.

Kaiser High’s band will pay for the trip to New York through a series of fundraising events throughout the school year. Supporters can donate directly through their banking or Zelle app at kaiserbandboosters@gmail.com.

“We are so proud of our band and the work being done by Roberto Ronquillo,” Kaiser High Principal Monica Young said. “How exciting it is to get a chance to visit New York and to perform at Carnegie Hall. Congratulations to all of our talented students.”

For Kaiser High senior and Carnegie Hall-bound euphonium player Liliana Lobo, who performed during the National Memorial Day Parade and was selected for the Tournament of Roses Honor Band in 2024 and 2025, the high profile showcases help boost the group’s confidence while providing experiences and memories that will last a lifetime.

“It’s really shocking, all the places you get to go in band,” Lobo said. “What I love most about these performances, especially the Memorial Day Parade with the whole band, is that we are performing on live TV for millions of people. It’s much different than our other shows. It’s so fun to watch them back and go, ‘Wow, we’re good!’”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_FESTIVAL1: Henry J. Kaiser High School’s Wind Ensemble has earned an opportunity to perform on the legendary Carnegie Hall stage during the National Band and Orchestra Festival.

FUSD_FESTIVAL2: Since joining Henry J. Kaiser High School in 2022, Director of Music Roberto Ronquillo has guided the school’s music program to national stages, including the upcoming 2026 National Band and Orchestra Festival at Carnegie Hall.

FUSD_FESTIVAL3: In April 2026, Henry J. Kaiser High School’s String Orchestra will perform at Carnegie Hall during the National Band and Orchestra Festival. Kaiser is one of two Fontana Unified orchestras set to perform after Summit High’s Fortepiano String Orchestra qualified in May.

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