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Spring 3-7-2016

### 10 Ouachita students named finalists in state NATS vocal competition

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#### Recommended Citation

Hurst, Anna and Ouachita News Bureau, "10 Ouachita students named finalists in state NATS vocal competition" (2016). *Press Releases*. 232.

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**OUACHITA**  
BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



**NEWS**

For immediate release

**10 Ouachita students named finalists in state NATS vocal competition**

*By Anna Hurst*

March 7, 2016

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at [newsbureau@obu.edu](mailto:newsbureau@obu.edu) or (870) 245-5208

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ten Ouachita Baptist University students were named finalists at the 2016 Arkansas National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) conference held recently at Henderson State University. Among the finalists, four Ouachita students earned first place awards.

Approximately 200 students from universities across the state of Arkansas attended the conference. Participants auditioned in classical or music theatre divisions. All OBU voice teachers who attended the conference served as judges in the audition process or as collaborative pianists. Staff collaborative pianists who assisted students this year included John Alec Briggs, Susan Monroe and Phyllis Walker.

“I think it is fair to say that our team of OBU voice professionals are extremely pleased and proud of all our students,” said Dr. Jon Secrest, coordinator of OBU’s vocal studies program and professor of music. “Not only those who were fortunate to win awards, but also those who are building on their performance skillset by participating in activities such as NATS.

“Any live audition enhances the cumulative experience of a singer/actor,” Secrest added. “The NATS audition experience is particularly helpful in that many of the teachers who are giving written feedback have had performing careers of their own. This kind of background often makes their assessment and observations both insightful and helpful.”

This year’s conference included a guest artist recital featuring Dr. Evan Jones, professor of music theory and coordinator of music theory and composition at Florida State University. Jones also taught a master class that included one Ouachita student, Hannah Saunders, in addition to several other students from throughout the state.

“Evan Jones did an amazing job of showing me how artistry in performance can also improve the technical aspects,” explained Saunders, who sang Jerome Kern’s “Can’t Help Lovin’ That Man” from *Show Boat*. “He really showed me how important it is to be a part of the music and listen to my instincts.” Saunders is a freshman musical theatre major from St. Paul, Ark.

“It is a good thing for our students to experience success,” Secrest said. “It builds confidence and provides resume-building material that will be viewed by some as very positive and appealing. Most often, but not always, success of this kind is a fairly dependable indicator of a student’s work ethic. The student then feels a sense of accomplishment, which motivates them to continue their efforts in the practice room. We as teachers are always pleased and blessed when our students are recognized for their artistic accomplishments, and the department benefits from having a strong presence and reputation in the state, region and nation.”

The following Ouachita students were NATS finalists, in order of hometown:

**Barling, Ark.**—Zach Myers, a freshman musical theatre student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, placed second in the lower college music theatre men division.

**Cedarville, Ark.**—Michaela Finley, a sophomore musical theatre student of David Stanley, earned first place in the lower college music theatre women division.

**Frisco, Texas**—Alexis Morgan, a junior choral music education student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, placed second in the upper college music theatre women division and third in the junior women division.

**Kirby, Ark.**—Rachel Mack, a freshman musical theatre student of Dr. Jon Secrest, earned second place in the lower college music theatre women division.

**Little Rock, Ark.**—Aaden Jones, a sophomore musical theatre student of John Alec Briggs, placed second in the upper college music theatre men division.

**North Little Rock, Ark.**—Kayla Walker, a junior musical theatre student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, earned first place in the upper college music theatre women division.

**Rockwall, Texas**—Jessie Brunson, a freshman vocal performance student of Dr. Jon Secrest, earned first place in the freshman women division.

**Russellville, Ark.**—Scotty Scott, a freshman musical theatre student of Dr. Jon Secrest, earned second place in the freshman men division and third place in the lower college music theatre men division.

**Wylie, Texas**—Jacob Hemsath, a sophomore musical theatre student of David Stanley, earned first place in the lower college music theatre men division. He also was a semifinalist in the sophomore men division. Libby Villegas, a freshman musical theatre student of David Stanley, placed fourth in the freshman women division.

Other Ouachita students named NATS semifinalists, in order of hometown, include:

**Alexander, Ark.**—Anna Darr, a sophomore musical theatre student of Dr. Margaret Garrett, was a semifinalist in the lower college music theatre women division.

**Bella Vista, Ark.**—Beth Crisler, a junior vocal performance student of Suzetta Glenn, was a semifinalist in the junior women division.

**Booneville, Ark.**—J.D. Sanders, a freshman worship arts student of John Alec Briggs, was a semifinalist in the freshman men division.

**Camden, Ark.**—Evan Wheatley, a senior music student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, was a semifinalist in the upper college music theatre men division.

**Evansville, Ind.**—Lauren Terry, a freshman musical theatre student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, was a semifinalist in the freshman women division and the lower college music theatre women division.

**Grapevine, Texas**—Joy Biebighauser, a freshman worship arts student of David Stanley, was a semifinalist in the freshman women division.

**Heath, Texas**—Kenzie Osborn, a freshman musical theatre student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, was a semifinalist in the lower college music theatre women division.

**Huntington, Ark.**—Cody Walls, a sophomore musical theatre student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, was a semifinalist in the freshman men division and the lower college music theatre men division.

**Maumelle, Ark.**—Jessica Elliff, a freshman musical theatre student of Dr. Margaret Garrett, was a semifinalist in the lower college music theatre women division.

**McKinney, Texas**—Lizzie Shelby, a junior vocal performance student of Suzetta Glenn, was a semifinalist in the junior women division.

**North Little Rock, Ark.**—Kenderick Scorza, a senior musical theatre student of David Stanley, was a semifinalist in the upper college music theatre men division.

**Rockwall, Texas**—Micah Brooks, a freshman musical theatre student of Dr. Jon Secrest, was a semifinalist in the freshman men division.

**St. Paul, Ark.**—Hannah Saunders, a freshman musical theatre student of Dr. Margaret Garrett, was a semifinalist in the lower college music theatre women division.

**White Hall, Ark.**—Bethany Gere, a senior musical theatre student of Dr. Margaret Garrett, was a semifinalist in the upper college music theatre women division.

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