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For immediate release

Ouachita vocal studies program boasts highest number of finalists at Southern Region NATS auditions

By Addy Goodman

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ouachita Baptist University music students earned 12 finalist honors at the 42nd annual southern region National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) auditions Nov. 8-11, the highest number of finalists from any competing school. Additionally, Kara Claybrook, adjunct instructor of voice at Ouachita, earned second place in the NATS Artist Awards (NATSAA) competition for the southern region.

The auditions were held at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Miss. The event included approximately 430 students from colleges and universities in Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

“The OBU voice teachers involved in this year’s auditions are all so pleased about the accomplishments of those who participated, not only for those who advanced into the later rounds of competition, but for those who did not,” said Dr. Jon Secrest, coordinator of Ouachita’s vocal studies program and Addie Mae Maddox Professor of Music. “Just being prepared, participating and learning the valuable lessons that go along with the experience is enough. To know that OBU had the largest number of finalists in the competition from all the schools that participated is icing on the cake!”

“It’s an incredible real-life audition experience that impacts our aspiring performers in so many ways,” Secrest added. “The discipline required to prepare for, follow through on and participate in an audition like this is really significant. Students who chose to enter more than one category have to have as many as eight three- or four-minute songs prepared and be ready to sing them at a highly proficient level at the drop of a hat.”

The annual audition is a three-round, competitive event. In the preliminary round, students sing a selection of their choice and one chosen by the judges in their category. Students receive written feedback and scores, and those with average scores of 90 or above move on to the semifinals. In that round, singers are scored according to a rubric of performance skills. The students with the top four

cumulative scores above 270 move on to the finals. In the final round, a panel of eight judges ranks the four singers.

“NATS has given me the opportunity to improve my vocal ability by receiving feedback from judges, learning technique from various master classes and hearing new material other students perform,” said Clay Mobley, a sophomore music industry major from Wylie, Texas. Mobley placed first in the lower college music theatre men division.

Claybrook’s second place finish in the 2017 Southern Region NATSAA competition will give her the opportunity to compete on the national level if the first place winner is unavailable to do so. The NATSAA competition is exclusively for emerging professional classical singers.

“I’m very grateful to God for the opportunity to participate in this competition,” Claybrook said. “It was so encouraging to place so well.

“I’m the type of person who needs a goal to work toward, so NATSAA was a great motivator,” Claybrook added. She was assisted by collaborative pianist Kristen LaMadrid.

In addition to student auditions, the conference includes lecture recitals, educational presentations, master classes and performances by various member teachers from the region. Dr. Glenda Secrest, professor of music, and Dr. Jon Secrest performed “A Man and a Woman” from *110 in the Shade* by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt, and “The Song that Goes Like This” from *Spamalot* by Eric Idle. They were assisted by collaborative pianist Phyllis Walker.

Dr. Jon Secrest said he found the biggest takeaway of the weekend was “the growth in artistry, self-confidence and spirit of joy in performance gained by students in the OBU Vocal Studies program.”

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

Allen, Texas – Logan Dooley, 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.

Alexander, Ark. – Hannah Hill, a sophomore musical theatre student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, earned second place in the lower college music theatre women division.

Arlington, Texas – Bonnie Gentry, a sophomore musical theatre student of Dr. Jon Secrest, earned third place in the sophomore women division. Gentry also was a semifinalist in the lower college music theatre division.

Benton, Ark. – Emily Johnson, a junior musical theatre student of Dr. Maggie Garrett, earned first place in the lower college music theatre women division.

Greenwood, Ark. – Zach Myers, a junior musical theatre student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, earned first place in the upper college music theatre men division.

Lewisville, Texas – Philip Robinson, a junior musical theatre student of Dr. Maggie Garrett, earned second place in the upper college music theatre men division.

North Little Rock, Ark. – Evan Dowers, a sophomore choral music education student of Dr. Jon Secrest, earned second place in the lower college music theatre men division.

Pittsburg, Texas – Lizzy Griffin, a senior musical theatre student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, earned third place in the upper college music theatre women division. Griffin also was a semifinalist in the junior women division.

Rockwall, Texas – Micah Brooks, a junior musical theatre student of Dr. Jon Secrest, earned fourth place in the upper college music theatre men division. Brooks also was a semifinalist in the junior men division.

Tecumseh, Okla. – Ansley Elliott, a sophomore vocal performance student of Dr. Maggie Garrett, earned fourth place in the lower college music theatre women division. Elliott also was a semifinalist in the freshman women division.

Wylie, Texas – Clay Mobley, a sophomore music industry student of Dr. Jon Secrest, earned first place in the lower college music theatre men division. Mobley also was a semifinalist in the sophomore men division.

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

Arkadelphia, Ark. – Danielle Hall, a freshman vocal performance student of Dr. Maggie Garrett, lower college music theatre women division

Austin, Texas – Hannah Anderson, a freshman musical theatre student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, freshman women division

Evansville, Ind. – Lauren Terry, a junior musical theatre student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, upper college music theatre women division

Garland, Texas – Elizabeth Schutter, a senior choral music education student of John Alec Briggs, senior women division

Greenwood, Ark. – Alex Marrin, a sophomore musical theatre student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, lower college music theatre men division

Jonesboro, Ark. – Will Stotts, a senior musical theatre student of Dr. Jon Secrest, upper college music theatre men division

Minden, La. – Melodie Dubose, a freshman musical theatre student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, freshman women division

Plano, Texas – Paige Price, a freshman musical theatre student of Dr. Jon Secrest, lower college music theatre women division

Rockwall, Texas – Jessie Brunson, a junior vocal performance student of Dr. Jon Secrest, junior women division

Roland, Ark. – Michael Pere, a senior musical theatre student of Dr. Jon Secrest, upper college music theatre men division

Russellville, Ark. – Scotty Scott, a junior musical theatre student of Dr. Jon Secrest, upper college music theatre men division

Van Buren, Ark. – Cody Walls, a senior musical theatre student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, upper college music theatre men division

Wylie, Texas – Lexi Reimer, a freshman choral music education student of Dr. Arnold Rawls, freshman women division

PHOTO OF FINALISTS AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD

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