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3-6-2018

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Recommended Citation

Smith, Katie and Ouachita News Bureau, "Nine Ouachita students named finalists in state NATS competition" (2018). *Press Releases*. 481.

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For immediate release

Nine Ouachita students named finalists in state NATS competition

By Katie Smith

March 6, 2018

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



ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Nine students from Ouachita Baptist University were named finalists at the 2018 Arkansas National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) recently held at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway. Five of these students earned first place honors.

“Participation in the competition creates an environment of motivation and goal setting among our students,” said Dr. Jon Secrest, Addie Mae Maddox Professor of Music and coordinator of Ouachita’s vocal studies program. “Working toward a performance goal always encourages the students in their diligence and level of preparation.

“These results reflect extremely well on our program,” Dr. Secrest added. “They affirm the hard work and investment of time our students spend building their artistry toward an elite level of proficiency.”

During the competition, which includes several colleges and universities of all sizes from across Arkansas, students are judged by NATS members from other educational institutions and private studios and receive written critiques on their performances, focusing on musicianship, artistry, expression and other factors. Additionally, tenor Scott Michael was the featured guest artist at the conference, performing a recital and teaching a master class.

To prepare for this rigorous competition, students meet weekly with their voice instructor to receive guidance on their repertoire selection, performance practice and vocal technique. Students also are encouraged to practice outside of class every day for at least one hour.

“The work load is shared by the singers; their teachers, who tirelessly dedicate themselves to this task; and their collaborative pianists, who have a direct influence on how each student’s performance is accepted and judged,” Dr. Secrest explained. “The sacrifice and dedication shown by all those involved is outstanding. We are blessed beyond measure to have the finest staff of collaborative pianists in the state of Arkansas.”

The nine finalists from Ouachita, listed in order of hometown, were:

Allen, Texas—Logan Dooley, a sophomore musical theatre major and student of Dr. Jon Secrest, earned first place in the freshman men division and second place in the lower college music theatre men division.

Arlington, Texas—Bonnie Gentry, a sophomore musical theatre major and student of Dr. Jon Secrest, earned first place in the sophomore women division and second place in the lower college music theatre women division.

Austin, Texas—Hannah Anderson, a freshman musical theatre major and student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, earned first place in the freshman women division. Anderson also was a semifinalist in the lower college music theatre women division.

Garfield, Ark.—Cedar Valdez, a sophomore musical theatre major and student of Dr. Jon Secrest and former student of Dr. Margaret Garrett, earned third place in the lower college music theatre men division.

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

North Little Rock, Ark.—Sharayah Wallace, a sophomore musical theatre major and student of John Alec Briggs, earned third place in the lower college music theatre women division.

Rockwall, Texas—Micah Brooks, a junior musical theatre major and student of Dr. Jon Secrest, earned third place in the junior men division and third place in the upper level college music theatre men division.

Russellville, Ark.—Hannah Hines, a senior musical theatre and mass communications major and student of Dr. Margaret Garrett, earned first place in the upper college music theatre women division.

Wylie, Texas—Clay Mobley, a sophomore music industry major and student of Dr. Jon Secrest, earned first place in the sophomore men division and first place in the lower college music theatre men division.

Other semifinalists from Ouachita, in order of hometown, were:

Alexander, Ark.—Hannah Earls, a freshman musical theatre major and student of Dr. Margaret Garrett, was a semifinalist in the lower college music theatre women division. Hannah Hill, a sophomore musical theatre major and student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, was a semifinalist in the lower college music theatre women division.

Bella Vista, Ark.—Sophie Chiocco, a freshman musical theatre major and student of Dr. Arnold Rawls, was a semifinalist in the lower college music theatre women division.

Benton, Ark.—Emily Johnson, a junior musical theatre major and student of Dr. Margaret Garrett, was a semifinalist in the lower college music theatre women division.

Clarksville, Ark.—Emma Pitts, a junior music education major and student of Dr. Jon Secrest, was a semifinalist in the sophomore women and lower college music theatre women divisions.

Greenwood, Ark.—Alex Marrin, a sophomore musical theatre major and student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, was a semifinalist in the lower college music theatre men division.

Griffithville, Ark.—Caleb Harris, a freshman musical theatre major and student of Kara Claybrook, was a semifinalist in the lower college music theatre men division.

Longview, Texas—Rachel Webber, a senior musical theatre major and student of Dr. Jon Secrest, was a semifinalist in the upper college music theatre women division.

Minden, La.—Melodie Dubose, a freshman musical theatre major and student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, was a semifinalist in the freshman women and lower college music theatre women divisions.

North Little Rock, Ark.—Dean Carmona, a sophomore vocal performance major and student of Dr. Jon Secrest, was a semifinalist in the sophomore men division. Evan Dowers, a sophomore music education major and student of Dr. Jon Secrest, was a semifinalist in the sophomore men division.

Plano, Texas—Paige Price, a freshman musical theatre major and student of Dr. Jon Secrest, was a semifinalist in the lower college music theatre women division.

Sheridan, Ark.—Madeline Martin, a freshman musical theatre and mass communications major and student of Dr. Jon Secrest, was a semifinalist in the lower college music theatre women division.

Van Buren, Ark.—Cody Walls, a senior musical theatre major and student of Dr. Glenda Secrest, was a semifinalist in the junior men and upper college music theatre men divisions.

Walnut Ridge, Ark.—Dylan Blackwood, a junior musical theatre major and student of Dr. Jon Secrest, was a semifinalist in the lower college music theatre men division.

Ouachita's collaborative pianists for the competition included Kristen La Madrid, Susan Monroe and Elsen Portugal.

For more information, contact Dr. Jon Secrest at secrestj@obu.edu.