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10 Bonita Unified Singers Selected for Southern California Vocal Association Honor Choirs

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – Continuing what has become an annual tradition for the District’s top vocal talent, 10 Bonita Unified students have been selected to perform with the prestigious Southern California Vocal Association (SCVA) Honor Choirs, with multiple performers chosen from both Bonita and San Dimas high schools.

San Dimas High School senior Steve Moreno, junior Soft Washburn and freshman Leanne Flores joined Bonita High School seniors Eric Romero, Audrey Granger, Gage Dowdle and Nathan Kwan, juniors Christian Weber and Ksenia Freeborn, and sophomore Valeria Geren to be among the 270 top choir members from Southern California selected to perform Saturday, Nov. 18 at the University of Redlands.

“This is an incredible achievement for San Dimas High School,” San Dimas High Choir Director Jared Pugh said. “These students competed against hundreds of other applicants and were ranked in the top of their field. For a smaller school like San Dimas to have so many students in the Honor Choirs is extraordinary. It’s a great boost for our music program.”

The SCVA Honor Choirs are broken up into three groups: a mixed group of sopranos, altos, tenors and bass (SATB), a group that includes Romero, Kwan, Dowdle and Freeborn; tenors and bass only (TTBB), which includes Weber and Moreno; and sopranos and altos only (SSAA), which includes Washburn, Flores, Granger and Geren.

The talented vocalists have all traveled different paths to the Honor Choirs, but agree that music is a language that brings people together.

San Dimas High’s Moreno comes from a family of musicians but never considered singing until walking past the choir room as a sophomore and hearing the singers building a chord. Washburn was only a year old when she flew to Germany with her parents, singing her ABCs over and over on the plane ride. Flores has been singing since a young age and gained experience by participating in elementary school talent shows.

“I love music because it’s fun and expressive,” Flores said. “Music is happy, sad, funky, cultural and pretty basic to most things in life. I love to play and sing – it’s just always been something I’ve enjoyed even from the moment I could talk. Music is my passion, my career, it’s what I want to do in the future. It’s awesome that I’ve been selected as a freshman.”

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Bonita High's Romero is making his second consecutive appearance in the Honor Choir, singing in the mixed SATB choir after performing in the TTBB choir in 2022. Granger grew up listening to classical music and opera, while Geren sang along with Disney film heroines. Weber joined his family in Christmas caroling at a young age and is a budding composer, while Dowdle learned to sing accompanying himself on piano. Freeborn was inspired by her sister to join choir in the fifth grade, while Kwan loves the performance aspect of singing, as well as the camaraderie.

"Music is a universal language that everyone knows and everyone can find a connection through," Freeborn said. "No matter if you are from a different part of the world, everyone can connect through it, it's very sentimental and it's endearing to me to be able to express that kind of language through music. I can't believe I made the choir. I'm super excited to meet new friends in the choir and challenge myself."

The Bonita and San Dimas Honor Choir students auditioned in September, performing a classical or art song of their own choosing; and showcased their ability to sing scales and triads, perform a tonal memory and sight-read. They will spend two days at the University of Redlands rehearsing with their peers before the big performance on Saturday night.

"This is a tremendous honor for our students, who have worked so hard on their craft, as well as a testament to the music education program at Bonita Unified, as many of our choir students have been studying music here since elementary school," Bonita High Choir Director Ryan Yoder said. "Many schools would be thrilled to have one student selected. At Bonita, we have seven in Honor Choir this year, and we are ecstatic. Congratulations to all the Bonita Unified 2023 Honor Choir members."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

BUSD_SDHS_SCVA: San Dimas High School senior Steve Romero, freshman Leanne Flores and junior Soft Washburn share a laugh after being selected to the Southern California Vocal Association's (SCVA) 2023 Honor Choirs. It was the first selection for each of the students to sing with the prestigious choir, which will perform Saturday, Nov. 18 at the University of Redlands.

BUSD_BHS_SCVA: Bonita High School choir members are all smiles after being selected to the Southern California Vocal Association's (SCVA) 2023 Honor Choirs, which will stage its annual performance on Saturday, Nov. 18 at the University of Redlands. From left to right are senior Nathan Kwan, senior Audrey Granger, junior Christian Weber, sophomore Valeria Geren, senior Gage Dowdle, junior Ksenia Freeborn, and senior Eric Romero.

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