



Saint Viator Band Takes Disney Stage by Storm

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Freshman Santiago Sordo-Palacios (left) and senior Danny Cortese, both of Arlington Heights, and sophomore Kyle Seaman of Aurora wait to perform at Festival Disney with other members of the Saint Viator symphonic band.

Saint Viator High School's symphonic band scored a rating of excellent earlier this week from an esteemed panel of university music directors as part of Festival Disney.

Performing at the Premiere Theater on the back lot at Disney's Hollywood Studios, the Saint Viator symphonic band impressed music professors from Florida State University, the University of South Carolina and the University of Notre Dame.

This was Saint Viator's second appearance at the all-Disney-produced

competitive music festival, where they went up against high school concert bands from nearly a dozen high schools from across the country.

Dr. Kenneth Dye, director of bands at the University of Notre Dame, helped to launch the festival eight years ago, and he continues to be

actively involved with it.

"This is a first class educational experience," Dye said. "Students get to perform in a world class venue and get feedback from expert clinicians --- and enjoy the parks."

Approximately 55 band students traveled to Orlando for the competition and performance tour. They played under the direction of Tom Seaman, Saint Viator band director.

"The students showed me just how much they could step up," Seaman said. "They played really, really well, and after having only three weeks to prepare."

They opened their set with the march "Miss Liberty" by Carl King, before an emotional rendition of "Amazing Grace," and a difficult medley of familiar tunes "Sailing Songs" as their dramatic closer.

It was Dye who worked with the band after their competition performance, smoothing their suspension in "Amazing Grace" and heightening their articulation in the sailors' hornpipe section of "Sailing Songs."

"What a fabulous job you did preparing for this," Dye told them. "This is a beautiful arrangement."

Sophomore percussionist Carlee Smith from Bartlett took Dye's counsel to heart, especially his advice aimed at the rhythm and low brass sections.

"He reminded us to listen to other parts of the band, so that we all blend as one," Smith said. "It's advice we've heard before, but it always helps to hear it from someone else."

Saint Viator students performed a longer set the next day at the Marketplace stage in middle of Downtown Disney, as thousands of tourists walked the main street venue just outside of the Disney parks.

Dressed in their concert dress, the Saint Viator musicians drew a rousing response with their closing number, a medley of music from the "Blues Brothers."

Band members rounded out their trip with an instrumental workshop in a Disney recording studio, taping their own soundtrack to a Disney animated feature.

Of course, in between gigs, students visited all the Disney parks, including Hollywood Studios, Epcot Center, the Magic Kingdom, Animal Kingdom and Universal Studios.

"It was a really rewarding experience," said sophomore saxophonist Joseph Lorenzini of Arlington Heights. "I think just being here at Disney and seeing all that they do with music will really help us in the future."

Band members returned home to start preparations for their Spring Arts Festival performance --- where they will reprise some of their Disney hits --- set for 1 p.m. May 1 at Saint Viator High School.