



HILLSDALE COLLEGE

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CONTACT:

Emily Stack Davis

517-803-3745

PR@hillsdale.edu

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Hillsdale College Music Department Hosts Annual Student Concerto/Aria Competition

Winners will perform as soloists with the Hillsdale College Symphony Orchestra.

HILLSDALE, Mich. — The Hillsdale College Music Department hosted its annual Student Concerto/Aria Competition on Jan. 25 in Conrad Recital Hall. Participants performed solo pieces for a panel of guest judges, and three students were selected to perform with the Hillsdale College Symphony Orchestra this spring.

“The annual competition motivates students to focus on a specific piece with their studio professor, typically during the fall semester leading into the January auditions,” said James Holleman, music director of choirs and orchestras. “The chance to perform as a soloists with our symphony orchestra is an amazing opportunity for our students.”

Seventeen instrumentalists and seven vocalists prepared repertoire with their individual studio teachers and performed solo pieces for a panel of guest judges made up of professional musicians and faculty from peer institutions. Performances included violin, viola, cello, clarinet, oboe, piano, and voice. Students, faculty, staff, and members of the community attended.

Judges were Timothy Cheeks, professor of performing arts/vocal arts at The University of Michigan; Amy Chang, principal cellist in the Toledo Symphony Orchestra and cello instructor at The University of Toledo; and David Keep assistant professor of music and piano/keyboard area head at Hope College.

“It was extremely inspiring and refreshing for me to sit down and listen to these amazing students,” Chang said. “I appreciate each individual who put in so much effort, and everyone made such wonderful presentation. I was very impressed.”

The judges selected three students to perform as soloists with the orchestra during the Saturday, March 28 concert in Markel Auditorium. Ellia He '26, a violin student of Dr. Melissa Knecht,

performed Tomas Antonio Vitale's Chaconne in G Minor. Samuel Jarzab '26, a clarinet student of Dr. Andrew Sprung, performed first movement of Aaron Copland's Concerto for Clarinet and Strings. Ashlyn Linton '26, a piano student of Dr. Daniel Kuehler, performed the first movement of Sergei Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 in F# Minor, Op. 1.

"I was extremely impressed, and I'm still thinking about the incredible dedication the students have, and obviously that the teachers have for their talented students," Cheeks said.

The judges also awarded honorable mentions to mezzo-soprano Sophia LaBonte '26, a voice student of Emily Douglass, and Anne Crites '27, an oboe student of Christopher Wheeler.

More than a quarter of Hillsdale's student body participates in one of the College's music ensembles, which include the College Choir, Chamber Choir, Symphony Orchestra, and Jazz Big Band.

For photos from the competition, click [here](#). For recordings of Hillsdale College music performances, click [here](#). For more information about Hillsdale's performing ensembles, click [here](#). For photos of Hillsdale College, click [here](#). For a high-resolution copy of the Hillsdale College clocktower logo, click [here](#).

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College is an independent, nonsectarian, Christian liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, *Imprimis*, with a circulation of more than 7.3 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

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