

Howard Bishop Middle students win best in show in drama competition, will perform at state festival

A group of students from Howard Bishop Middle School have been invited to perform in this week's opening ceremony of the Florida Junior Thespian State Festival after earning top honors at a district competition in Jacksonville.

At the recent District 1 Festival, sponsored by the Educational Theatre Association, the 16 students performed 'Run and Tell That' from the musical 'Hairspray.' The piece earned the ensemble a superior rating and the top award in the Large Group Musical Category. It was then selected as 'Best of Show' for the entire competition, beating out the winners of 14 other categories. That honor qualified the students to perform in the opening ceremony for the statewide competition and to compete against the winners in their category from across the state, including students from performing arts schools.



Thirteen other pieces from the combined Howard Bishop/Lincoln Middle School Thespian troupe also earned superior ratings at the District 1 Festival, and five of them are headed to the state competition, which runs from Thursday, January 12 through Saturday, January 14.

This was the first time drama/chorus teacher Jaclyn Collins had taken a group to a thespian competition. She says she was and wasn't surprised by her students' success.

"I think they're awesome, and hearing the way the crowd responded, I think they agreed," said Collins. "What we represent is diversity and fun, and I think that's what really helped them stand out."

The piece the students performed focuses on overcoming racism and the fact that diversity benefits society.

"It's a piece about race, and most of the students in it are students of color who are extremely talented. Throughout the whole piece you see the kids having fun and becoming integrated."

Eighth-grader Patrick Ford, who earned superior ratings as part of a large group ensemble, small group ensemble and solo performer, says he's looking forward to the state festival.

"I am nervous, but I'm confident that we will do a good job," said Ford. "Everyone here is incredible in their own way and I think we make a great team."

Eighth-grader Aaiden Cotton who was the lead performer in the Best of Show piece, says he loves the opportunity drama gives him to step into a variety of characters, try new things, meet new people, and, of course, sing and dance.

"It teaches me people skills," he said. "I'm not as nervous talking to people as I used to be and I can do anything on the spot if you ask. Those are skills that will be important for me to have in the future."

The students who earned superiors in the district competition, along with their school and category, are listed below. Due to limitations in the number of entries a troupe may have, those who will be competing at the state event are in bold.

(more)

Large Group Musical (HBMS): Aiden Cotton, Patrick Ford, Lorin Dela Cruz, Mia Moore, Jordyn Smith, Zyion Green, Maliyah Mincey, Julia Wynn, Jay Shelton, De'Karee Cason, Xander Emma, Amani Gainey, Amari Henderson, Jillianne Gayo, Mia Nakanishi, Shivani Joshi-Guske

Small Group Musical (LMS): Jayden Arduser, Esther Thompson, Gracie McMillen, Megan Hoover, Juliet Anderson, Tavya Joshi, Yasmin Hassan

Duet Musical (LMS): Megan Hoover and Juliet Anderson

Small Group Musical (HBMS): Jordyn Smith, Amari Henderson, Amani Gainey, Maliyah Mincey, Mariah Miller, Zyion Green

Solo Musical (HBMS): Patrick Ford

Solo Musical (HBMS): Aiden Cotton

Small Group (HBMS): Roni Chaimov, Lorin Dela Cruz, Gianina Celso, Eliza Hazen, Quinn Ryan Altieri, Sylvana Vivas

Small Group (HBMS): Patch Ford, Aiden Cotton, Xander Emma, Sebastian Emma, Halen Herchel, De'Karee Cason

Solo (HBMS): Jordyn Smith

Solo (HBMS): Amari Henderson

Monologue (HBMS): Annika Gamad

Solo (LMS): Esther Thompson

Solo (LMS): Nitya Rao

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