

Student symphonic orchestra debuts at MAHS concert

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McKeesport Area High School students will showcase their musical talents as a new symphonic orchestra makes its debut during the school's annual holiday concert.

When the marching band season ended for McKeesport Area students in late October, nearly 35 students in grades nine through 12 were looking for a new creative outlet.

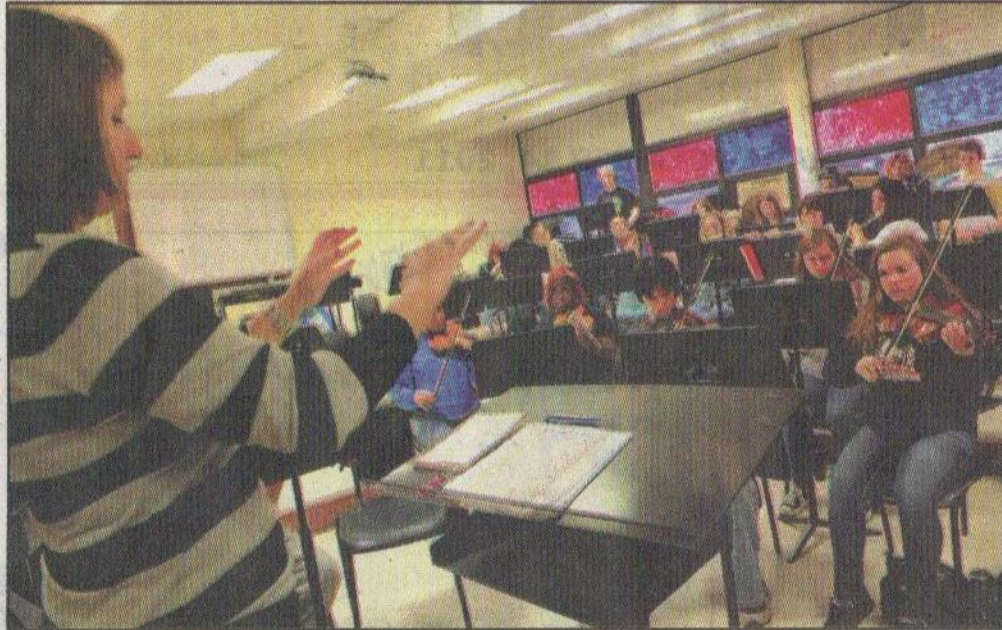
Under the direction of Katelyn Panza, a symphonic orchestra was formed as an after-school group intended to enrich students' musical experience through exposure to more advanced selections.

"It's completely volunteer," Panza said. "We formed the group because a lot of students are friends, and they wanted to do something that combined the orchestra and the band."

The symphonic orchestra meets once weekly after school, Panza explained, giving students a chance to test their abilities while enjoying time with their peers.

"It's fun," she said. "The students appreciate the extra playing time. It's more challenging music, and it's stuff they have to work on outside of class."

Panza's students said they



— Photos by Cindy Shegan Keeley/Daily News

Katelyn Panza leads the symphonic orchestra during a recent practice.

are thrilled with the opportunity to build their talents under a new dynamic.

"Playing in the (symphonic orchestra) is a great experience, because there's a lot of kids who do band and orchestra. This combines them both," senior percussionist Adam Fuller said. "We never really have the experience of doing both at the same time. There's a lot of classical music that's fun, but it can only be played with strings and brass together."

Junior Sara Levendusky, who plays clarinet, said she

enjoys every chance she gets to play.

"I play my instrument all the time," Sara said. "I see the symphonic orchestra as another opportunity to play my instrument and do what I love."

For Sara, the holiday concert features songs she describes simply as "fun," such as "Winter Wonderland," "Stille Nacht (Silent Night)," and "Jingle Bells Forever."

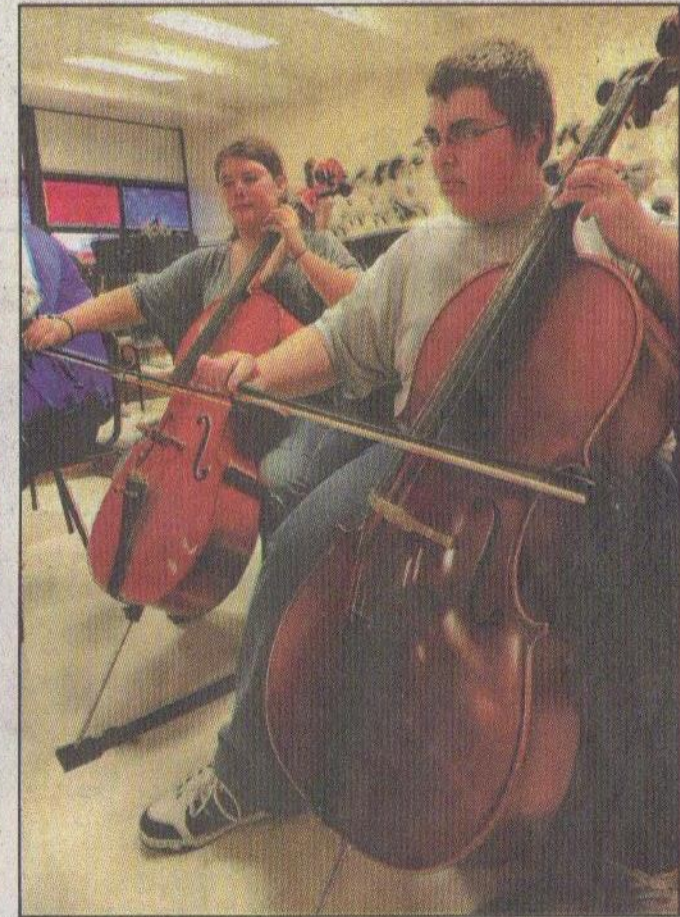
The program offers something for everybody and allows each of the symphonic orchestra's sections

a time to shine.

"I personally love 'Jingle Bells Forever' — I love Sousa marches," Sara said. "In 'Silent Night,' I have a duet with a cello player, and it's so much fun to play."

Parent Carolyn Carriero said she's happy to see her son Casey, who plays the violin, involved in a challenging music program that gives him an opportunity to enhance his skills while having a good time.

"This is bringing kids together who want to play together," parent Carolyn Carriero said. "And it's the



Allison Margarcloi and Collin Whitney rehearse for an upcoming concert.

first time they are going on stage to perform together."

The symphonic orchestra will perform during Thursday's concert at 7 p.m. in the high school auditorium. The performance also will include the concert

band and choir.

Tonight, the high school will host Founders Hall performers, as the auditorium will be open for a 7 p.m. concert featuring the middle school's band, orchestra and choir.