



Home (to Music) for the Holidays

Some of my favorite moments while serving NYSSMA® were during the four years I was the 2nd Vice President. My time overseeing New York's talented student musicians in my 2nd VP leadership role was among the best of my career. After all, aren't students the reason we all do what we do?

Before you read on, allow me the opportunity to acknowledge and thank our current 2nd VP, Daryle Redmond, who has spent countless hours organizing and coordinating everything all-state. Permit me to also recognize the tremendous efforts of the five all-state chairs who graciously accepted my invitation to serve as ensemble administrators, helping to make our five 2022/2023 all-state ensembles a success:

Robert Dumas – Mixed Chorus.

David La Morte – Symphonic Band.

Kathryn Behr – Symphony Orchestra.

Adam Erdos – Instrumental Jazz.

Kaitlyn Koch – Vocal Jazz.

Typically, this page is designed to send some sort of inspirational message, something motivational, or words of encouragement to support music educators as they navigate

their daily routine of making music education a priority in the lives of the students they teach. This time, I'm going to change direction a bit and address the students who will arrive in Rochester after the Thanksgiving holiday break.

*... take the time to
fill the holiday season
with appreciation for
all that is good*

Your NYSSMA® family

As we embark on another all-state experience, I ask that you share and reinforce the following message with your conference all-state students.

As we approach the magic of the holiday season, I encourage you to remember that holiday celebrations are all about family, relationships,

and, of course, time spent together. Those connections are more complicated and intricate than ever before. Family no longer has a traditional look, and relationships are more complex and complicated than in the past. The opportunities to share time together took a huge blow in the past two years, leaving many feeling isolated and separated. Some would suggest that finding a place of belonging can be a very difficult process post-pandemic.

As NYSSMA® president, I am here to tell you that as you head to Rochester to participate in an all-state ensemble, you now BELONG to our NYSSMA® all-state family. You will build new relationships, some that will last a lifetime, and be given the opportunity to CONNECT with your peers who share the same love of music that brought you to Rochester. Please know it is the work of NYSSMA® leadership to provide an experience that puts music at the center for all students.

Conference all-state is about coming together to CREATE an artistic encounter that will leave you with musical growth that is richer and fuller for having been part of a collegial activity culminating in communal,



beautiful, wondrous music-making. It is about sharing your cultural background and the things you believe in with your fellow musicians from across New York State.

Appreciating music's role

As with the family with whom you will be celebrating this holiday season, you will find in your new NYSSMA® family a sense of encouragement, a feeling of respect, and a mindset full of love and support. We are all here to make your musical journey something that leaves you with memories to take back to your loved ones at home. It will also foster a better understanding of what it means to give, to understand, to think beyond yourself, and to recognize that it takes teamwork to create the music that you will make. Most important, it will cultivate an appreciation of all that makes us different and special.

NYSSMA® has taught you to not give up! Nothing can stop you from reaching your goals, and you now have an opportunity in which kindness and thoughtfulness allow you to shine. It is my wish that your time in Rochester is everything and more than you're hoping for. Upon your return home, take the time to fill the holiday season with appreciation for all that is good. May music be evermore a part of what makes you, You.

I have chosen Connect, Belong, Create as the NYSSMA® Winter Conference theme. I encourage you to be that musician who helps make NYSSMA® all-inclusive, welcoming, and warm. Inclusion outcomes can only be met when you and your fellow all-state performers are truly inviting to all. Let's make Rochester and this holiday season a time for us to come together where the further out we extend family togetherness, the stronger the entity becomes.

In conclusion, allow me to use this opportunity to recognize the NYSSMA® family of chaperones lead by Neil and Karen Bryson and assisted by Jessica Chapman (Instrumental), Peter Valantoni (Choral), and Mindy Poupore and Bill Fancher (Jazz). These individuals, along with their teams of kind and giving personnel, take on the responsibility of caring for and protecting the 550-plus all-state students in their charge. Their work is tireless. Rochester, known for its rich culture, is the perfect place for a conference with all-state performances that promises to be nothing short of a remarkable opportunity for both students and teachers to Connect, Belong, and Create. Much like the family celebrations we relish at this time of year, I look forward to your coming "home" to celebrate another year of being together and embracing the power of music education. ||