Chorus Chronicle 2025 - 2026

HFCS Department of Music (Chorus)

Editor:
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The Senior Chorus at the WMHT-TV Studio in Troy, November 2025, to record their performance for *Music for the Holidays*.

Editor's Note...

Twenty years into my tenure as Chorus Director at Hoosick Falls Central School, I find myself as energized as ever. Six performances at Carnegie Hall, four appearances on WMHT-TV, a CBS spotlight, collaborations with Albany Pro Musica at Troy Music Hall and the University at Albany, a stint with the Boston String Quartet, and countless other experiences have only deepened my conviction that the pursuit of excellence in performance never loses its pull. The spark students bring to every rehearsal and every stage is always fresh — and it continues to propel us toward new opportunities and adventures.

This year was no exception. My choral students at Hoosick Falls Middle School (grades 7–8) and High School (grades 9–12) embraced a full and ambitious season: the RCSMA All-County Festivals and Scholarship Festival, Albany Pro Musica's High School Festival, the Pro Musica International Festival, a collaboration with the Bennington County Choral Society, and the Trills and Thrills Music Evaluation, where the Junior Chorus earned well-deserved recognition. The season's crowning moment came in May 2026, when the Senior Chorus delivered a phenomenal win at the *Music in the Parks* Competition. As they have done time and again, these singers met the relentless demands of learning new repertoire with determination and joy. Their only goal was to sing — and sing they did!

Special points of interest:

- *Area All State*
- *Albany Pro Musica*
- *Scholarship Results*
- *NYSSMA*
- *Music in the Parks Competition*

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RCSMA All County Festival - Fall 2025
Singing with the Best in the County



Congratulations to the eleven Chorus students who performed at the RCSMA All-County Festival on Saturday, November 6 & 8, 2025! This year's festival featured four performing groups — Senior Chorus, Jazz Band, Junior Band, and Elementary Chorus — and was hosted right here at Hoosick Falls. Our Chorus students were hand-selected by Dr. Yudkoff to perform alongside some of the finest young musicians in the county, and the experience proved both inspiring and rewarding as students worked under the direction of the festival's invited conductors. Pictured above from left to right:
Chyah Rhoden, Mya Wiggins, Abigail Weeden, Karalina Hastings, Mason Amodeo-Duket, Ethan McMahon, Jack Mallory, Frances Gardner, Shane Hatlee, Kaitlyn Baker, and Grady Rowlands



From left to right: Seniors Chyah Rhoden, Karalina Hastings, Ethan McMahon and Shane Hatlee embrace their final All-County experience!

Area All-State Festival - November 2025
Singing with the Best in the Capital Region



Shane Hatlee (bass), Chyah Rhoden (soprano), and Grady Rowlands (bass) earned a place in the Mixed Chorus at the NYSSMA Area All-State Festival, held at Proctors Theatre in Schenectady on November 21–22, 2025. Their selection was a direct result of their outstanding Level VI scores at the NYSSMA Solo Festival in May 2025 — achievements that placed them among the most accomplished student musicians competing from schools across the Capital Region.

Singers Shine at NYSSMA Solo Evaluation Festival

This year's record-breaking participation in the NYSSMA Solo Festival required our students to be split across two sites — March at Maple Avenue Middle School in Saratoga Springs and May at Mechanicville High School. The outstanding results speak for themselves: these students showed up, worked hard, and delivered. Congratulations to all!

Student Name	Grade	NYSSMA Level	Type	Rating
Grady Rowlands	10	All State (Level 6)	Solo	Outstanding
Abigail Weeden	10	All State (Level 6)	Solo	Outstanding
Jack Mallory	10	All State (Level 6)	Solo	Outstanding
Mason Amodeo-Duket	10	6	Solo	Outstanding
Chyah Rhoden	12	6	Solo	Outstanding
Shane Hatlee	12	6	Solo	Outstanding
Karalina Hastings	12	6	Solo	Outstanding
Kaitlin Baker	11	6	Solo	Outstanding
Mya Wiggins	11	6	Solo	Outstanding
Bret Giglio	11	5	Solo	Outstanding
Shane Hatlee & Abigail Weeden	12 & 10	5	Duet	Outstanding
Josh Allen & Ludmila Belyaeva	11 & 9	5	Duet	Outstanding
Chyah Rhoden & Mya Wiggins	12 & 11	4	Duet	Outstanding
Ethan McMahon & Mya Wiggins	12 & 11	4	Duet	Outstanding
Emma-Mae Kinney & Mya Wiggins	12 & 11	4	Duet	Outstanding
Brennan Maddex	9	4	Solo	Outstanding
Reese Richard	9	4	Solo	Outstanding
Ludmila Belyaeva	9	4	Solo	Outstanding
Ana-Marie Cottrell & Rachel Pilot	12 & 10	3	Duet	Outstanding
Michael Allen	9	3	Solo	Outstanding
Landon Perry	7	2	Solo	Outstanding
Isabella Muratorri	7	2	Solo	Outstanding
Kaitlyn Baker & Frances Gardner	11	4	Duet	Excellent
Josh Allen	11	4	Solo	Excellent
Kael Waytkus	9	4	Solo	Excellent
Carly Turner	9	3	Solo	Excellent
Aurora Ferraro	8	3	Solo	Excellent
Sadie Hale	8	3	Solo	Excellent
Kaydence Williams	9	3	Solo	Excellent
Abigail Nowicki	8	3	Solo	Excellent
Remi Meddis	7	2	Solo	Excellent
Phoenix Danish	7	2	Solo	Excellent
Charlotte Hastings	7	2	Solo	Excellent
Karley Gates	7	2	Solo	Excellent
Maya Cornish	7	2	Solo	Excellent
Ayva Crosby	7	2	Solo	Excellent
Amelia Houle	7	2	Solo	Excellent
Loralei Gardner	7	2	Solo	Excellent
Lilian Bedor	7	2	Solo	Excellent

RCSMA All County Festival - Winter 2026





Pictured from left to right:
Top Row: *Carly Turner, Abigail Nowicki, Ludmila Belyaeva, and Gretta Rowlands*
Seated: *Brennon Maddex and Kael Waytkus*
Inset left: *Phoenix Danish*



On February 7, 2026, Columbia High School in East Greenbush hosted the second of two annual All-County Music Festival organized by the Rensselaer County School Music Association (RCSMA). The festival showcased exceptional selected music students from fifteen invited school districts across Rensselaer County, performing in four ensembles: Elementary Band (grades 5-6), Junior Chorus (grades 7 -9), String Orchestra, and Senior Band (grades 10-12). Hoosick Falls was proudly represented by fourteen students. Dr. Yudkoff's seven vocalists performed in the Junior Chorus: sopranos Gretta Rowlands and Abigail Nowicki; altos Carly Turner, Ludmila Belyaeva, and Phoenix Danish; and baritones Brennon Maddex and Kael Waytkus. Mr. Allen's seven instrumentalists performed in the Senior Band. These students delivered outstanding performances, reflecting great musicianship and pride in their school and community.

Music in the Parks Competitive Evaluation Festival & Bonding Tour
Senior Chorus in Pennsylvania
Half a Chorus - A Full Victory



Members of the Senior Chorus in Pennsylvania before their Excellent evaluation and winning performance at the Music in the Parks Festival

A scheduling conflict between the Junior Prom and the Chorus Evaluation Festival meant that several talented 11th and 12th-grade singers were unable to join the Senior Chorus at their Pennsylvania Music Evaluation Festival. With only 14 of the chorus's 30 members available to perform, the odds were far from favorable.

But this group of mostly younger singers, guided by a handful of veteran members and fueled by tireless dedication, refused to be defined by their circumstances. On May 30, 2026, they rose to the moment — outperforming a choir from a Private School for Gifted Students from Pennsylvania (which had won the category last year) to claim first place in this category.

To these 14 extraordinary students: their heart, resilience, and determination made all the difference. Congratulations to the following students on an outstanding achievement: Sopranos (Mari Cleary, Reese Richard & Abigail Weeden); Baritones/Basses (Bret Giglio, Brennan Maddex, Shane Hatlee, Jack Mallory, Mason Amodeo-Duket, Kael Waytkus), and Altos (Kaitlyn Baker, Carly Turner, Gray Gardner, Rachel Pilot & Ana-Marie Cottrell).

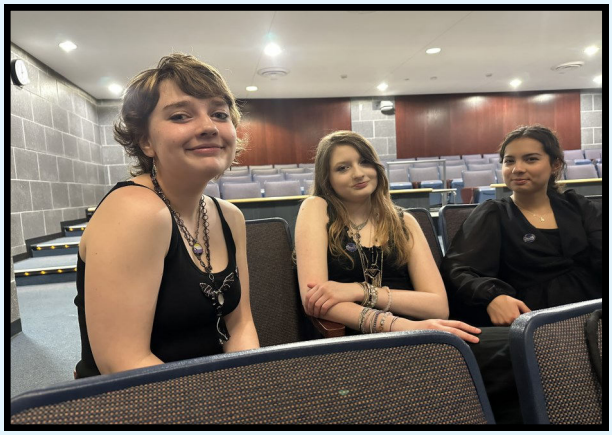


Fresh off a first-place finish at the Music in the Parks Festival, the Senior Chorus celebrated their hard-earned victory with a fun-filled day at Dorney Park in Pennsylvania — the perfect reward for a performance that was a credit to their school's music program.









Seniors Ana Cottrell and Shane Hatlee received the first place trophy on behalf of the Senior Chorus - a proud moment for this group of singers!

Senior Chorus Bonding Tour & Music Evaluation in Pennsylvania



Lehigh Valley Zoo &
Stay in Allentown, PA

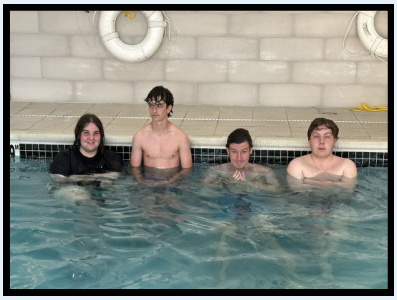



The Wolf Den
Imagine you are a wolf pup. You and your siblings were born in this den, weighing only around one pound each - close to the weight of a softball. The den is along a hillside so that it keeps you hidden from predators and protects you from bad weather.
After three weeks, you will start venturing outside to explore your new surroundings. When you are two or three months old (when humans can't even crawl yet), you will leave the den for good and begin learning to hunt.
So good luck and happy exploring!

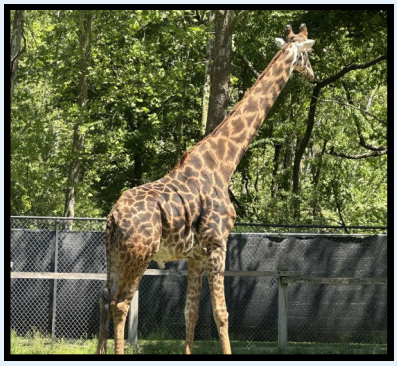













RESTROOMS
MILKSHAKES

Senior Chorus Community Outreach
Kiwanis Club Holiday Luncheon Performance



For over a decade, the Senior Chorus has made the Annual Kiwanis Club Holiday Luncheon a cherished tradition — and December 2025 was no exception. Under the direction of Dr. Yudkoff, with Mr. Ben April at the piano and Mrs. Martha von Schilgen on strings, the ensemble treated Kiwanis members and community guests to a festive and heartfelt program of holiday music. A delicious holiday lunch followed, rounding out a truly celebratory afternoon.

















Eat, Pray, Sing....



“Superior” Rating at Trills & Thrills Evaluation Festival Junior Chorus at Great Escape, Queensbury NY



The Junior Chorus participated in the annual Trills and Thrills Evaluation Festival at Queensbury High School on June 5, 2026 where they received a “Superior” rating. This evaluation was followed by a well-deserved afternoon of fun at Great Escape in Queensbury, NY. Congratulations to all students on their achievements at the All County Festival, the NYSSMA Solo Festival, and the Trills and Thrills Evaluation Festival this year.





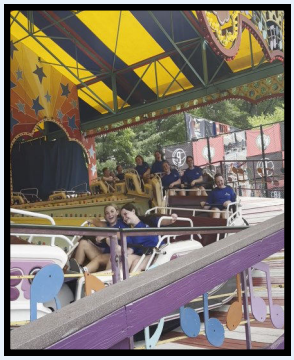


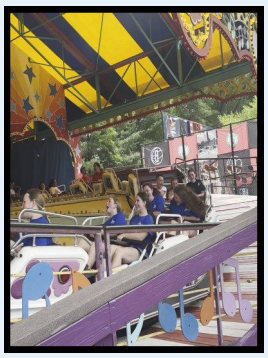






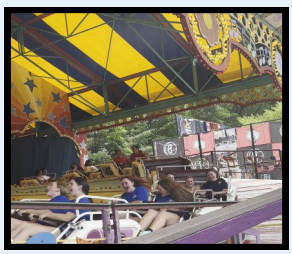


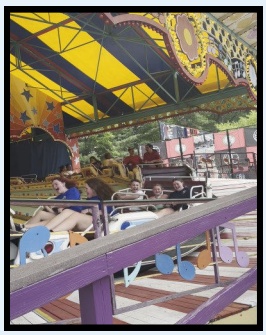






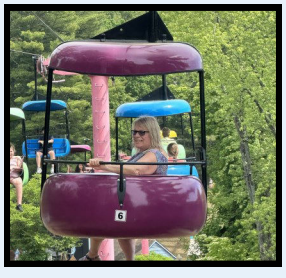














Albany Pro Musica High School Choral Festival
The Love of Thousands



On February 14, 2026, six singers from the Hoosick Falls Senior Chorus took the stage at the 26th Annual Pro Musica High School Choral Festival, held at the Performing Arts Center of the University at Albany. Each year, this celebrated event brings together talented high school vocalists to learn, rehearse, and perform alongside Albany Pro Musica — the region's premier choral ensemble.

This year's festival was reimagined as a treble choir experience, uniting 55 sopranos and altos from 19 schools in a program that showcased the full breadth, power, and beauty of treble voices, performed alongside members of APM's treble chamber singers.

Congratulations to our six outstanding representatives: Soprano I singers Chyah Rhoden and Abigail Weeden; Soprano IIs Karalina Hastings and Mya Wiggins; and altos Kaitlyn Baker and Frances Gardner. A special recognition goes to Abigail Weeden, who shone as one of the featured soloists in a moving performance of "For Good" from Stephen Schwartz's beloved musical *Wicked*.



The six Hoosick Falls singers were honored at this year's Performing Arts Awards Ceremony for their remarkable achievement at the Albany Pro Musica Choral Festival. Representing our school with distinction, these young artists embodied the excellence that defines our program. Pictured from left to right: Frances Gardner, Kaitlyn Baker, Abigail Weeden, Karalina Hastings, Mya Wiggins, and Chyah Rhoden.

Pro Musica International Choral Festival





Abigail Weeden (above left) belts out her solo at APM's Choral Festival.

Pictured left to right: Shane Hatlee and Ethan McMahon, recognized at the Performing Arts Awards ceremony for their outstanding participation in the Pro Musica International Choral Festival hosted by Albany Pro Musica, which united 150 high school singers from across the United States and Canada for a week of extraordinary music-making — July 13–19, 2025. Performing alongside renowned guest artists at venues throughout the Capital Region, participants experienced choral music at its highest level with Ethan also earning a place in the Honor Choir.

Awards Evening 2025 - 2026



Pictured left to right: Seniors *Shane Hatlee, Karalina Hastings, Ana-Marie Cottrell, Chyah Rhoden, and Ethan McMahon,* whose awards represent years of outstanding achievement and dedication to the Performing Arts. *Emma-Mae Kinney* also received awards for her contributions.



Receiving medals for their Senior Chorus All-County participation from left to right are: *Grady Rowlands, Mason Amodeo-Duket, Shane Hatlee, Jack Mallory, Ethan McMahon, Chyah Rhoden, Mya Wiggins, Abigail Weeden, Karalina Hastings, Frances Gardner, and Kaitlyn Baker*. Another year of remarkable accomplishments for Senior Chorus students!

Recipients of Awards in the 7-12 Choral Program

Awards	Awardees
National Choral Award	Shane Hatlee & Chyah Rhoden
Hildegard Award	Chyah Rhoden & Ethan McMahon
Eloise Canzeri Award	Shane Hatlee
11th Grade Award	Mya Wiggins & Kaitlyn Baker
10th Grade Award	Grady Rowlands, Abigail Weeden, Jack Mallory & Mason Amodeo-Duket
9th Grade Award	Reese Richard & Brennon Maddex
8th Grade Award	Gretta Rowlands
7th Grade Star Performers	Phoenix Danish, Landon Perry, Isabella Muratorri & Karly Gates



Junior Chorus All-County medals were awarded to selected students from left to right: *Phoenix Danish, Kael Waytkus, Abigail Nowicki, Brennon Maddex, Gretta Rowlands, Ludmila Belyaeva, and Carly Turner.* Congratulations to all!

Awards Evening 2025 - 2026 (contd.)



Shane Hatlee and Chyah Rhoden celebrate the high honor of receiving the National Choral Award.



Emma-Mae Kinney, Karalina Hastings and Ana-Marie Cottrell (from left to right) received trophies for Excellence in Chorus



Chyah Rhoden and Ethan McMahon receive the Hildegard Award for their ongoing commitment to chorus.



Winner of the Eloise Canzeri award was Shane Hatlee





Winners of the 11th Grade Choral Award - (from left to right) Kaitlyn Baker and Mya Wiggins



Winners of the 10th Grade Choral Award - (from left to right) Abigail Weeden, Jack Mallory, Grady Rowlands and Mason Amodeo-Duket (not pictured).



Shane Hatlee, Grady Rowlands, and Chyah Rhoden were each awarded trophies in recognition of their outstanding performances with the Area All-State Mixed Chorus at Proctors Theatre in November 2025.







ALL GOLD AT NYSSMA - From left to right above: *Picture 1*~Abigail Weeden, Jack Mallory and Grady Rowlands (Outstanding All-State Solos); *Pictures 2 & 3*~ Josh Allen, Ludmila Belyaeva, Rachel Pilot & Ana Cottrell (Outstanding Duets).
From left to right below: Emma-Mae Kinney, Chyah Rhoden, Ethan McMahon, Mya Wiggins (Outstanding Duets) with Frances Gardner and Kaitlyn Baker (Excellent Duet).





LEVEL 6 GOLD (OUTSTANDING SOLOS): From left to right above: Mason Amodeo-Duket, Shane Hatlee, Chyah Rhoden, Kaitlyn Baker, Karalina Hastings and Mya Wiggins.



Junior Chorus Silver Medalists from left to right: Maya Cornish, Charlotte Hastings, Ayva Crosby, Karly Gates, Phoenix Danish, and Remi Meddis.

Senior Chorus performs at Bennington County Choral Society Concert



At the invitation of Ben April, Choral Director of the Bennington County Choral Society, members of the Senior Chorus joined the Society's Spring Concert on Sunday, April 26, 2026 at Sacred Heart Saint Francis de Sales in Bennington, VT. Students performed their own segment, conducted by Dr. Yudkoff, to enthusiastic applause, then united with the adult singers for Kirchner's *Unclouded Day*, a stirring performance of Randall Thompson's *Alleluia* and a rousing finale of Raymond Wise's *Shine the Light*. A special note of recognition goes to Chyah Rhoden, who raced back from a college visit just in time to lead the soprano section, with Kaitlyn Baker by her side. Pictured left to right: Chyah Rhoden, Brennon Maddex, Mason Amodeo-Duket, Josh Allen, Bret Giglio, Michael Allen, Grady Rowlands, Ludmila Belyaeva, Gray Gardner, Kaitlyn Baker, and Rachel Pilot.

In Other News...

Performing Arts Council



Members of the Performing Arts Council — representing Band, Chorus, and Drama — contributed ideas, energy, and countless hours of service throughout the year. From setting up for the Cabaret and Scholarship Festival to baking and staffing concessions, these students gave generously of their time regardless of the outcome of fundraising efforts. The Council was led by Co-Presidents Chyah Rhoden and Ethan McMahon, Treasurer Karalina Hastings, and Secretary Abigail Weeden.

Guitar Club Students Perform with Chorus



Henley Lewis (7th grade) on bass guitar

On March 12, 2026, the Junior and Senior Choruses joined forces for a standout moment at the Pops Concert - a combined performance of Pink Floyd's *Another Brick in the Wall, Part 2.*

Anchoring the sound with assured, confident playing on bass was Guitar Club member Henley Lewis, while fellow Club member Thomas Parent brought energy and flair to the lead guitar. Together, they helped create one of the evening's most memorable moments, reflecting both the breadth of the chorus's repertoire and the remarkable musicianship of these two talented performers.



Thomas Parent (12th grade) on lead guitar

RCSMA Scholarship Festival
Prizes won in two categories



At the Annual RCSMA Scholarship Festival, hosted at Hoosick Falls High School on May 11, sophomore Grady Rowlands (above left) earned first prize in the Grades 9–10 category, competing against students from East Greenbush, Averill Park, Lansingburgh, and Troy. His vocal performance of Widmung by Robert Schumann — a NYSSMA Level 6 solo selection - captivated the judges with its refined tone, expressive interpretation, and commanding delivery, outshining all other vocalists and instrumentalists in the category. Senior Shane Hatlee (above right) added to the district's success with a third-place finish in the Grades 11–12 category. For a small school district, having two students place at a County festival of this caliber is a remarkable achievement. Congratulations to both Grady and Shane!

Tribute and Thanks

This issue of the Chorus Chronicle captures some of the year's most significant highlights, but our body of work runs deeper than any single publication can hold. Our annual concerts, and a wonderfully attended Cabaret all added to a rich and memorable season. None of it would have been possible without the many people who make this program what it is: our students, their supportive families, our accompanists Ben April and Martha von Schilgen, our chaperones, our dedicated bus drivers, and the School Administrators and Board of Education whose ongoing support underlies everything we do.

As the Chorus Director who has had the profound joy of working with remarkably talented students over the past twenty years, I want to say plainly what has always guided my vision: coming to Hoosick Falls, I was committed to leveling the playing field — to ensuring that our students are never defined by their circumstances. From festivals in Queensbury to Orlando to Myrtle Beach to New Hampshire to New Jersey and Pennsylvania, from performances at Troy Music Hall to Carnegie Hall, these young singers have beaten the odds through perseverance, talent, and an unshakeable belief in what they could achieve.

In the words of Harriet Tubman:

"Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember,
you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars."