

Hitting the High Notes

Ryan festival gives best
Catholic school players
a ride on the bandwagon

By GARY STRASSBERG
Staff Writer

The halls will be alive with the sound of music this weekend when the 1993 All-Catholic Band Festival tunes up at Archbishop Ryan High School.

Gene Ciccimaro, the school's band director, said 98 of the best music students were selected from 25 high schools across the Delaware Valley — 18 in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and seven private academies — to participate in the three-day festival at the school, at 11201 Academy Road.

The festival features a public performance on Saturday afternoon.

"They'll arrive here Thursday (Feb. 4) and they'll start rehearsals," he said. "We'll provide them with lunch and dinner, and then they'll be staying in people's homes from our band. We have roughly about thirty-one parents who have opened up their homes to these kids.

"It's a great avenue for young musicians," he added. "I had done it, and it's just a good experience as a student. You stay in people's homes, you meet new people, and you meet kids from all over the place."

Ciccimaro said this is the second time that Ryan is hosting the festival, the first time having been in 1984.

The list of Northeast-area high schools that will be represented at the event this year includes Father Judge, Cardinal Dougherty, Nazareth Academy, Northeast Catholic, St. Hubert's and Little Flower.

"Most schools send their best (musicians)," Ciccimaro said. "We had roughly about forty people try out from our school, and we had eighteen make it."

The festival will culminate with a special public performance in Ryan's auditorium on Saturday, Feb. 6, at 3 p.m. The concert will include renditions of the *Star Spangled Banner* and *America the Beautiful*,



A group of Ryan's top musicians get in tune for the All-Catholic Band Festival this weekend.
Lawrence M. Browne - Times Photo

Festival

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"Each instrument had three stations that they had to go to, and there were two people auditioning them at each station," Ciccimaro explained.

Although some people have contended that the auditioning process is an unfair way to select musicians for the band, the Ryan band leader said it gives the students "a little more incentive to prepare."

"Some people complain that the kid's a good player but when they go into that kind of situation, they get so nervous they don't perform (well), and that's a valid point," he conceded. "But at the same time, you have a lot of people who are very good, and

selections from *Phantom of the Opera*, and much more. Tickets are \$5 each.

This year, Ciccimaro noted, the concert will feature guest conductor Arthur D. Chodoroff, who is director of bands and a music professor at Temple University's Esther Boyer College of Music.

"It's going to be a good concert," he said. "The last couple of years, it's just been getting better each year. It's a great sound."

One Ryan senior, Robert Johnston, will be honored during the event for being chosen to play

this kind of sorts them out a little bit."

The way Ciccimaro sees it, the audition process also helps students get ready for a variety of similar experiences in the real world.

"You always go on auditions," he said. "If you go out to an interview for a job, you're going to have to handle an interview well. So it certainly has some things that are useful in life."

Tony DiLorenzo, a Ryan junior who has played clarinet for seven years, agreed that the audition was beneficial.

"I think it gets you used to being nervous and everything, and playing under pressure," said the musician, who will be making his first appearance at the festival. "I feel like I've accomplished something."

DiLorenzo said he's looking forward to

saxophone in the All-Catholic Band four years in a row.

"He'll be getting a little plaque," Ciccimaro said. "They do that every year — they honor students who have participated all four years."

Auditions for the All-Catholic Band were held at Ryan in November 1992. Students were selected by a group of professional musicians and educators, based on their ability to play scales, sight-read music, and perform an instrumental solo.

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"performing in front of a crowd also "being able to play some can do with a regular band."

Jim Kurek, another Ryan player to perform in his first All-Catholic Band during the November audition.

"The music that we had to play was harder than the music we're playing now," the trumpet player noted.

According to Rich Genovese, a brass teacher at Ryan, the All-Catholic Band began in the early 1960s, but was revived in 1970s.

"What happened was, we had a bandmasters association, and I think every school just took over it."