

STEPPING INTO HISTORY

OSU marching band will be part of inaugural parade

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Twenty-year-old Clayton Finken is going to Washington for Tuesday's presidential inauguration, and he's taking his trombone with him.

The Oak Harbor man will have more than 200 familiar faces at his side as he's joined by the rest of the Ohio State University marching band, which has been selected to play in the inaugural parade.

"It's an awesome feeling," said Mr. Finken, one of more than a dozen band members from northwest Ohio. "This is like a tipping point to a snowball of changes that are going to happen in not only the state of Ohio but the country, and to be there for this is just incredible."

It's an honor that wasn't easy to achieve. More than 1,300 acts applied to be in President-elect Barack Obama's inaugural parade, far more than the usual 300 or 400, according to Chris Mather, a spokesman for the Presidential Inaugural Committee. Only 10 college marching bands were among the 90-plus acts eventually selected.

"It's a big deal," said Erik Hassan, 21, a sousaphone player from Findlay. "It's neat to be part of the first African-American president coming into office."

As the largest all-brass and percussion band in the country, the group is no stranger to being in the spotlight, especially considering the attention it gets playing at Ohio State football games. But this opportunity represents something different.

"This is the biggest event that I could ever ask for," said Matt Mauro, 19, a mellophone player from Whitehouse. "I'm definitely more excited about this than I would be a Michigan game or Fiesta Bowl because it's such a unique opportunity."

Only a handful of past OSU bands have participated in an inaugural parade, most of them in recent history. The band played at both inaugurations of George W. Bush and for his father, George H.W. Bush. It also performed for Richard Nixon and Herbert Hoover, according to Jon R. Woods, director of the marching and athletic bands at Ohio State.

This year, the group's play list will include "Buckeye Battle Cry," "Beautiful Ohio," "Fight the Team Across the Field," and "I Wanna Go Back to Ohio State," he said.

While much has been made of political divisions across the country in recent years, Paul Limmer, 19, of Oregon, said personal politics get thrown aside for an honor like this.

"It's a once in a lifetime opportunity," the percussionist said. "We do have obvious differences between people, Republican and Democrat, [but] at the same time we're all there for the greater cause. It's more like looking past the present and more toward the future."

Tyler Provo, 18, a snare drum player from Sylvania, said it will be cool to see the new President in person. Or maybe a better word is "cold," based on what he's heard from band members who participated in the last inaugural parade.



Left: Matt Mauro of Whitehouse. Middle: Jon Waters, left, assistant director of the OSU marching band, and Clayton Finken is from Oak Harbor. Right: Paul Limmer of Oregon.

“It’s going to be really cold,” he said. “Really, really, really cold.”

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