

EHS Violin Sensation Ashley Kim Is Selected For St. Louis Youth Symphony Orchestra

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville High School junior Ashley Kim, 16, has had a passion for the violin since she was 7 years old. Her nearly a decade of hard work and dedication was recognized recently as she was a St. Louis Youth Symphony Orchestra (SLSYO) selection for the 2021-2022 season.

Ashley said this was her first time auditioning for the St. Louis Youth Symphony Orchestra (SLSYO).

“The audition process is very complex, and there are a lot of details to pay attention to when it comes to preparing the pieces. Unlike past years, this year was an online audition due to COVID-19 restrictions. All auditions were blind meaning, the judging panel has no idea who you are. Judging is strictly based on skill level and accurate interpretation of the music.

“Auditioning was a two-part process. The first part was preliminary rounds. The preliminary round is for young musicians like me who are auditioning for the first time. Here, I was required to prepare two scales (one major and minor), and an excerpt of a solo of my choice that best demonstrates my skill. I audio recorded this and sent it to them. Once I passed this round, I moved onto the finals, which also required the same things, but this time, orchestral excerpts were added in.

“I cannot express in words how thrilled I am to have been selected as a YO musician this year. I sit as an alternate 2nd violin, and as of right now, I was asked to be in this season’s cycle 1. I can’t wait to attend rehearsals and perform in the concert coming up this November. It’s such an honor to be selected as a Youth Orchestra member, and this memorable opportunity motivates me to keep improving my musicianship.”

Ashley said her violin career all started with her parents.

“At 7 years old, I didn’t really think much about it since I was still so young,” she said. “I remember just finding the instrument fascinating and fun. I liked having something new and interesting to explore! As I slowly developed my technique and piled on new repertoire, I started to build an attachment to the violin, and my passion for it only grew from there. I owe a lot to my parents for pushing for my music education. I feel especially grateful for their continuous support in everything. I can honestly say that it was thanks to them that I discovered my musical talent and love for the art form!

“I have now been playing for 9 years now. I began my musical journey at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville’s Suzuki Program. I participated in their Advanced Violin Tour Group for four years. In the time span from 2015-17, I placed second twice, and then first in the program’s John and Kay Kendall Annual Concerto Competition:

Intermediate Division, and 3rd in the Advanced Division. In 2015, I placed third at the Belleville Philharmonic Society Tuerck Competition.

“Last year, I transitioned from the SIUE Suzuki Program to Webster University’s Community Music School. In addition, I recently had the amazing privilege of receiving the Monticello College Foundation Scholarship from the Community Music School of Webster University Artistic Merit Scholarship. Starting from 6th grade, I have also participated in the ILMEA (Illinois Music Education Association) orchestra every year. ILMEA is an event once a year in the fall where musicians across our district audition to be selected to play in the orchestra. Junior orchestra is from 6th-8th grade and senior orchestra is 9th-12th grade. I sat as concertmaster my 7th grade year and even made State ILMEA my sophomore year.”

Ashley took her first started orchestra class in elementary school and said she loved the atmosphere, and playing with friends in an orchestra at such a young age.

“I continued orchestra all the way through middle school, and now I am in the Honors Symphonic Orchestra,” she said. “As a freshman, I sat as principal 2nd violin. This school year, I sit as concertmaster. Even when I was in middle school, my current school music instructor, Mrs. Victoria Voumard, has been such an amazing mentor, and I truly enjoy every single moment of orchestra class at school. She is one of the reasons that I am able to be the proud and confident violinist I am today. I cannot thank her enough for her constant guidance and support.”

The EHS junior also enjoys other school activities as well.

“At school, I am very active in Tri-M Music Honor Society and I’ve been elected as the class representative this year,” she said. “I’m eager to start organizing club activities, and future performances in my community. I am also an officer of HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America)-Med Club and a member of the German Honor Society.

“I plan to continue my musical education through the university level. I want to major in Biology and minor in violin performance. In regards to future plans, I think I want to follow the pre-med route and further my education to medical school. I’m really intrigued by the fields of Forensic Medicine, Pediatrics/Pediatric Surgery, and Orthopedics. However, I’m still a little unsure about setting a concrete path. Over this summer, my family and I visited the Northwestern University Campus in Evanston, Illinois. It’s one of my top schools along with Washington University in St. Louis and the University of Chicago. St. Louis University also has a med program that I am interested in, so SLU is an option as well out of many others.”

Ashley believes music will always be part of her life long after high school.

"Music has been with me as long as I can remember," she said. "It's difficult for me to picture a life where I didn't play violin! With that, I would also like to express great thanks to my current private teacher, Joanne Keefe, and former teacher, Erika Lord-Castillo, for all their patient teaching in my musical career so far."