



Highly Talented AHS Junior Victor Humphrey Named St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra Member

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ST. LOUIS - When Alton High School junior student Victor Humphrey was in fourth grade, his renowned instructor Elizabeth Jankowski first discussed the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra with the promising musician. Since that time, he said he has looked forward to auditioning for the highly prestigious symphony group.

Victor was selected for the viola section this fall for the St. Louis orchestra.

"I was ecstatic to be selected for the viola section my first time auditioning because I figured it could take a few attempts," Victor said. "Playing with such amazing musicians is already making me a better violist and it's just so rewarding to be with other people who get how much discipline it takes to balance academics, music, and even sports. Quite a few of us run cross country, which was really fun to discover. I have been going to Powell Hall for concerts since I was three years old so to say that I am excited to be sitting on that stage every Saturday afternoon is an understatement!"

Victor said he chose viola simply because it was lower than violin, but higher than cello, so it seemed like a "happy medium" as a strings instrument."

"I also liked that we got our own clef," he said. "I have stuck with viola because I fell in love with its richness, and I also really enjoy that there is such an element of physicality to playing a larger instrument. I have been playing viola for seven years now. My first viola teacher, Elizabeth Jankowski, has always called the viola section the 'creamy filling' in the orchestra and I love that description. We get to add so much character and depth to what is being played."

Victor is a multi-faceted musician and also plays piano.

"I have also studied piano for 11 years," he said. "I currently study piano with Angela Kim at SIUE, and I now study viola with Rudolf Haken, whom I met while attending Illinois Summer Youth Music, at the University of Illinois. I stay busy at AHS with Symphonic Orchestra and the Alton High Jazz Band while taking all honors classes this year and I am studying for the AP Music Theory exam on my own.

"I've had all A's in high school so far. I'm really proud to have been selected for the Illinois Music Educators Association All-District Festival for the past six years and I was selected for ILMEA All-State last year as a sophomore. Fingers crossed for this year. I am very excited that All-District will be back to in-person again in just a few weeks, actually the day before my first concert at Powell."

This was the AHS junior's third year as a member of AHS's cross country, swim, and tennis teams.

"Balancing SLSYO with cross country actually went pretty well because I could run Saturday meets first thing in the morning and then be on my way to Powell but tennis season is definitely going to be more challenging," he said. "Tennis tournaments are not quick like cross country meets! One way or another, it is important to me to still play AHS tennis because I have such a passion for the game and my teammates are all great friends. I really need to thank my parents for helping me stay organized and for getting me to sports practices, rehearsals, concerts, and lessons. They are there cheering me on for everything I do."

Victor plans to play viola and/or piano in college and possibly minor in music.

"I am considering studying math or pursuing a physical therapy DPT program," he said. "My greatest inspirations for this first season as a violist with SLSYO have definitely been Elizabeth Jankowski, Laura Plummer, and Rudolf Haken. Mrs. Jankowski really began all of my momentum as a musician and she has taught me so much more than music. I realize all the time how much she has also influenced my academic success and the way I try to approach life.

"Likewise, Laura Plummer has given so much of herself to all of her AHS students and helped make us, as she puts it 'smarter than the average bear.' She is so helpful and patient and it means so much to me that she supports all of my pursuits, even the ones that make my schedule way more complicated.

"Lastly, Professor Haken is an amazing violist who inspires me each week in lessons, especially since he continues to remind me that while performing at this level is a lot of work, it should always be fun and rewarding. I am finding that to be more and more true with SLSYO. It's an honor and a blessing to be on that stage and I cannot wait to hear that applause in a few weeks!"

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<https://www.slso.org/en/edu/youth-orchestra/yo-musicians/>