

if you're not first, you're last

Second place finish motivates show choir

Show choir had a history to live up to – even with COVID-19 making in-person rehearsals impossible for weeks right before the season began in January.

“With the history that Johnston has in show choir and how we’ve done in the past I would say that makes an impact on how we perform living up to that standard that they’ve set,” junior Kyra Labenz said.

Placing second at the first competitive show of the year, Des Moines Christian, was not what they had planned. Though they did not get last, the group got what many would consider the first loser getting second.

“People’s amount of effort they gave changed from lack luster, not really paying attention, to most people focusing (and) grinding,” senior Brandon Zimmer said. “Being that we were online for eight weeks trying to do choreography definitely had an impact on the show but once we came back we had that mindset we needed to work hard and take those victories.”

The eight weeks practicing on Zoom proved interesting. Members of the choir found places in their houses to practice. Some used iPads, some webcams. There were different internet speeds and some had difficulty connecting. Mics were muted because the latency from each person to each other person would have made the choir fall out of time.

Senior Grant Boeschen danced in his basement facing the camera. He could see about half of the showchoir members on his big screen TV. “Technically, all 50 or 60 of us could have been singing,” Boeschen said. “I sang roughly 90% of the time.”

Innovation director Laura Grimm was new to the high school replacing Samantha Robillard who moved to Pella, but members were familiar with Grimm having had her in the ninth grade show choir Sound Advice.

With the Des Moines Christian nonwin looming, there was a push for to get first at the next competition at Urbandale. They delivered. They also placed first at Pella, the only other competition as COVID-19 cancelled the others including the trips to Minnesota and Nebraska.

“It’s really fun to win,” senior Sam Shanks said. “It feels like you completed something huge. It brings you together if you get second place. Everybody’s like we did really well, but we can do better, or if we get first we went all out.”



Junior Melanie Dygert performs the opening song “I See Fire” in the show choir’s fire-themed show at the informance. The farthest the choir travelled was Pella as the out-of-state trips to Minnesota and Nebraska were cancelled due to the pandemic. photo by Jordyn Cimmiyotti

Bella Voce

Sophomore Waverly Zhao performs the choreography to “Open Your Eyes”. In different divisions, Bella Voce or just Bella, did not operate the same way that Innovation or Synergy did. With Inno getting second place, it affected Synergy but not Bella. “This year Bella was really great,” Zhao said. “Personally, I had a really good time because of the positive energy everyone brings to the ensemble. As a group, we did really well and competed in the prep division for the first time, getting second place.”



Snapping her fingers, sophomore Hayley TeKippe dances in the first song of Bella’s show. “This year was really fun, especially all my friends,” TeKippe said. “It was really nice to not be stressed over everything all the time, but still be able to have fun.” “Open Your Eyes”, “Chasing Twisters”, “Find Me”, “Mama Didn’t Raise No Fool” and “Don’t Stop Dancin’” were the standard songs.



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Innovation



Junior Isabelle Morales performs Inno's rendition of "Atom Bomb" by The Strike. "I'd say the competitive aspect helps us perform better," Morales said. "With that kind of pressure, it makes us strive to be the best we can be." The second place showing at Des Moines Christian really drove them. "We were kind of expecting to win, which is not the right mindset," she said. "We were kinda taken by surprise, and it (winning second place) put us in our place, and we knew we had to work harder. There was obviously a lot to improve on."



Senior Julia Fergus goes disco during the "I See Fire" medley. Inno placed second at Des Moines Christian and that motivated them. "I think in the three weeks we had until our next competition we pushed a lot to make ourselves better because we didn't want to get second again." The next competition at Urbandale they placed first.



Posing, junior Colin Scermer thrust his arms to his head during I see fire, Feel Good, Remember When It Rained, Only Everything. Scermer's view on the competitive aspects of show he said "Everyone wants to do really well and get first, that's a driving factor for how work hard". With getting 2nd place at DMC, "It was disappointing to get second, but we wanted to work hard and show people we are good."



Synergy

Twisting, sophomore Kai Moyer moves to the beat of "Can't Hold Us". "The first one was a strange performance in general learning how to perform and adapting to stages," Moyer said. "Rehearsals were obviously different; getting to competitions we didn't have regular rehearsals and had to figure it out on stage."

Senior Emily Geers dances to the songs, "Amazing", "Black and White", "Hold On", "Upside", and "Can't Hold Us". "I don't really look at the competition," Geers said. "I just think it's fun." They placed second at Des Moines Christian. "It did cause us to work harder. In the past we haven't done as well, and we've wanted to get first, it's kind of a legacy thing."

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