

Niu Valley Meets Carnegie Hall

BY PAIGE TAKEYA

The kids didn't know it, but Niu Valley Middle School's performance at Carnegie Hall was very nearly snowed out.

When the school's 66 performers arrived for the New York Wind Band Festival, their visit coincided with a major East Coast blizzard.

of the five bands accepted.

"It's normally for high school groups, so it's quite rare for a middle school to be accepted," explained Morita.

Even rarer was the chance to perform in Carnegie Hall.

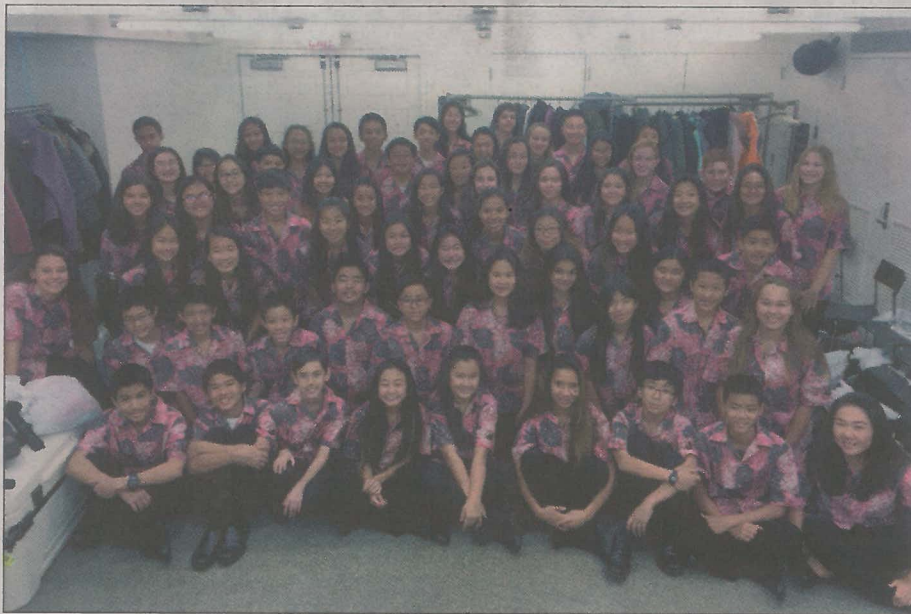
"Many consider it the most prestigious concert hall in the world," Morita said.

"Playing at Carnegie Hall

more than the 20 minutes they spent on stage.

"(The chance) didn't come from nowhere. It's not like we were gifted with this opportunity without putting in the time and sacrifice," Tajima said.

There were many, many hours of practice to get ready. Plus, Tajima added, Fanning and Morita even led



Sixty-six students from Niu Valley Middle School headed to New York City's Carnegie Hall for a special performance in the New York Wind Band Festival. PHOTO FROM NIU VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL.

"There was a good chance it would have been canceled due to power outages or the Carnegie Hall workers not being able to commute," admitted band director Wayne Fanning. "Fortunately, (our hotel was) across the street from Carnegie Hall, but getting there was still a challenge, walking through a falling blizzard."

It was fitting, in a way. As it turns out, everything about that trip toed the line of improbable.

Fanning and fellow band director Zachary Morita had submitted an audition tape of the students for the festival, and were surprised to be one

is kind of the equivalent of being in the Super Bowl," added principal Sean Tajima. "For a middle school band, or even a high school band, to perform is pretty remarkable. It's a place for professionals and the best of the best to perform."

It's definitely something eighth-grader Derya Hanusz-Soguk will never forget.

"It was probably one of the most amazing things I've ever done in my life," the trumpet player enthused. "We've never played in a hall like that."

Nevertheless, the adults probably are most proud of all the hard work and hours the students put in — even

band practices on weekends and holidays. And all the students participated without complaint.

"There's a lot of work that goes on by many different music programs that isn't always highlighted," Fanning said. "What we did represents the entire state. There's a lot of great music-making going on in many different schools."

Niu Valley Middle School's next big performance will be their formal concert at 6 p.m. May 20 at Kaimuki High School auditorium. Admission is free.

For more information, call the school at 377-2440 or visit niuvalleymiddle.org.

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