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Wind Ensemble Wins National Band Performance Competition

March 17, 2017

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Illinois Wesleyan's Lev Ivanov wanted to share exciting news with his student musicians in person, but the news was too big to wait until after spring break.

The Illinois Wesleyan [Wind Ensemble](#) has been selected as the national winner of The American Prize in Band Performance competition in the performing arts, college/university division. Ivanov, who conducts the Wind Ensemble, resorted to emailing his students with the news.

"You hear of collegiate ensembles winning awards but never imagine or predict that you would be a part of one of those ensembles or to work closely with the peers who helped the ensemble achieve this award," musician Bailey Knowles '19 said to her conductor after hearing the news.

The American Prize is a series of nonprofit, national competitions in the performing arts providing cash awards, professional adjudication and recognition for the best recorded performances by ensembles and individuals in the United States. It is administered by Hat City Music Theatre, Inc., a nonprofit organization based in Connecticut.



The Wind Ensemble is comprised of the top wind and percussion students at Illinois Wesleyan.

In establishing The American Prize contests, Chief Judge David Katz noted most musicians will never win major awards such as Grammys, Tony Awards or Pulitzers, or even be nominated. "But that does not mean that the music we make is unworthy of national recognition and award," Katz said. "Excellence in the arts is not restricted to the famous names, or limited to a single city on either coast, or reserved only for the top graduates of the most prestigious schools. In America, it is not location nor pedigree, but talent, love of the art, hard work and commitment that makes the difference."

Ivanov agreed, and noted competitions do not define musicians, but do help them strive to be better and achieve results they never thought possible.

"We are incredibly honored to receive this award," said Ivanov, an visiting assistant professor of [music](#), who has conducted the Wind Ensemble since the fall 2014 semester.

Founded in 1979, the Wind Ensemble is comprised of the top wind and percussion students at Illinois Wesleyan and performs the finest wind band literature. For its submission to The American Prize judges, the Wind Ensemble performed Persichetti's *Divertimento*; Sheldon's *Metropolis*; Mennin's *Canzona*; Lindroth's *Spin Cycle*; and Milhaud's *Suite Française*, along with other works.

The ensemble has worked with and sponsored commissions from Pulitzer Prize-winning composers such as William Bolcom, John Corigliano, Karel Husa, Jennifer Higdon, Michael Schelle and Joseph Schwantner. In addition, the ensemble has had the opportunity to work with Dutch composer Louis Andreissen. The group's annual solo competition allows student winners to perform solos with the ensemble. The ensemble performs several concerts throughout the year, tours regularly and has appeared at the College Band Directors National Association Conference and the Illinois Music Educators Association Conference.

