



Sacramento Bee/Kevin German

Clarinetist Randolph Palada, left, and oboist Keith Lui are seniors at Christian Brothers High School who have been chosen for the Hershey's All-USA Band. The friends, from opposite sides of the planet, approach music from different perspectives.

In concert

Two pals have excelled together in Christian Brothers' music program

By Melissa Dahl
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Randolph Palada and Keith Lui were born on opposite sides of the globe, and when they graduate from Christian Brothers High School in the spring, the two friends may end up on opposite sides of the country.

But during their time at Christian Brothers, their lives have followed similar paths because their school has let them explore their passion for music.

Only three California students, including Keith and Randolph, were chosen for Hershey's All-USA Band. The 2-year-old program was set up to provide outstanding band kids with the same amount of praise and recognition as their sports-minded peers.

Kevin Haag, director of visual and performing arts at Christian Brothers, says recognition for the students also is evidence of a school that's spent the last 10 years building up its arts department and now boasts more than 25 classes in those areas.

Still, Keith and Randolph say they've pretty much exhausted the school's

band classes, and they're taking additional music lessons on the side.

Playing music at Christian Brothers has had different effects on these students. Keith, who says his GPA this year is around 4.7, plays the oboe as an escape from all the pressures that come with being an overachiever.

"I have a lot of academic work, and it gives me relief from the stress," says Keith, a Hong Kong native whose family moved to the United States in 1994.

He says he's most proud of the scholastic recognition, but he appreciates the awards for his participation in sports and music because he says it proves he's not always holed up in his room with his nose in a book.

"He excels completely in everything that he decides to do, and oboe just happens to be one of those things," Haag says. "An interesting aspect - that music was a way for him to balance out everything. I guess that's the whole point: that all kids should be exposed to (the arts), (although) not all kids are going to pursue it."

As for Randolph, who was born in

San Francisco, playing the clarinet helped him find his niche, and he's determined to become a professional musician. He joined beginning band his freshman year because it was an alternative to gym class, but his natural skills helped him quickly advance, and as a senior he's amassed a list of accomplishments he hopes will secure him a spot at the Juilliard School in New York next fall.

Haag hopes the attention that students like Keith and Randolph bring the school will allow the arts department to continue to grow, which he says will provide the students with more opportunities.

"People have always been regarded in esteem if they are cultured and worldly. But the reality is that many times education regards it as the last thing," Haag says, although he believes "there seems to be a bit of a shift, at least in some schools."

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