

KINGS OF THE SWINGERS: SCHOOL BAND TAKES TOP UK TITLE FOR UNPRECEDENTED THIRD TIME

The Swing Band from Altrincham Grammar School for Boys has taken the top national award at the UK's largest big band festival for an unprecedented third time.

The only Greater Manchester School to reach the finals of the National Concert Band Festival, the 22-strong band of boys aged between 12 and 18 scooped the top Platinum award for their 'outstanding' performance beating a dozen big bands from across the UK in the final.

Colin Myers, Head of Music at Altrincham Grammar School for Boys, explained: "I'm extremely proud of the boys becoming national champions and they should be delighted with their achievement: it's hugely deserved."

The Swing Band at Altrincham Grammar School for Boys beat more than 100 bands and 5,000 musicians who had qualified for the regional rounds before triumphing over the final 12 best UK bands.

Added Mr Myers: "We won the top UK band title in 2011 and 2015 but to have a hat-trick of national honours is an incredible result."

Leader of the trumpet section, W. Zhao, age 17, said: "I first picked up a trumpet when I was 11-years-old thanks to our school's ground-breaking scheme which provides a free instrument to every pupil in Year 7 and 8 to teach students music through performance. Nothing beats being part of a band and performing live in front of an audience: it's a fantastic feeling."

Added Mr Myers: "We have always recognised the importance and benefits of musical performance and are committed to fund-raising efforts to provide boys with an instrument of their own. This not only unearths incredible natural talent but provides students with skills for life."

The band's repertoire - from Count Basie classics to Wonderwall by Oasis - was described by national adjudicators as 'outstanding' and 'first class,' with tenor saxophonist J. Cottrell's vocal solo on Wonderwall receiving special praise.

Currently in Year 13, he is taking the UK title was particularly special: "This was my final performance after five years with the band. It's been unforgettable, a real pleasure to be with such a great group of lads and music teachers who constantly encourage and inspire. And it's wonderful to leave on such a high note."

Trombone player, D. Morris, agreed: "This is something we'll always remember: to win one national title is incredible, but to take the treble is phenomenal! It was a great team effort and all those months of practice have certainly paid off!"

He added: "This was a real group effort and wasn't just down to the band: our families have heard the same tunes practised repeatedly and our teachers have continually encouraged and inspired us especially Mr Myers, Ms de Jesus, Mrs Jarrett, Mr Lloyd, Mr Hulme, Mr Taylor, Ms Summerfield Ms Atack and Mr Bold. This win is for them."

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