Three Newark High School students are members of the 2019-20 Hochstein Youth Symphony Orchestra, the highest-level youth orchestra in The Hochstein School’s four-tier youth orchestra program.

They are NHS junior and French horn player Rachel George, who is the HYSO Principal Horn, NHS junior Joshua Mercer, a percussionist and Elijah Malach, a sophomore at NHS who plays trumpet.

The HYSO is an advanced youth orchestra comprised of grade 7-12 advanced musicians from all over the Rochester region. Students compete annually for a seat in the orchestra, performing in at least four concerts throughout the school year. This season, students from 27 different schools are participating.

The HYSO’s first concert of the year is coming up on November 10 at 3 p.m. in Hochstein Performance Hall. The program includes Felix Mendelssohn’s tempestuous “Hebrides Overture (“Fingal’s Cave”), the zestful symphonic work “Open the Door” by Vermont contemporary composer Gwyneth Walker, Camille Saint-Saëns’ evocative “Danse Macabre,” and Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s dramatic “Romeo and Juliet Overture Fantasy.”

Since 2000, the HYSO has performed in cities in Spain, Portugal, Austria, France, Germany, Czech Republic, Italy, Switzerland, and Ireland. The orchestra made its Carnegie Hall debut in 2002 and will tour in Germany and the Czech Republic in Spring 2020.

In 2020, The Hochstein School celebrates its centennial and, as part of the celebration, the Hochstein Youth Symphony Orchestra will perform a special concert on the Live from Hochstein concert series on March 18, 2020, which will be broadcast live on WXXI 91.5 FM.

George, who has been playing the French horn since she was in fourth grade, has been taking private French horn lessons at Hochstein since she was in 7th grade. She was in its Junior Wind Symphony when she was in 7th and 8th grades; was in Philharmonia when she was in 8th grade; in the Youth Wind Symphony in 9th and 10th grade, in addition to being a member of the HYSO the last two years. This year, because she is HYSO’s Principal Horn, she was awarded the Gretchen Snedeker Memorial Endowed Scholarship that covers Hochstein’s tuition for a full year.
Having earned a near perfect score of 99 for her French Horn solo last spring at the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) solo festival, George has been selected to participate in NYSSMA’s All-State Conference in Rochester December 5-8 at the Rochester Convention Center.

George is a member of the NHS Wind Ensemble, Jazz Band and Brass Quintet, all directed by NHS instrumental music teacher Robert Humphrey, who also directs Concert Band, Marching Band and “Downbeat.” She is also a member of the NHS Jazz and Chamber Choirs, directed by NHS vocal music teacher Kate Flock, who also directs Mixed Chorus.

While this is Mercer’s first year in the HYSO, he has also been a member of the Hochstein Percussion Ensemble for the past three years. He also been taking private percussion lessons with RPO principle percussionist, Jim Tiller, for three years and has been playing percussion since he was in fourth grade. At NHS, he is a member of Jazz Band, Marching Band, Wind Ensemble and “Downbeat.” Mercer also plays piano and enjoys performing at his church and in nursing homes.

Malach has been taking private trumpet lessons more than four years, currently studying under Patrick Corvington. He has been taking piano lessons at Hochstein since he was in the 8th grade. Malach participated in Philharmonia, playing trumpet and piano, through his freshman year, and is a member of NHS Wind Ensemble, Marching Band, Brass Quintet Jazz Band, “Downbeat” and Jazz Choir.

He is going to be the accompanist for the 2020 Sodus High School musical production and also enjoys playing jazz standards, Broadway tunes and Christmas music at nursing homes and playing the organ in various local churches.

All three NHS students will also attend NYSSMA’s Senior High Area All State at Letchworth High School November 15-16th and will be touring next Spring in Germany and the Czech Republic with the HYSO.

“These three students are all remarkable young musicians and future leaders,” said Humphrey. “Their accomplishments in musical settings are dwarfed only by their exceptional work ethic and dedication to excellence. I am very proud to know them; and humbled to be able to call them my students.”