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### **Morton orchestra to jam with pros**

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Of the Journal Star*

Morton High School musicians are enjoying another once-in-a-lifetime experience.

A little more than a year after the school's marching band performed in the inaugural parade for President Barack Obama in Washington, D.C., the orchestra will be in the spotlight Saturday night.

It will perform in a sold-out concert with the nationally known Boston String Quartet at the school's 450-seat Bertha Frank Performing Arts Center on Saturday night.

The quartet has played at prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall and collaborated with artists such as John Mayer, the Boston Ballet and Jennifer Holliday.

Besides rehearsing for two days with the quartet and composer Mauricio Yazigi, who flew in from Los Angeles for the weekend, the 90-member orchestra will participate in a workshop on improvisation.

Yazigi was happy with what he heard in a Friday morning rehearsal with the orchestra at Bertha Frank.

"They sound good," he assured orchestra director Kristin Witzig.

During lunch in the lobby outside the auditorium, students buzzed with anticipation about their upcoming rehearsals, workshop and Saturday's show.

Senior Dale Domnick, who plays viola, called the weekend the most exciting experience he's had with the orchestra and a great accomplishment for the group. Sophomore Leah Roth echoed his enthusiasm.

"This is an incredible opportunity for a high school orchestra in a small town," said Roth, who plays cello.

The quartet is performing with 16 high school orchestras across the East, South and Midwest during its second annual Xibus Tour that supports K-12 music education in public schools.

Tour executive director and quartet first violinist Christopher Vuk said Morton's orchestra was chosen for the tour because of its sterling reputation, outstanding record in competitions and strong community support.

"I had no idea the quartet wanted to come here until I got the call in November from (Vuk)," Witzig said.

Joining Vuk on the Bertha Frank stage will be quartet second violinist Sharon Cohen, violist Chen Lin and cellist Jeremy Harman.

The quartet does not charge high schools for its time and expertise. The tour is funded by Vuk's not-for-profit Music Makers' Foundation, corporate sponsors and other donors. Concert tickets and CD sales also help fund the tour.

The program Saturday night will include African, Middle Eastern, Latin, pop, rock 'n' roll and classical selections. Of the 13 pieces, six will feature the combined efforts of the quartet and orchestra and another will include the orchestra and Morton choral students.

"One of the ideas behind the tour is to get students to play music on their instruments they've never played before," Vuk said.

Yazigi will conduct six of his compositions. The other songs have been arranged by quartet members.

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