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For immediate release

## **Ouachita music students chosen to sing and study in Italy**

*By Rachel Bruton*

November 6, 2018

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ouachita Baptist University students filled one third of the competitive spots for this year's Opera in Concert in Italy program. Five Ouachita students were selected for the three-week program for college students to study opera and Italian language while submerged in Italian culture. Students from around the nation and Canada auditioned, and 15 were selected in total.

The following Ouachita students studied with the program in 2018: Micah Brooks, a senior musical theatre major from Rockwall, Texas; Bonnie Gentry, a junior musical theatre major from Arlington, Texas; Lizzy Griffin, a senior musical theatre major from Pittsburg, Texas; Hannah Saunders, a senior musical theater major from St. Paul, Ark.; and Rachel Webber, a senior musical theater from Longview, Texas.

"It is an honor to have any Ouachita student chosen for this program, but to have five students selected to attend the program is outstanding," said Gary Gerber, dean of Ouachita's School of Fine Arts. "It is such a rich cultural, educational and musical experience for them. They are immersed into the culture of Italy and are using the language every day. They are singing Italian operatic arias that are at the heart of the music in that country. It is truly a wonderful program for our students to experience and have on their resumes."

"This experience was so beneficial in so many ways," Saunders said. "I had the opportunity to study with world-class vocal coaches and teachers. I was immersed in the Italian language in a way that I never would have been able to in a classroom or lecture setting, and I got to experience an entirely new culture in an incredibly personal way."

Through Opera in Concert in Italy, which is based in Urbino, Italy, students studied Italian language and opera business, received vocal coaching, auditioned for area opera companies and performed at various concert venues and opera houses throughout Italy. Students also traveled to Venice, Ravenna and the Adriatic coast.

"Studying in Italy this summer not only gave me the opportunity to learn another language, but it opened my eyes to another culture," Brooks said. "It's helped me decide what I want to accomplish before I graduate and gave me an outlook into my career beyond school."

“Besides making some amazing connections in the field that I want to enter, I've learned a lot about not just music and performing, but also how to better understand different cultures,” Saunders added.

To learn more about the program Opera in Concert in Italy, visit [www.operainconcert.org/study-in-italy/](http://www.operainconcert.org/study-in-italy/). To learn more about Ouachita's vocal music programs, contact Gary Gerber at [gerberg@obu.edu](mailto:gerberg@obu.edu) or (870) 245-5128.

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