

Press Release – “Spotlight on Talent” Will Shine on These Finalists

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The preliminary competition for the 27th annual “Spotlight on Talent” contest was held recently. Once again it was a whirlwind of talented students all primed to compete to be named a finalist. This year the audition saw 92 acts, a total of 200 students! It was a 12 hour day for the producers, the Heritage Arts Center Association, and a most challenging job for the 10 judges. A great variety of performing arts were displayed - both solos and groups.

The performing arts competition has expanded to 2 final shows because of the huge increase in the numbers of applicants and quality of the talent. The top 57 scoring acts, 152 students, were chosen to perform on Saturday, March 27, 2010. Act I will start at 12:00 noon and will feature students up through 6th grade and younger groups. Act II, at 7:00 p.m. will showcase older students and groups. The day will also include a visual arts competition, with artwork and prize ribbons displayed in the lobby. Both shows will be at the Center for the Arts at Wesley Chapel High School. Tickets will be \$12 for 8 years and older, \$6 for under 8, and under 2 is free. The large theater has plenty of general admission seating.

This competition is a regional one, with contestants coming from Pasco County and all surrounding areas. There will be many different teachers and studios represented, who have been working with these students all year in preparation. All of the final performances will be awarded a trophy, and two professional panels of judges will have the task of selecting winners for cash prizes. In total over \$2,000 in cash, trophies, and ribbons will be presented with \$100 awards going to the first place winners in 6 different categories. The finalist performances vary in style from jazz to classical and Broadway to rock. The audience will enjoy piano music from the great masters to Sousa’s “Stars and Stripes Forever”; songs from “Wicked”, “Spamalot”, “Phantom”, “Guys & Dolls”, “Funny Girl”, “Little Mermaid”, “Wizard of Oz”; and ballet, jazz, modern and acrobatic dances. Instrumental music will include classical guitar, Vivaldi by a 7 year old violinist, a rock band, and a wild drum solo.

Our Masters of Ceremony for Act I is Erica Hayden McCarthy, a “Spotlight” alum who went on to compete in Miss Florida as Miss Pasco County. Lawyer Hutch Brock, Dade City’s former Mayor, will Emcee Act II. Each show will have a panel of professional judges. Act I – Carol Parker and Mary Ann Aguis are dance experts, Carole McBride is a European trained opera singer, Dr. Sam Wright of USF is a Miss America trained judge, and Sofia Kraevska is a music professor at St. Leo University. For Act II we have – Dr. Lee and Dr. Kim McCormick are college music professors; Kerry Nel is a dance expert, and Lisa Watson is a vocal soloist and musical theater performer.

With a 27 year history, this competition has now come “full circle”. Spotlight “alums” are now in positions of responsibility for the production. One was a tryout judge, and the two co-producers, Alicia Polk Guanio and Rebecca Friedman Groomes, were annual contestants from the age of 5. The Spotlight competition costs over \$10,000 to produce and would not be possible without wonderful support from generous area businesses and corporations. Producer Barbara Friedman invites all from our area who love the arts and young people to attend these most exciting and inspiring shows. She will be glad to answer any questions at spotlight@heritagearts.org or 352-567-1720.