

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

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The preliminary competition for the 28th 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 102 acts, a total of over 200 students! It was a 12 hour day for the producers, the Heritage Arts Center Association, and a most challenging job for the 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 63 scoring acts, 139 students, were chosen to perform on Saturday, March 26, 2011. Act I will start at 12:00 noon and will feature students up through 12 years old 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. Tickets for adults will be \$12 or both shows for \$20, students through high school are \$6 or both for \$10 (under 5 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 7 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 jazz; songs from “Funny Girl” to Madonna, “Lion King” to “Les Miz”; and ballet, jazz, modern, pointe and acrobatic dances. Instrumental music will include classical guitar, electric guitar, and “Phantom” music on the violin.

Our Masters of Ceremony for Act I is John Timpanelli, who has performed from Las Vegas to NYC, and local educator and author Dr. Mike Rom will Emcee Act II. Each show will have a panel of professional judges. For Act I we have dance judges Kathy Follensbee and Susan Sisk, USF professors Dr. Sang Lee (piano) and Brad Diamond (voice), and professional pianist and vocalist Frances Coburn. For Act II we have Dr. Larry Sledge and Robert Winslow, college professors in voice and piano, dance experts Rosemary Bramuchi and Patty McNally, and Jen Regal, vocalist and music minister.

With a 28 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 Grooms, were annual contestants from the age of 5. The Spotlight competition costs over \$11,000 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.