

APRIL 30, 2024

14 Talented Southern California Teens Clinch the Top Spots of The Music Center's 36th Annual Spotlight Performing Arts Competition

Grand Prize Finalists to Perform at The Music Center's Walt Disney Concert Hall on Tuesday, June 4, 2024

Longstanding Nationally Acclaimed Free Performing Arts Competition and Artistic Development Program for High School Students Has Awarded More Than \$2.8 Million in Scholarships

Photos Available

LOS ANGELES (April 30, 2024)—The Music Center today announced that 14 Southern California students, hailing from Los Angeles to San Diego Counties, were named Grand Prize finalists in *The Music Center's 36th Annual Spotlight* program, a nationally acclaimed free performing arts competition, scholarship and artistic development program for teens. Each finalist will receive a \$5,000 scholarship. This year's Grand Prize finalists were selected from more than 1,520 applicants who competed in seven artistic categories: acting, ballet, classical instrumental, classical voice, contemporary instrumental, dance and non-classical voice.

Spotlight, part of the portfolio of The Music Center's programming arm TMC Arts, offers teens expert advice, coaching and audition experience as well as mastery classes taught by professional artists and arts administrators. Throughout the monthslong competition, which began in fall 2023, the young artists were granted a range of invaluable opportunities, such as performance auditions, individual feedback from industry professionals and more than \$100,000 in cash awards. To date, The Music Center has awarded more than \$2.8 million in scholarships.

With two students winning in each of the seven categories, this year's Spotlight Grand Prize finalists are:

- Acting: Harry Orenstein, 18, and Skyla Woodard, 17, both 12th grade students at Los Angeles County High School for the Arts.
- Ballet: Amelie Bott-Suzuki, 14, a 9th grader at California Connections Academy; and Isabella Howard, 16, a 10th grader at Nevada Virtual Learning Academy.
- Classical Instrumental: Holly Lacey, 17, an 11th grade student at South Pasadena High School; and Kyle Yeung, 16, a 10th grade student at Pacific Academy.
- Classical Voice: Meghan Linnington, 17, a 12th grader at California Connections Academy; and Callie Chae Pyken, 16, a 10th grader at Los Angeles County High School for the Arts.
- Contemporary Instrumental: Jack Lieberman, 18, a 12th grade student at Agoura High School; and Savannah Tweedt, 18, a 12th grade student at Orange County School of the Arts.
- Dance: Andrea Martínez, 16, an 11th grader; and Isabella Silva, 16, a 10th grader—both attending Orange County School of the Arts.
- Non-Classical Voice: Mia Rivera, 17, a 12th grade student at San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts; and Kai Wright, 17, an 11th grade student at Los Angeles County High School for the Arts.

"Congratulations to the 2024 *Spotlight* Grand Prize finalists for their exceptional achievement! The countless hours of auditions and rehearsals during their yearlong journey have paid off magnificently," said Rachel S. Moore, president and CEO of The Music Center. "Dorothy Buffum Chandler, who founded The Music Center 60 years ago, was a fervent advocate of instilling the values of the performing arts in young people. She would be overjoyed to know that tens of thousands of local youth benefit from *Spotlight* and have made their families, schools and communities immensely proud. I commend all of this year's applicants for their dedication during the competition, and I wish each of them continued success in their artistic accomplishments."

The Grand Prize finalists will showcase their incredible talents at The Music Center's *Spotlight* Grand Finale on Tuesday, June 4, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. at The Music Center's Walt Disney Concert Hall, the first time in five years that the finale will be held in the iconic venue. The finale, which is free and open to the public, will offer a look into each of the finalists' lives, with behind-the-scenes footage detailing their artistic journey and *Spotlight* experience.

"What an honor it is for the *Spotlight* team to have inspired and guided more than 54,000 young artists in Southern California for 36 years!" said Jeri Gaile, Fredric Roberts director of *The Music Center's Spotlight*. "The students'

perseverance and passion for the performing arts are praiseworthy--I give all of them a standing ovation for being able to juggle school, rehearsals and *Spotlight*. As expected, all of this year's applicants were remarkable, making it quite a challenge for our judges to make their final selections. The 2024 Grand Prize finalists have earned their place on stage of The Music Center's Walt Disney Concert Hall, so please join us on June 4 for a special evening of celebration and unforgettable performances!"

Guests and performing arts lovers can elevate their experience at the *Spotlight Grand Finale* with a sponsorship opportunity, ranging from Supporter to Principal Benefactor levels, of the longstanding Spotlight program. All proceeds from these sponsorships will ensure that *Spotlight* continues to be provided, at no cost, to future generations of young artists. In gratitude of their financial support, sponsors will be invited to attend a pre-performance reception and/or a post-performance dinner at The Music Center's Walt Disney Concert Hall. More information about these giving opportunities can be found at musiccenter.org/supportspotlight.

In addition to the 14 Grand Prize finalists, The Music Center also named one honorable mention in each of the seven categories. This year's honorable mentions, who garnered a \$1,000 scholarship, include: Callie Chae Pyken, a 10th grade student at Los Angeles County High School for the Arts, in acting; Alfredo-Totocani García, a 12th grader who is homeschooled, in ballet; Minji Choi, a 9th grade student from Northwood High School, in classical instrumental; Madison Becerra, an 11th grader at Orange County School of the Arts, in classical voice; Logan Macy, a 9th grade student at Orange County School of the Arts, in dance; David Lim, a 10th grader at Idyllwild Arts Academy, in contemporary instrumental; and Lena Embry, a 12th grade student at California School of the Arts - San Gabriel Valley, in non-classical voice.

An important part of The Music Center's fundamental support for arts learning, *Spotlight* offers performance opportunities, audition experiences and mentorship, plus technical and artistic insights provided by professional artists and arts administrators. Spotlight is completely free with no financial barriers for participants, which gives equal footing to all aspiring artists no matter their talent level. This year, more than 1,520 teens auditioned for the prestigious program, representing 265 schools, 177 cities and eight counties. All Spotlight applicants receive written feedback from distinguished panels of judges following each audition round to help students improve and gain knowledge in their specific performance discipline.

Since its launch in 1988, *Spotlight* has transformed the lives of more than 54,000 high school students hailing from Santa Barbara to San Diego. Numerous *Spotlight* participants have gone on to successful professional careers. For example, nearly two dozen finalists are Presidential Scholars, and many more have joined or performed with professional companies, such as Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, American Ballet Theatre, Metropolitan Opera, LA Opera, Boston Symphony Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic. Notable *Spotlight* alumni include Misty Copeland, who made history in the dance world as the first African American principal dancer for American Ballet Theatre; recording artists Adam Lambert and Josh Groban; Emmy® Award-winning composer Kris Bowers, whose work includes the scores for *Bob Marley: One Love*, *Bridgerton*, *Green Book* and *Dear White People*, and who is the co-director of the Academy Award-winning short documentary *The Last Repair Shop*; Lindsay Mendez, Tony Award® winner for her role in the Broadway revival of *Carousel* and star of Broadway's *Merrily We Roll Along*; Erin Mackey, star of Broadway's *Wicked*, *Sondheim on Sondheim*, *Anything Goes*, *Chaplin*, and *Amazing Grace*; Matthew Rushing, interim artistic director for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; Yao Guang Zhai, associate principal clarinet of the Toronto Symphony; and Gerald Clayton, GRAMMY® Award-winning jazz recording artist; among numerous others.

Major support for *The Music Center's Spotlight* program is provided by lead endowment benefactor and founding chairman of Spotlight Fredric Roberts, Helen and Peter Bing, Edgerton Foundation, Terri and Jerry Kohl, Marie H. Song, The Hearst Foundations and an anonymous donor.

For more information about *The Music Center's Spotlight* program, visit musiccenter.org/spotlight or follow @musiccenterspotlight on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok and @spotlightawards on X.

To RSVP for free tickets to this year's *Spotlight Grand Finale*, visit musiccenter.org/spotlightfinale.

CALENDAR LISTING

WHAT:

The Music Center's 36th Annual Spotlight Grand Finale

Selected from more than 1,520 teen applicants, 14 Grand Prize finalists of *The Music Center's Spotlight* program will showcase their artistry on stage in front of a live audience at The Music Center's Walt Disney Concert Hall. *The Music Center's Spotlight* is a nationally acclaimed free performing arts competition, scholarship and artistic development program for Southern California teens in seven categories: acting, ballet, classical instrumental, classical voice, contemporary instrumental, dance and non-classical voice.

WHEN:

Tuesday, June 4, 2024

7:00 p.m.

WHERE:

The Music Center's Walt Disney Concert Hall

111 S. Grand Ave.

Los Angeles 90012

TICKETS:

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

To RSVP for tickets, visit musiccenter.org/spotlightfinale

ABOUT THE MUSIC CENTER

The Music Center convenes artists, communities and ideas with the goal of deepening the cultural lives of every resident in Los Angeles County. Celebrating its 60th year in 2024, the \$70 million non-profit performing arts organization has two divisions: TMC Arts and TMC Ops. TMC Arts, The Music Center's programming engine, provides year-round programming inside The Music Center's four theatres, on Jerry Moss Plaza, outside at Grand Park--a 12-acre adjacent green space--in schools and other locations all over Los Angeles County and on a digital platform called *The Music Center Offstage*. TMC Arts presents world-class dance with *Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center*, free and low-cost public concerts and events, as well as live and digital K-12 arts education programs, workshops, performances, interactive experiences and special events. TMC Ops manages the theatres, the Plaza and Grand Park, which comprise \$2 billion in county assets, on behalf of the County of Los Angeles. The Music Center is also home to four renowned resident companies--Center Theatre Group, Los Angeles Master Chorale, LA Opera and LA Phil. For more information, visit musiccenter.org. Follow The Music Center on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @MusicCenterLA.

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