

JUNE 8, 2022

New York City Ballet Principal Dancer Tiler Peck and Encanto Cast Member Rhenzy Feliz to Co-Host The Music Center's Highly Anticipated 34th Annual Spotlight Grand Finale on June 15 at Ahmanson Theatre

The duo are the first hosts to emcee the Grand Finale live on stage following two years of virtual programming because of the pandemic

Photos Available Upon Request

LOS ANGELES (June 8, 2022) -- The Music Center announced Tiler Peck, principal dancer of New York City Ballet and widely recognized as one of the finest American ballet dancers of our time, and actor Rhenzy Feliz, who played the role of Camilo Madrigal in Disney's Oscar-winning animated feature film *Encanto*, will co-host this year's *Spotlight Grand Finale* on **Wednesday, June 15, at 7 p.m.** in The Music Center's Ahmanson Theatre. The highly anticipated 34th annual event--**returning live on stage after a two-year run held virtually amid the COVID-19 pandemic**--will showcase the outstanding performances of 14 talented Southern California teens selected from more than 1,300 applicants. The nationally acclaimed performing arts competition, scholarship and artistic development program includes more than \$100,000 in cash awards distributed through three rounds of auditions.

Peck curated and starred in The Music Center's *BalletNOW* in 2017, part of *Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center*. The Music Center commissioned this highly innovative, three-performance program, which inspired the Hulu feature documentary *Ballet Now* featuring Peck and executive produced by Elisabeth Moss. Peck also choreographed the ballet sequences in the 2019 action thriller film *John Wick: Chapter 3 - Parabellum*, Netflix's *Tiny Pretty Things* and *Ray Donovan* (in which she also appeared).

"As a Southern California native, I have a special place in my heart for The Music Center, and I am thrilled to return to this Los Angeles cultural anchor as the host of this year's *Spotlight Grand Finale*," said Peck. "I cannot wait to introduce some of Southern California's best and brightest young performers to audiences who join us for this incredible celebration of their talents and their journey. Be prepared to be wowed by the next generation of entertainers!"

A native of Bakersfield, California, Peck made her Broadway debut at 11 as young Gracie Shinn in Meredith Willson's *The Music Man*. She appeared on Broadway as Ivy Smith in the Tony Award-nominated revival of *On the Town* and portrayed Louise in the Emmy Award-nominated production of New York Philharmonic's *Live from Lincoln Center* production of *Carousel*. Peck originated the title role in Susan Stroman's musical *Little Dancer* at the Kennedy Center. She starred in CLI Studios' *A New Stage* and in the world premiere of William Forsythe's *The Barre Project*, serving as executive producer for both productions. Peck most recently curated and directed the inaugural *Artists at the Center* for New York City Center and has performed for President Obama at the 2012 and 2014 Kennedy Center Honors. In addition to being the designer of Tiler Peck Designs for Body Wrappers and Tiler Peck x STATESIDE, she has penned two children's books in her *Katerina Ballerina* series published by Simon & Schuster.

Feliz is an alumnus of *The Music Center's Spotlight* program in 2016, competing as a finalist in the acting category. As a senior at Santa Monica High School, the Dominican American actor booked his first professional acting job by joining season 2 of Hulu Original Series *Casual*. His additional credits include George Clooney's *The Tender Bar* for Amazon Studios opposite Ben Affleck and Tye Sheridan, Netflix drama film *All Together Now* and a lead role in the Hulu Original Series *Runaways* based on the Marvel Comics.

"I have so many awesome memories of auditioning and being selected as one of the Grand Prize finalists of *The Music Center's Spotlight*. With the one-on-one mentoring I received throughout the nearly year-long process, I had the tools, guidance and confidence to become the best actor I can be--and to keep following my dreams," said Feliz. "Every young person we will see perform at this year's Grand Finale are talented and earned their chance in the spotlight. Congratulations to all of them!"

Feliz has the unique opportunity to have the #1 song *We Don't Talk About Bruno* from the global animated feature film hit *Encanto* on *Billboard*. He stars in the current season of Ryan Murphy's award-winning and critically-acclaimed

anthology horror television series *American Horror Story* for cable network FX and will be seen in the upcoming feature film *The Same Storm* which premiered at the Telluride Film Festival.

"Given Tiler's passion for dance, Rhenzy's intimate connection to our *Spotlight* program and their dedication to young artists, we knew these two would be perfect as co-hosts of this year's *Spotlight Grand Finale*. Tiler knows first-hand the excitement and the magic of performing on stage before a live audience and, as one of the nation's premier ballerinas, she will be an inspiration to our 14 finalists--and to young performers worldwide for that matter--who dream of being in her shoes one day," added Jeri Gaile, Fredric Roberts Director, *Spotlight* program. "And having Rhenzy return to The Music Center for this special evening will be a treat! When he auditioned for *Spotlight* six years ago, we knew he had a gift. We are very proud of his accomplishments, and we are thrilled to have him as co-host. This year's Grand Finale will be a night to remember!"

The 14 *Spotlight* Grand Prize winners include two finalists in each of seven categories: acting, ballet, dance, classical voice, non-classical voice, classical instrumental and jazz instrumental. In addition to performing in the finale, each student will receive a \$5,000 scholarship.

Acting:

- **Michael Davis**, 18, a senior at San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts (Chula Vista)
- **Lauren Mei**, 16, a junior at Orange County School of the Arts - OCSA (Irvine)

Ballet:

- **Sophia Koo**, 14, a freshman at Arnold O. Beckman High School and Tustin Connect (Irvine)
- **Justin Padilla**, 15, a home-schooled sophomore (Lake Forest)

Dance:

- **Dyllan Blackburn**, 15, a sophomore at Canyon High School (Anaheim)
- **Tegan Chou**, 15, a sophomore at ASU Prep Digital (Tustin)

Classical Voice:

- **Oscar Yum**, 17, a junior at Flintridge Prep (Altadena)
- **Lia Zheng**, 17, a junior at Canyon Crest Academy (San Diego)

Non-Classical Voice:

- **Bella Aboulhosn**, 17, a junior at Chaminade College Preparatory School - Canoga Park (Los Angeles)
- **Elias Robles**, 17, a senior at Los Altos High School (Hacienda Heights)

Classical Instrumental:

- **Andrew Shi**, 17, piano, a senior at Diamond Bar High School (Walnut)
- **Ashley Tsai**, 16, violin, a senior at Colburn Music Academy (Los Angeles)

Jazz Instrumental:

- **Evan Dexter**, 16, trombone, a junior at Los Angeles County High School for the Arts (LACHSA), (Chatsworth)
- **Sophia Papouchado**, 17, drums, a junior at Vistamar School (Manhattan Beach)

In addition to the Grand Prize Finalists, The Music Center also named an Honorable Mention in each category, awarding each student a \$1,000 scholarship. The Honorable Mentions include: **Acting:** Lulu Royce, 17, Los Angeles County High School for the Arts (Los Angeles); **Ballet:** Ashley Chung, 17, Cypress High School (Cypress); **Dance:** Dakota Faunteroy, 17, Calabasas High School (Calabasas); **Classical Voice:** Victoria Curet, 15, San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts (San Diego); **Non-Classical Voice:** Lulu Royce, 17, Los Angeles County High School for the Arts (Los Angeles); **Classical Instrumental:** Hwaseop Jeong (clarinet), 17, Colburn Music Academy (Los Angeles); and **Jazz Instrumental:** William Schwartzman (piano), 17, Los Angeles County High School for the Arts (Santa Monica). *The Music Center's Spotlight* program awards more than \$100,000 in cash scholarships annually.

Numerous *Spotlight* participants have gone on to successful professional careers. Twenty-three finalists are Presidential Scholars, and many more have joined or performed with professional companies including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, American Ballet Theatre, Metropolitan Opera, LA Opera, Boston Symphony Orchestra and

the New York Philharmonic, among others. 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; Kris Bowers, Emmy® Award-winning composer whose work includes the scores for *Bridgerton*, *Green Book* and *Dear White People*; Lindsay Mendez, Tony Award® winner for her role in the Broadway revival of *Carousel* and now starring in the television drama *All Rise*; Erin Mackey, star of Broadway's *Wicked*, *Sondheim on Sondheim*, *Anything Goes*, *Chaplin* and *Amazing Grace*; Matthew Rushing, associate artistic director for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; Yao Guang Zhai, associate principal clarinet of the Toronto Symphony; Gerald Clayton, GRAMMY® Award-winning jazz recording artist; and more.

The Music Center's Spotlight program is generously supported by Fredric Roberts, Helen and Peter Bing, Dr. Martin Balser, The Hearst Foundations, the Edgerton Foundation and an anonymous donor. Fredric Roberts is founding chairman of *Spotlight*. The late Walter E. Grauman is the creator. For more information about *The Music Center's Spotlight* program, visit musiccenter.org/spotlight or join the conversation at facebook.com/MusicCenterSpotlight.

To purchase tickets to the *Spotlight Grand Finale*, visit musiccenter.org/spotlightfinale.

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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. 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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