

APRIL 27, 2022

## The Music Center Names Fourteen Aspiring Teen Artists as Grand Prize Finalists for The Music Center's 34th Annual Spotlight Program

**Annual *Spotlight Grand Finale* Returns for In Person Performance Showcasing Finalists' Artistry at The Music Center's Ahmanson Theatre**

**LOS ANGELES (April 27, 2022)**--The Music Center announced 14 Grand Prize finalists from more than 1,300 applicants in **The Music Center's 34th annual Spotlight** (*Spotlight*) program, a free nationally acclaimed performing arts competition, scholarship and artistic development program for teens. A TMC Arts program, *Spotlight* provides Southern California teens with expert advice, coaching, auditions and mastery classes taught by professional artists and arts administrators. The program recognizes and rewards all participants throughout the competition with a range of benefits such as individual feedback from industry professionals, performance opportunities and more than \$100,000 in cash awards through three rounds of auditions.

Held in person for the first time since 2019, and in The Music Center's Ahmanson Theatre, this year's *Spotlight Grand Finale* will showcase the talents of each of the individual finalists and offer a look into their lives, with behind the scenes footage detailing their artistic journey and *Spotlight* experience, including how they persevered through multiple rounds of virtual auditions, improved their technical skills based on detailed feedback by industry experts and learned about their craft by attending classes with world-renowned experts in their discipline.

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 event, each student will receive a \$5,000 scholarship.

The *Spotlight* Grand Prize Finalists are:

### **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)

"*The Music Center's Spotlight* provides Southern California teen artists with the tools and guidance to hone their craft and build a community with whom they can share their passion for the arts. We were so pleased that, after a two-year absence, we are able to bring back many of the in-person *Spotlight* auditions and workshops where the talent, hard work and perseverance of these 14 amazing finalists could shine," said Rachel S. Moore, president and CEO of The Music Center. "*The Spotlight Grand Finale* is the last step in the finalists' journey and a chance to celebrate each teen as they take the stage before a large audience at The Music Center."

"With a 34-year history of helping to develop and support some of Southern California's most talented teens, *Spotlight* uplifts aspiring artists and provides pathways for them to connect with one another and the greater *Spotlight* community. We offer a nurturing environment to help kids believe in themselves, because we believe in them," added Jeri Gaile, Fredric Roberts Director of *The Music Center's Spotlight* program. "The *Spotlight* team is honored to help guide these 14 finalists as they identify their path into the future and empower each of them to do their best, whether on stage, in the classroom or in the community."

In addition to the Grand Prize Finalists, The Music Center also named an Honorable Mention in each category, awarding each student with 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.

An important part of The Music Center's fundamental support for arts learning, *Spotlight* offers valuable 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 1,300 teens auditioned for the prestigious program, representing more than 256 schools, 181 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 53,000 high school students from Santa Barbara to San Diego by being a competition and more. *Spotlight* provides students the opportunity to develop their performance abilities, receive valuable college preparedness skills and gain confidence to pursue their dreams in the performing arts. Through a supportive environment, students also develop important life skills, including building self-esteem, preparation and perseverance, which benefit the participants beyond the stage.

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; Adam Lambert and Josh Groban, pop recording artists; 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 many others.

*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](https://musiccenter.org/spotlight) or join the conversation on [facebook.com/MusicCenterSpotlight/](https://facebook.com/MusicCenterSpotlight/).

### **Calendar Listings**

#### **When:**

June 15, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time

#### **Where:**

The Music Center's Ahmanson Theatre  
135 N. Grand Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

#### **Tickets:**

Tickets are available for \$5 each.

Please visit [musiccenter.org/spotlight](https://musiccenter.org/spotlight) for more information.

### **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 Gloriana 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](https://musiccenter.org). Follow The Music Center on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @MusicCenterLA.

### ***The Music Center's 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Spotlight Program Grand Prize Finalists***

| <b>Full Name</b> | <b>Program Name</b>       | <b>Home City</b> | <b>School</b>                                    | <b>Grade</b> |
|------------------|---------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Michael Davis    | Acting                    | Chula Vista      | San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts | 12           |
| Lauren Mei       | Acting                    | Irvine           | Orange County School of the Arts - OCSA          | 11           |
| Sophia Koo       | Ballet                    | Irvine           | Arnold O. Beckman High School and Tustin Connect | 9            |
| Justin Padilla   | Ballet                    | Lake Forest      | Home Schooled                                    | 10           |
| Andrew Shi       | Classical<br>Instrumental | Walnut           | Diamond Bar High School                          | 12           |
| Ashley Tsai      | Classical<br>Instrumental | Los Angeles      | Colburn Music Academy                            | 12           |
| Oscar Yum        | Classical Voice           | Altadena         | Flintridge Prep School                           | 11           |

|                   |                     |                  |                                                         |    |
|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Lia Zheng         | Classical Voice     | San Diego        | Canyon Crest Academy                                    | 11 |
| Dyllan Blackburn  | Dance               | Anaheim          | Canyon High School - Anaheim                            | 10 |
| Tegan Chou        | Dance               | Tustin           | ASU Prep Digital                                        | 10 |
| Evan Dexter       | Jazz Instrumental   | Chatsworth       | Los Angeles County High School for the Arts - LACHSA    | 11 |
| Sophia Papouchado | Jazz Instrumental   | Manhattan Beach  | Vistamar School                                         | 11 |
| Bella Aboulhosn   | Non-Classical Voice | Los Angeles      | Chaminade College Preparatory High School - Canoga Park | 11 |
| Elias Robles      | Non-Classical Voice | Hacienda Heights | Los Altos High School                                   | 12 |

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