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The Music Center Names 113 Southern California High School Students as Semifinalists in "The Music Center's 37th Annual Spotlight" Program

Nationally Recognized Arts Learning Program and Competition Offers \$100,000+ in Scholarships for Aspiring Artists with Performance Opportunities and Invaluable Professional Feedback

LOS ANGELES (February 19, 2025) -- The Music Center announced today that 113 of Southern California's most talented high school students have advanced to become semifinalists in **The Music Center's 37th Annual Spotlight** program, a free, nationally acclaimed performing arts competition, scholarship and artistic development program for teens. More than 1,600 teens, representing 269 schools, 174 cities and eight counties, auditioned this year, and five of the 113 semifinalists earned spots in two separate artistic categories in the prestigious program.

A longstanding initiative of The Music Center's programming arm TMC Arts, *Spotlight* provides Southern California teens with expert feedback, advice, coaching, auditions and mastery classes taught by professional artists and arts administrators in seven categories: acting, ballet, dance, classical voice, non-classical voice, classical instrumental and contemporary instrumental. The program recognizes and rewards participants throughout the competition with more than \$100,000 in cash awards following three rounds of auditions. To date, The Music Center has awarded over \$2.9 million in scholarships and has transformed the lives of more than 55,000 high school students who hail from across Southern California and the Central Valley, from Kern County to San Diego County.

All *Spotlight* applicants receive written feedback from distinguished panels of judges following each audition round to help them improve and gain insight in their performing arts discipline. An initiative of The Music Center's fundamental support for arts learning, *Spotlight* provides students with the opportunity to develop and hone their performance abilities, receive crucial college preparedness skills and gain the confidence to pursue their dreams in the performing arts. Through a supportive environment, students also develop vital life skills, including self-esteem, preparation and perseverance, which benefit them beyond the stage.

"I want to congratulate this year's outstanding class of *Spotlight* semifinalists! To advance this far into the competition is an incredible achievement and a testament to the talent and hard work of these young artists," said Rachel S. Moore, president and CEO of The Music Center. "More than ever, we need an outpouring of the arts to uplift our spirits and bring us together as a community. These students represent the next generation of performing artists who will bring us hope, joy and inspiration, and I'm proud to say our *Spotlight* program plays a major role in their artistic and personal development."

Spotlight semifinalists earn the rare opportunity to attend a special mastery class within their discipline with highly regarded artists, who share their expertise on performance technique, training and professional life. These experts provide students with invaluable feedback about their performances, offering the students a rich learning experience. Each semifinalist will audition one last time before a new panel of judges, who will then select the top two finalist performers in each category for a total of 14 Grand Prize Finalists (two from each category). Judges will also name an Honorable Mention in each category. **The Grand Prize Finalists will perform in The Music Center's *Spotlight* Grand Finale on Friday, June 6, 2025, at 8:00 p.m., at The Music Center's Ahmanson Theatre.**

"Over the yearlong course of auditions, feedback and mastery classes, our *Spotlight* participants and team of staff members become like a family. We support each other tirelessly, through good times and challenging ones," said Jeri Gaile, Fredric Roberts director, *The Music Center's Spotlight*. "I am immensely proud of all the young artists, who, over the past 37 years, made a commitment to our prestigious competition and kept forging forward in their artistic journeys no matter the obstacles they might have encountered. Their determination and artistic talent are a gift to the world."

The Music Center's Spotlight semifinalists each receive \$500. Grand Prize Finalists will each receive \$5,000 scholarships; one Honorable Mention in each category will receive \$1,000. Making an indelible impression on this

year's judges, 70 students (10 selected from each category) will each receive a \$100 Merit Award; this special honor acknowledges their achievement in the competition and their potential in the performing arts.

To help students interested in applying to the *Spotlight* program, The Music Center created **The Spotlight Academy** as an episodic series of online videos and tutorials. Designed for young artists, parents and educators, *The Spotlight Academy* features more than a dozen webisodes on subjects related to applying for the *Spotlight* program as well as advice for anyone considering a career in the arts, both on- or offstage. The videos provide a deep dive into the program's seven categories and discuss curated topics featuring alumni and experts in the field, including New York City Ballet principal dancer **Tiler Peck**, actor in *NCIS: Los Angeles* and Netflix's upcoming *The Residence* **Barrett Foa**, mezzo-soprano opera singer **Suzanna Guzmán** and more.

Since the program's launch in 1988, numerous *Spotlight* participants have gone on to successful professional careers. Nearly two dozen past 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 Oscar®-winning short documentary *The Last Repair Shop*; **Lindsay Mendez**, Tony Award® winner for her role in the Broadway revival of *Carousel* and who recently starred in the Broadway revival *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 many others.

Major support for The Music Center's *Spotlight* program is provided by Fredric Roberts, Helen and Peter Bing, Edgerton Foundation and Marie H. Song. 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 follow @musiccenterspotlight on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok and @spotlightawards on X.

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 \$80 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 Gloria Molina Grand Park--a 12-acre adjacent green space--in schools and other locations all over Los Angeles County. TMC Arts presents world-class dance with *Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center*, free and low-cost public concerts and events, live and digital K-12 arts education programs, workshops, performances, interactive experiences and special events. TMC Ops manages the theatres, the Plaza and Gloria Molina Grand Park, which comprise \$3 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 social media @MusicCenterLA.

The Music Center's 37th Annual Spotlight Semifinalists

HOME CITY	FULL NAME	PROGRAM NAME	SCHOOL	GRADE
Agoura Hills	Charles French	Contemporary Instrumental	Agoura High School	12
Agoura Hills	Jordan Klein	Contemporary Instrumental	Agoura High School	12
Anaheim	Brendan Knox	Non-Classical Voice	Orange County School of the Arts	12
Bell Canyon	Chase Teglas	Classical Voice	Chaminade College Preparatory High School	12
Bellflower	Erin Tardibuono	Non-Classical Voice	Orange County School of the Arts	12
Beverly Hills	Hyeongju An	Classical Voice	Idyllwild Arts Academy	12
Burbank	Jane Hasty	Classical Voice	Los Angeles County High School for the Arts	11
Burbank	Jane Hasty	Non-Classical Voice	Los Angeles County High School for the Arts	11
Burbank	Silas Schulz	Non-Classical Voice	John Burroughs High School	12

Burbank	Lusine Stepanyan	Classical Voice	Burbank High School	11
Calabasas	Riley Eichberg	Non-Classical Voice	Calabasas High School	12
Calabasas	Elie Samouhi	Contemporary Instrumental	Calabasas High School	11
Corona	Isabella Betancourt	Non-Classical Voice	Orange County School of the Arts	12
Costa Mesa	Ashwin Desai	Contemporary Instrumental	Orange County School of the Arts	11
Costa Mesa	Danica Hemmens	Non-Classical Voice	Coast High school	12
Eastvale	Erin Liao	Classical Instrumental	Eleanor Roosevelt High School	11
Encino	Julianne Hutton	Dance	The Archer School for Girls	12
Fullerton	Madison Becerra	Classical Voice	Orange County School of the Arts	12
Fullerton	David Lim	Contemporary Instrumental	BYU Independent Study	11
Fullerton	Kenny Song	Classical Instrumental	Orange County School of the Arts	10
Fullerton	Rachel Won	Classical Instrumental	Orange County School of the Arts	11
Glendale	Jasper Kugler	Classical Instrumental	Crescenta Valley High School	12
Huntington Beach	Liam Geoffroy	Ballet	Huntington Beach High School	9
Huntington Beach	Bianca Stratta	Acting	Huntington Beach High School	11
Idyllwild-Pine Cove	Louis Chen	Classical Instrumental	Idyllwild Arts Academy	12
Idyllwild-Pine Cove	Elijah Curtin-Adelman	Acting	Idyllwild Arts Academy	12
Idyllwild-Pine Cove	Adin Joseph	Dance	Idyllwild Arts Academy	12
Irvine	Minji Choi	Classical Instrumental	Northwood High School	10
Irvine	Kameron Couch	Dance	Orange County School of the Arts	12
Irvine	Diane Doberstein	Ballet	iLead Exploration	11
Irvine	Jonathan Doh	Classical Instrumental	Pacific Academy - Irvine	10
Irvine	Mia Frederick	Ballet	Cabrillo Point Academy	11
Irvine	Madeleine Lee	Ballet	Laurel Springs School	12
Irvine	Rubi Lee	Classical Instrumental	Pacific Academy - Irvine	12
Irvine	Michelle Lu	Ballet	Portola High School	12
Irvine	Logan Macy	Dance	Orange County School of the Arts	10
Irvine	Kaya Sparnicht	Acting	Orange County School of the Arts	12
Irvine	Kiera Sun	Ballet	Cabrillo Point Academy	9
Irvine	Kiera Sun	Dance	Cabrillo Point Academy	9
Irvine	Eiline Tai	Classical Instrumental	California Connections Academy	11
La Cañada Flintridge	Thomas Chung	Classical Instrumental	Crescenta Valley High School	12
La Cañada Flintridge	Lev Sakae Taira	Classical Voice	Laurel Springs School	11
La Verne	Evangeline Lien	Classical Instrumental	Claremont High School	9
Ladera Ranch	Hannah Gu	Ballet	Tesoro High School	11
Laguna Beach	Alexa Blanchard	Dance	Laguna Beach High School	11
Laguna Beach	Tessa Espinola	Non-Classical Voice	Orange County School of the Arts	12
Laguna Beach	Lavinia Watkins	Classical Voice	Orange County School of the Arts	11
Lomita	River Arviso	Dance	HArts Academy	12
Los Alamitos	Arron Myers	Dance	Los Alamitos High School	11
Los Angeles	Asher Bartfeld	Classical Voice	Los Angeles County High School for the Arts	12
Los Angeles	Christopher Bladon	Contemporary Instrumental	Agoura High School	12
Los Angeles	Delila Carlos	Acting	Los Angeles County High School for the Arts	11
Los Angeles	Matilda Luz Concha Pearson	Acting	Los Angeles County High School for the Arts	11
Los Angeles	Matilda Luz Concha Pearson	Non-Classical Voice	Los Angeles County High School for the Arts	11
Los Angeles	Noah Farag	Contemporary Instrumental	Hamilton High School	12
Los Angeles	Melanie Flores	Acting	Hamilton High School	12
Los Angeles	Allegra Frost	Contemporary Instrumental	Valley International Preparatory High School	12
Los Angeles	Jack Heath	Acting	Los Angeles County High School for the Arts	11
Los Angeles	Crystin Herring	Acting	Windward School	12
Los Angeles	Joshua Ho	Classical Instrumental	Palisades Charter High School	12
Los Angeles	Cole Kaller	Acting	Windward School	12
Los Angeles	Aria Kamei-Oser	Ballet	Palisades Charter High School - Virtual Academy	11
Los Angeles	Armen Kavcioglu	Ballet	North Hollywood High School	9
Los Angeles	James Lauter	Acting	Campbell Hall	11
Los Angeles	Hao Li	Acting	Sierra Canyon Upper School	12
Los Angeles	Clara Maranville	Acting	Marlborough School	11
Los Angeles	Micah MikoLevine	Acting	Westridge Upper School	12
Los Angeles	Nathan Pak	Classical Instrumental	Taft High School	11
Los Angeles	Julian Pankowski	Non-Classical Voice	Van Nuys Senior High School	12
Los Angeles	Mateo Rodriguez	Contemporary Instrumental	Los Angeles County High School for the Arts	10
Los Angeles	Harlem Shepherd	Non-Classical Voice	Los Angeles County High School for the Arts	10
Los Angeles	Samuel Siskind	Classical Voice	Lindamood-Bell Academy	12
Los Angeles	Noah Steinman	Contemporary Instrumental	Hamilton High School	11
Los Angeles	Manos Vourgourakis	Contemporary Instrumental	Harvard-Westlake Upper School	12
Mission Viejo	Gracy French	Dance	Mission Viejo High School	10
Newport Beach	Margaux DeAllen	Ballet	Mater Dei High School	10
Newport Beach	Everett Leigh	Classical Instrumental	Tarbut V'Torah Community Day School	9
Newport Beach	Lexie Shehab	Non-Classical Voice	Orange County School of the Arts	10
North Hollywood	Baz Felber	Acting	Ramon C. Cortines High School	11
Orange	Emmet Althoen	Contemporary Instrumental	Orange County School of the Arts	9
Pacific Palisades	Bianca Iker	Classical Voice	Pacifica Christian High School	11
Pasadena	Julia Kleindorfer	Classical Instrumental	Westridge Upper School	10
Pasadena	Steinunn Liorsdottir	Classical Voice	Flintridge Preparatory	12
Riverside	Kayla McCarty	Acting	Ramona High School	12

Riverside	Luna Rodriguez	Ballet	Ramona High School	12
Riverside	Amayzee Ruiz	Non-Classical Voice	John W. North High School	10
San Diego	Emma Donnelly	Dance	The Bishop's School Will Parsons	12
San Diego	Zara Exconde	Non-Classical Voice	San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts	12
San Diego	Evonne Fangao	Classical Voice	The Cambridge School	10
San Diego	Michelle Shi	Dance	Canyon Crest Academy	11
San Diego	Olivia Xia	Classical Voice	Rancho Bernardo High School	9
San Juan Capistrano	Samuel Chung	Contemporary Instrumental	Orange County School of the Arts	12
San Marino	Emilia Bernstein	Classical Voice	San Marino High School	11
Santa Clarita	Brooklyn Covington	Dance	Valencia High School	10
Santa Clarita	Elina Ghosh	Non-Classical Voice	West Ranch High School	10
Santa Clarita	Ananya Joseph	Dance	Academy of the Canyons	10
Santa Monica	Charles Blanchard	Classical Voice	Santa Monica High School	12
Simi Valley	Troy Winkler	Non-Classical Voice	Grace Brethren	11
Tarzana	Anorah Permenter	Acting	Chaminade College Preparatory High School	9
Temecula	Lane Whitehurst	Ballet	<i>Homeschooled</i>	11
Thousand Oaks	Saoirse Sipes	Contemporary Instrumental	Thousand Oaks High School	11
Toluca Lake	Sofia Rile	Dance	Los Angeles County High School for the Arts	10
Torrance	Joaquin Garde	Contemporary Instrumental	Los Angeles County High School for the Arts	12
Torrance	Mai Ishiyama	Ballet	Excel High School	10
Torrance	Mai Ishiyama	Dance	Excel High School	10
Tustin	Hannah Cho	Classical Instrumental	Pacific Academy - Irvine	12
Tustin	Aimee Ernt	Ballet	Foothill High School	11
Tustin	Riley Ernt	Ballet	Foothill High School	11
Tustin	Riley Ernt	Dance	Foothill High School	11
Upland	Zaire Franklin	Contemporary Instrumental	California School of the Arts - San Gabriel Valley	12
West Covina	Allison Luo	Acting	West Covina High School	11
Yorba Linda	Afina Gosla	Ballet	Cabrillo Point Academy	9
Yorba Linda	Megan Reta	Dance	El Dorado High School	11

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