

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

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The preliminary competition for the 29th 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 62 scoring acts, 134 students, were chosen to perform on Saturday, March 10, 2012. Act I will start at 12:00 noon and will feature students up through 7th grade 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, so tickets are only available at the door.

This competition is a regional one, with contestants coming from Pasco County and the surrounding areas from St. Pete to Hudson to Bushnell. 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 \$3,000 in cash, trophies, and ribbons will be presented with \$150 awards going to the first place winners in 8 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 “Rio” to “Phantom of the Opera”, Shakeras to the “Addams Family”; and dances this year are ballet and acrobatic, Bollywood and traditional Scottish sword dance. Instrumental music will include guitar styles from classical to Rascal Flatts country to original, and for the 1st time there will be an authentic Scottish bagpipe performance. There also are snare drum percussionists – “Dueling Drummers”.

Producers are happy to announce that the Masters of Ceremony for Act II is Kurt Browning, the Florida Secretary of State until just recently. He was able to return home to Pasco County after overseeing the Rep. Primary Elections. Each show will also have a panel of professional judges whose backgrounds include expertise in dance, vocal, piano, and instrumental fields.

With a 29 year history, this competition has now come “full circle”. Spotlight “alums” are now in positions of responsibility for the production. Two were tryout judges, 4 sit on the Heritage Arts Board of Directors, and the two co-producers, Alicia Polk Guanio and Rebecca Friedman Groomes, were annual contestants from the age of 5. The Spotlight competition costs over \$12,000 to produce and would not be possible without wonderful support from generous area businesses and individual supporters. 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.