

Talent Search Top Winners

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John E. Profant Foundation For The Arts

Contact: Marie Profant

(805) 705-9179

**"The exciting news came in the darkness of the theater, as one judge after another whispered,
"How can I get in touch with that performer? I want to help!"**

The first phase of a November talent search has been completed, with several more around the corner. In a collaboration between the John E. Profant Foundation For The Arts, and Santa Barbara City College, auditions were filmed at the Fe Bland Forum. Joyce Shaar, Chair of the "Be A Star or Support A Star" event, explained that "this is a fund raiser to benefit the SBCC arts students, with all contestants donating \$100 and all receiving a DVD of their performance. Talent is perhaps the most unique gift a human can have, and we are so proud of these performers who are giving their best to benefit others."

Rich Hoag, a long-time supporter of SBCC, performed as MC introducing the contestants who ranged in age from 4 to 82. Michael Stinson, Director of the SBCC Film Department, manned two cameras as dozens of singers, musicians, dancers and actors appeared, including a few sponsors who performed: Sara Miller McCune, with a riveting reading from "Pygmalion" by George Bernard Shaw; Patricia Starr, wearing a blue outfit and blue hair and playing a piano solo "Bumble Boogie" by Jack Fina ("Flight of the Bumble Bee" set on a boogie woogie bass); and actor Dr. Larry Williams, with a scene from "The Odd Couple" by Neil Simon.

Behind the scenes the committee also included: Eliane Alexandre - Talent Scout, Barbie Burgess - Event Planning, Dr. Mary Collier - Board Member, Mary Garton - Administration, Dana Hansen - Public Relations, Jen Mishkin - Administration, Gloria Montano - Media, Valerie O'Connor - Event Planning, Dave Raber - Administration, Edgar Real - Administration, Dor Stampfli - Audition Manager. From SBCC: Kay Bruce - Public Relations, Anna Lafferty - Media Arts Dept, Student Tammi Clenard - Poster Design.

Profant Foundation Board Member Dr. Mary Collier explained that "the experience gained at local auditions is always helpful to young performers who will be challenged throughout their career to present their best work regardless of the circumstances." Marie Profant added, "We are so pleased that City College has offered their facility and Film and Graphic Arts Department resources to make this possible. We hope the funds raised will benefit many students, while at the same time offering exposure for some performers. A few participants will appear on TV and also receive a referral to a mentor, agent, or advisor. The judges have offered to provide these contestants a 'next step' in their career. Although no one can guarantee success, we hope to open doors for these talented individuals."

This was not a normal contest where judges are expected to select the very best audition. The distinguished panel was asked which performers should appear on a television program, and then recommend the participants who will receive referrals to industry professionals. Some of these referral prizes were planned in advance, such as free classes for dancers and consultations with experts. But the exciting news came in the darkness of the theater, as one judge after another whispered, "How can I get in touch with that performer? I want to help!" So rather than wait until all the referrals are made - a continuing process - and the TV broadcast is ready, the committee is sharing the early results by announcing three of the top winners.

Tenor **Edgar Ernesto Ramirez** performed "Granada" in the Classical Music category and won the Grand Prize of \$500. Event judges Marilyn Gilbert and Nathan Rundlett have arranged for him to be heard in audition at the San Jose Opera in December. Marilyn explained, "This is a truly amazing opera company which gives contracts ranging from 1 to 3 years for promising young opera singers -and they get the kind of training they get in Europe - singing many, many roles over that period of time. Many of their singers have gone on to make careers in major opera houses all over the world." Edgar's participation was sponsored by pianist and vocal coach Renee Hamaty.

Contemporary vocalist **Brittany Battistini** performed "Stranger In My House" by Tamia, and "Fallen" by Alecia Keys. Event Judge and smooth jazz DJ Mark DeAnda offered her work on a recording project resulting from this performance. Brittany Isabella has studied Speech Level Singing with legendary teacher Seth Riggs over the past 6 years. Currently Brittany is singing for private parties, teaching vocal lessons and writing her own music. She anticipates working in the music industry in the near future. Brittany was sponsored by Bodywise Nutritional Products.

Jessica Spaw is a contemporary vocalist who performed "God Help The Outcasts" from "The Hunchback of Notre Dame". She was referred to a professional recording studio to create a demo, donated by the Hutton Foundation and Ben Rutstein of "Escape Studios". Jessica sings with Agatha Carubia, and is a senior at San Marcos High School where she has performed in many theatrical productions. "I feel very privileged and honored to have had the opportunity to work with a professional like Ben Rutstein on a demo recording. I would never have imagined that I would be able to do the things that this talent search has made available for me." Jessica was sponsored by Tami Spaw - Prudential California Realty.

A complete list of winners will be announced early next year, along with the upcoming phases of the project. These include the DVD production by Michael Stinson and SBCC graduate Meg Barbour, the award presentation, and the TV broadcast early next year by "The Santa Barbara Channels," an organization which supports local culture and the arts.

Detail below includes a list of the judges, and some feedback:

The distinguished panel of judges includes some of Santa Barbara's finest talent. Those who could not attend the live audition will review the film and offer additional input and referrals.

Janet Adderley, owner of Adderley School of Performing Arts, has a BA from Yale University. She starred in "Starlight Express" on Broadway and "Sweet Justice" on TV, and is an on-set acting coach for TV.

David Alvarez, owner of A Fascinating Rhythm Dance Center for the past nine years, has been dancing for 23 years. He competed professionally in International Latin style and now competes in Ballroom and Latin with his students, representing California in national competitions. Prior to opening A Fascinating Rhythm, he taught with both Arthur Murray and Fred Astaire Dance Studios, and was named as their Top Teacher both in the US and internationally.

Barbie Burgess, past President of the Lobero Theater Foundation, is a member of Fiesta Finale Gala Steering Committee with expertise in fundraising for the arts.

Dr. Mary Collier had life long preparation for the stage in ballet, piano, voice, and drama. She performed with the UCSB Opera Workshop, Santa Barbara Civic Opera Company, and Oberlin Group in Paris, France. Mary is currently on the Voice Faculty at Music Academy of the West, and Academic Faculty at Westmont College.

Mark DeAnda is a well-known DJ and manager for a smooth jazz radio station.

Marilyn Gilbert and **Nathan Rundlett**, both opera singers, founded the Santa Barbara Grand Opera and directed it for six years. Gilbert is also a civil rights attorney, former law professor, and community activist, and Rundlett is a former chemistry professor and is currently designing and making furniture.

Arlene & Milt Larsen, owners of The Magic Castle in Hollywood, are currently casting a musical production.

Hedda, better known as songwriter **Linda Laurie**, has written several gold and platinum hits for artists such as Frank Sinatra, Dionne Warwick, Diana Ross, and Sonny & Cher. Hedda also produced for TV, wrote for night club performers, and toured worldwide as a teenager. She was also a staff writer for Disney, Paramount, Screen Gems and Warner Brothers.

Steven Lovelace began his dance career in Kay Fulton's Santa Barbara City College Dance Department and went on to dance with several outstanding companies. He has a long history with the Summer Solstice Celebration, is a member of the Lit Moon Theatre Company, co-directed Dance Warehouse from 1985-91, and was the Assistant Director of the Santa Barbara Dance Alliance from 1986-87. He currently directs his own jazz dance program for Santa Barbara Jazz Dance Academy at Arts Alive! Dance and Creativity Center.

Susan Manchak was a principal dancer with the Kansas City Ballet for twelve years and also performed with the Colorado Ballet and Frankfurt Ballet. She has been teaching and choreographing for the past nine years both locally and nationally. Three of her works were recently shown at the Regional Dance Festival.

Sara Miller McCune is a former teenage actress, now a publishing business owner and philanthropist. Ms. McCune currently serves on the Board of the Santa Barbara Center for the Performing Arts which is restoring the Granada Theater, slated to reopen in 2007.

Julie McLeod is the Executive Director of Santa Barbara Dance Alliance where she produces many showcase events. She studied at Juilliard with Martha Graham, Jose Limon, Doris Humphrey and Anthony

Tudor, worked with Jerome Robbins in the original Broadway production of "West Side Story", and toured with Yul Brynner in "The King & I." Julie was the owner of Dance Warehouse for 20 years, and directed and choreographed for her dance company Improv, Inc. She was the S B News Press dance critic for 18 years, and has written for "Dance Teacher" and "Dance Magazine." In 1979, Julie received SBDA's first Lifetime Achievement Award for her contribution to Dance Arts, and this year was honored as a Local Hero in the Independent.

Ronnie Haran Mellen worked in film production as an actress and as a producer. She is the owner of a local Production / Casting Company that has been involved with almost every major feature shot in Santa Barbara County since 1983.

Bob Scott was the owner of the community's classical music station, KDB, from 1971 to 2002, when the Santa Barbara Foundation acquired it. He is still active in its operations as music and program director.

Joyce Shaar was noted for her dramatic roles, but feels most privileged to have worked on television as a straight lady for some of our all time great comedians.

Dr. Jack Ullom was a music professor and Music Department chairperson at SBCC for over 30 years. He is presently the Dean of Fine Arts, English and Social Science. Dr. Ullom has also been a member of the Santa Barbara Symphony for 36 years.

Diana Vandervoort served for 25 years as Chairman of the Noches de Ronda shows during Fiesta. Her dedication to young talent enabled thousands of performers to entertain the community. She is a dance expert with a background in both ballet and Flamenco techniques.

West Coast Management Agency specializes in procuring talent for commercial and print work.

Larry Williams has appeared in over 30 productions at the Lobero, Garvin and UCSB Theaters.

Notes from some parents about the Talent Search:

Regarding the TV appearance: "The kids will be thrilled when I tell them, and so I'm very grateful."

"Thanks so much for offering the program yesterday. My daughter had a wonderful time! It is clearly inspiring for her music studies to feel so encouraged and have such a positive and welcoming experience."

"Wow You really worked hard on this! This is very exciting for all the participants and I think you have spearheaded a great idea into a very successful event. I am sure each year it will get easier. Thank you for being so kind."

"Even though I didn't win, it was a terrific experience." (from an 8 year old)

"We had a fabulous time yesterday, seeing old friends and meeting new ones. I find it personally inspiring to see the devotion of your group to making certain that art, music, and beauty continue to flourish in the world today. Thank you."

Note to Performers:

We encourage all performers to continue pursuing their dreams and developing their talent. If you would like information about our Scholarship program, please check our website during the application period of February - April 2006. If you would like another opportunity to join the Talent Search, sign up today for next time, at www.profant.org. Those who would like to assist our organization in any way are encouraged to send a note to JEProfant@aol.com or call (805) 682-8184.