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Headshots of Finalist [HERE](#)

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## ***The Music Center's 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Spotlight* Program Names 14 Grand Prize Finalists from Among Southern California's Most Talented High School Students**

**– Local Teens to Perform at The Music Center's Walt Disney Concert Hall as Part of the Culmination of the Nationally Recognized Arts Training and Scholarship Program –**

**– Finalists to Join the Ranks of Alumni Including Misty Copeland, Josh Groban and Adam Lambert, among Numerous Others –**

See page 4 for the complete list of finalists. Photos available [HERE](#).

**LOS ANGELES (April 30, 2019)** – [The Music Center](#) announced 14 future superstars as Grand Prize Finalists in [The Music Center's 31<sup>st</sup> annual Spotlight](#) (*Spotlight*) program, the performing arts organization's free nationally-acclaimed scholarship and arts training program. An important part of The Music Center's fundamental support for arts education, *Spotlight* is more than a competition; it provides Southern California high school students the opportunity to acquire the skills they need to pursue their dreams in the performing arts. Two Grand Prize Finalists were named in each of seven categories. They will receive \$5,000 scholarships and appear in a ticketed Grand Finale Performance, open to the public, at The Music Center's Walt Disney Concert Hall on June 4, 2019, at 7:00 p.m. The *Spotlight* Grand Prize Finalists are:

- **Acting:** Adina Aaron, 18, a senior at Los Angeles County High School for the Arts, and Daniel Velez, 18, a senior at Ramon C. Cortines High School (Los Angeles);
- **Ballet:** Petra Johnson, 14, a freshman at Inspire Charter School (Duarte), and Darrion Sellman, 14, a freshman at Opportunities for Learning (Reseda);
- **Non-Classical Dance:** Lilah Horton, 15, a sophomore at Orange County School of the Arts (Santa Ana), and Zack Sommer, 17, a junior at Canyon Crest Academy (San Diego);
- **Classical Voice:** Eilyssa MacLean, 17, a junior at Aliso Niguel High School (Aliso Viejo), and Lydia Brown, 17, a senior at Claremont High School (Upland);
- **Non-Classical Voice:** Jaden Lewis, 17, a senior at Valencia High School, and Sage McNeely, 18, a senior at John Burroughs High School (Burbank);

– more –

- **Classical Instrumental:** Tristan Paradee (piano), 18, a senior at Excellence in Education Academy (Burbank), and Yejin Ahn (clarinet), 19, a senior at Colburn Music Academy (Los Angeles); and
- **Jazz Instrumental:** Mark Beebe (saxophone), 17, a senior at Idyllwild Arts Academy, and Dario Bizio (bass), 17, a senior at Hamilton High School (Los Angeles)

Approximately 1,600 participants auditioned for *Spotlight* this year, with students representing more than 253 high schools, 195 cities and eight California counties, in acting, ballet, non-classical dance, classical voice, non-classical voice, classical instrumental and jazz instrumental categories. All applicants have the opportunity to attend the *Spotlight* Academy, a free day-long series of seminars and workshops led by outstanding professionals and arts educators. During the academy, students, parents and teachers learn about what it takes to pursue higher education and careers in the arts. Throughout the year-long *Spotlight* program, students present their work for feedback before panels of judges and are encouraged to partake in master classes; these performance opportunities offer the aspiring artist a rich, customized learning experience.

According to Rachel Moore, president and CEO of The Music Center, *The Music Center's Spotlight* program nurtures nascent talent into blossoming performers or even future arts administrators by preparing them for the road ahead. "High school is the ultimate crossroad of life, and *Spotlight* offers a vital step forward for those students dreaming of a performing arts career," said Moore. "Beyond providing invaluable mentorship and performance feedback on their artistry, *Spotlight* also primes participants with the intangibles such as how to afford and pay for college, what an instrumentalist might actually major in, how to employ the best audition and application strategies, and how to deal with both acceptance and rejection. Having a 'what's next' toolbox builds a foundation of confidence and self-assurance these young adults can use in realizing a high school dream."

"We're so impressed with this year's cadre of *Spotlight* finalists who range from high school freshmen to seniors," adds Jeri Gaile, director of The Music Center's *Spotlight* program. "The beauty of *Spotlight* is how the program's personalized training and guidance opens a realm of possibilities whether these teens seek the spotlight or not. They have the insight now to decide their path forward. We're excited to watch these stars shine even brighter in the future."

In addition to the Grand Prize Finalists, The Music Center also named an Honorable Mention in each category, awarding each individual with a \$1,000 scholarship. The Honorable Mentions include: Acting – Gerardo Navarro, 17, Ramon C. Cortines High School (Los Angeles); Ballet – Jessalyn Ward, 17, California Preparatory Academy (San Clemente); Non-Classical Dance – Jessalyn Ward, 17, California Preparatory Academy (San Clemente); Classical Voice – Grace Bernard, 17, Los Angeles County High School for the Arts; Non-Classical Voice – Allison Ye, 17, San Marino High School; Classical Instrumental –

Kevin Cho (piano), 15, West Ranch High School (Santa Clarita); and Jazz Instrumental – Dalton Hayse (piano), 18, Hamilton High School (Los Angeles).

*The Music Center's Spotlight* program has transformed the lives of more than 47,000 students across Southern California, distributing more than \$2 million in scholarships and cash awards to aspiring performers and artists since the program's launch in 1988. The curricula help students develop their performance abilities, learn about careers in arts management and receive valuable college preparedness and workforce readiness skills.

Numerous *Spotlight* participants have gone on to successful professional careers. Twenty 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. They 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 *Green Book* and *Dear White People*; Lindsay Mendez, Tony Award winner for her role in the Broadway revival of *Carousel*; Erin Mackey, star of Broadway's *Wicked*, *Sondheim on Sondheim*, *Anything Goes*, *Chaplin* and *Amazing Grace*; Yao Guang Zhai, Principal Clarinet of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra; Gerald Clayton, Grammy® Award-winning jazz recording artist; and many others.

Fredric M. Roberts is founding chairman of The Music Center's Spotlight program. The late Walter E. Grauman was the creator.

Tickets to the June 4, 2019, *Spotlight* Grand Finale Performance are \$20 and are on sale now at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion Box Office, 135 N. Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA, 90012; by calling (213) 972-0711; or by visiting [musiccenter.org/spotlightfinale](https://musiccenter.org/spotlightfinale).

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/spotlightawards](https://facebook.com/spotlightawards).

### **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 non-profit performing arts organization has two divisions: *The Music Center Ops*, which manages The Music Center's four theatres, an outdoor plaza and Grand Park on behalf of the County of Los Angeles; and *The Music Center Arts*, which curates a world-class dance series, *Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center*; produces and presents programming in other arts genres with a focus on engagement; and presents nationally recognized arts education programs. The Music Center is also home to four renowned resident companies – Center Theatre Group, the LA Master Chorale, the LA Opera and the LA Philharmonic. With The Music Center On Location,™ the

non-profit performing arts organization brings events and activities to locations outside of its Downtown Los Angeles campus. The Music Center also programs and manages Grand Park, a 12-acre adjacent greenspace, with year-round free programming. For more information, visit [musiccenter.org](http://musiccenter.org) Follow The Music Center on Facebook, and follow @MusicCenterLA on Instagram and Twitter.

## The Music Center’s 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Spotlight Program Grand Prize Finalists

Full Name	Program Name	Home City	School	Grade
Eilyssa MacLean	Classical Voice	Aliso Viejo	Aliso Niguel High School	11
Sage McNeely	Non-Classical Voice	Burbank	John Burroughs High School	12
Tristan Paradee	Classical Instrumental	Burbank	Excellence in Education Academy	12
Petra Johnson	Ballet	Culver City	Inspire Charter School	9
Mark Beebe	Jazz Instrumental	Idyllwild	Idyllwild Arts Academy	12
Adina Aaron	Acting	Los Angeles	Los Angeles County High School for the Arts - LACHSA	12
Daniel Velez	Acting	Los Angeles	Ramon C. Cortines High School	12
Dario Bizio	Jazz Instrumental	Los Angeles	Hamilton High School	12
Darrion Sellman	Ballet	Los Angeles	Opportunities for Learning - Reseda	9
Yejin Ahn	Classical Instrumental	Los Angeles	Colburn Music Academy	12
Lilah Horton	Non-Classical Dance	Santa Ana	Orange County School of the Arts - OCSA	10
Jaden Lewis	Non-Classical Voice	Santa Clarita	Valencia High School	12
Zack Sommer	Non-Classical Dance	Solana Beach	Canyon Crest Academy	11
Lydia Brown	Classical Voice	Upland	Claremont High School	12

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