

# Young Singers Shine in the Spotlight at Lamorinda Idol Finals

By Clare Varellas



Grades 3 - 5 soloist winner Elizabeth Becker Photos Ohlen Alexander

A long line of excited audience members stretched down the side of the Orinda Theatre Sept. 8 as they waited anxiously to hear 60 of Lamorinda's most talented young vocal artists in the eighth annual Lamorinda Idol finals.

This kind of enthusiasm is typical for the community singing competition for youth, previously known as Orinda Idol. The name changed this past year to reflect the participation of kids from all three cities in the area. Created by the Orinda Arts Council in 2006, the competition, originally modeled after American Idol, has grown larger and larger over the past eight years.

"Over the years we've added group categories to the individual singing categories, we've added workshops for the finalists, and we've broadened the event to welcome young people from Moraga and Lafayette as well as Orinda," said Lamorinda Idol chairman Steve Harwood.

This year's competition began May 16-18 when singers from around the area auditioned in front of judges who determined whether the performers would continue on to the September finals. At the finals, participants sang alone or in groups, could choose the song they were to perform, and had the opportunity to win in any of eight age-oriented categories.

For many participants and community members, the event has grown into a pleasurable and meaningful tradition.

"It is such a fun and participatory way to bring the arts to people of all ages and interests in Lamorinda," said Lamorinda Idol Publicity Committee co-chair Esther Becker. "And so much community builds up around the performers and their supporters. Certainly kids gain confidence as well as support and mentoring [from] their fellow participants, the organizers, and the workshop leaders."

And with so much musical talent concentrated into one competition,

there are bound to be some future singing stars in the mix every year.

"We definitely have seen [some of the participants] go on and do exciting things," said Lamorinda Idol co-founder and Orinda Arts Council Board president Susan Garell.

A total of nine singers were awarded for their excellence in different age categories following the finals, each very passionate about singing. Below are the stories of two of the winners, 11-year-old Elizabeth Becker and 16-year-old Tosca Maltzman.

### Elizabeth Becker, Grades 3-5 Soloist Category Winner

Elizabeth Becker was only nine years old when she took to the stage for her first Lamorinda Idol competition two years ago, and she remembers how anxious she felt.

"I was really nervous because I felt like everyone was so good and I was afraid of how I'd sound in comparison," said Becker.

And yet this year, Becker, now two years older, managed to win the third through fifth grade soloist category by executing her own rendition of the song "Astonishing" from "Little Women," the musical. The Orinda Intermediate School sixth grader says singing is definitely one of her passions, and has been since she learned all of the songs in the movie "The Sound of Music" at age 3.

"I learned all the songs and sang them over and over," said Becker. "Really, music just makes me feel good."

Despite the fierce competition at the Lamorinda Idol finals, Becker was happy that she found a way to get past her anxiety and to enjoy the experience of performing.

"When I was performing I was really nervous because all of the other singers in my category are really good singers," said Becker. "The final experience was definitely worth it, because I think all the hard work paid off." ... continued on page B4



Grades 6-8 group winner Arriana Glenn and Lindsey Wallace

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