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Young Singers Shine in the Spotlight at Lamorinda Idol Finals

By Clare Varellas



Grades 3 - 5 soloist winner Elizabeth Becker Photos Ohlen Alexander

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."

In addition to singing, Becker enjoys swimming for Orinda Aquatics, running for Orinda Intermediate School, and participating in her church group activities. She looks forward to continuing her singing career in the future.

Said Becker, "I would like to [sing in] school musicals, hopefully Lamorinda Idol, and maybe a summer musical theatre camp."

Tosca Maltzman, High School Soloist Category Winner

Sixteen-year-old Tosca Maltzman has certainly spent her share of time on stage. Having participated in five Lamorinda Idols, being a part of theater groups in and out of school, and managing her school's a cappella group have made the Miramonte High School junior an experienced veteran in the world of singing and acting.

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

Maybe this is the reason Maltzman was able to secure herself a win in the high school soloist category during the finals. Maltzman, who won last year's Audience Award (granted to the artist that receives the highest percentage of audience votes but is not a category winner), was elated to receive her first victory in a category this year.

"I felt nervous in an excited way and I tried to use that energy to elevate my performance," said Maltzman.

But unlike any other Lamorinda Idol winner, Maltzman was able to experience both the role of a participant and the role of an organizer of the event, as she also worked as an administrative assistant.

"Working as the administrative assistant for the program has given me a deep appreciation [of] the amount of work it takes to put on a production like this," said Maltzman. "I worked with a committee made up of amazing volunteers who were responsible for all of the facets of the show and everything leading up to it. I was lucky to have a job that supported what I love to do."

Maltzman says she will continue to sing and act, as these are two of her most prominent passions.

"I have been listening to music and singing since before I could talk," said Maltzman.

And the Lamorinda Idol 2013 Winners Are ...

More than 200 students from across the Lamorinda area auditioned for Lamorinda Idol this year, and after tallying the votes, the following students were announced as the Lamorinda Idol 2013 winners:

Grades K - 2 Soloist Category: Mia Polichio (Camino Pablo)

Grades 3 - 5 Soloist Category: Elizabeth Becker (Orinda Intermediate School)

Middle School Soloist Category: Leah Woodcox (Miramonte)

High School Soloist Category: Tosca Maltzman (Miramonte)

K-5 Group Category: US2: Kiera Glenn (Orinda Intermediate School) and Maggie Heiskell (St. Perpetua)

Grades 6-8 Group Category: Lindsey & Arriana: Arriana Glenn (Orinda Intermediate School) and Lindsey Wallace (Orinda Intermediate School)

Audience Award: Lleyton Allen (Camino Pablo)

Lamorinda Idol 2014 auditions will be held next spring. For details, visit http://www.orindaartscouncil.org/lamorinda_idol_winners.php.



Grades 6-8 group winner Arriana Glenn and Lindsey Wallace





Audience Award winner Lleyton Allen

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