

20 YOUNGARTS WINNERS NAMED 2018 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS IN THE ARTS

YoungArts Winners From 14 States and Representing Eight Artistic Disciplines Receive High Honor Bestowed to Talented High School Seniors

Michael McElroy to Direct Multidisciplinary Public Performance Featuring U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts

Performance and Accompanying Exhibition of Scholars' Photography, Visual Arts and Writing Will Take Place at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts June 25, 2018

MIAMI, FL (May 8, 2018) – The [National YoungArts Foundation](http://www.youngarts.org) (YoungArts) congratulates the 54th class of **U.S. Presidential Scholars**, with special acknowledgement to the **U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts**. The U.S. Presidential Scholars award—one of the nation's highest honors for high school students who exemplify academic excellence—is presented on behalf of the President of the United States and honors up to 161 graduating high school seniors of high potential each year. The 20 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts are all YoungArts winners, and were nominated by the organization to The White House Commission on Presidential Scholars and selected based on academic and artistic excellence, leadership qualities and community service.

The 2018 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts include actors, dancers, singers, classical musicians, filmmakers, visual artists, photographers and writers, and join an illustrious group of YoungArts and U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts alumni, including Tony Award-nominated performer and choreographer **Desmond Richardson**; Los Angeles Music Center President **Rachel S. Moore**; novelist and National Book Award Finalist **Allegra Goodman**; Grammy Award-nominated violinist **Jennifer Koh**; Bravo's "Work of Art" winner **Abdi Farah**; Obie Award-winning actress **Donna Lynne Champlin**; and RCA Records award-winning singer-songwriter and Grammy Award-nominated artist **Chris Young**.

"I want to congratulate this year's class of Presidential Scholars on their achievement and also thank their parents, teachers and other academic advisors who have helped guide them along the way," said U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. "These students have pushed themselves to be the best they can be, and I am certain that devotion will serve them well as they continue their individual learning journeys."

From June 24–26, the U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts will join the other 141 U.S. Presidential Scholars from across the country in Washington, D.C. for the annual **National Recognition Program**, during which all Scholars receive a Presidential Medallion presented on behalf of the President of the United States. On **June 25**, the Arts Scholars will present their work to the public at the **John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts** through a special performance at **8 p.m.** in **Concert Hall** titled "**A Salute to the 2018 U.S. Presidential Scholars**." The free multidisciplinary performance will celebrate all of this year's awardees and will be directed by Tony and Grammy Award-nominated actor and singer and 1985 YoungArts Winner in Theater **Michael McElroy**. That evening, an exhibition of works created by the recognized photographers, visual artists and writers will also be on view in the **Hall of Nations** until July 1.

"What an honor to direct these young artists as part of this incredible program that recognizes and showcases the next generation of great artists in the U.S.," said Michael McElroy. "As a YoungArts alumnus, I still remember the impact that early recognition made in my life and career, and I'm grateful to YoungArts and the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars and the U.S. Department of Education for encouraging these artists to pursue artistic careers and recognizing the importance of the arts in ensuring a culturally vibrant future."

“On behalf of YoungArts, I am so proud to congratulate this year’s U.S. Presidential Scholars. We are honored to be the sole nominating agency for the arts component of the esteemed U.S. Presidential Scholars Program,” said Carolina García Jayaram, YoungArts President and CEO. “The Scholars in the Arts promise to be our country’s next generation of great artists, creating groundbreaking works that inspire and push us to new cultural heights.”

The 2018 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts are:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Hometown, State</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>YoungArts Winner Year and Discipline</i>
James Balo	Miami, FL	Design & Architecture Senior High School	2018, Visual Arts
Aaron Choate	Lexington, KY	Lafayette Senior High School	2018, Dance
Natalie Choo	Cincinnati, OH	Seven Hills School	2018, Voice
Aidan Forster	Taylors, SC	South Carolina Governor’s School for the Arts and Humanities	2018, Writing
Nathan Ginter	Kalamazoo, MI	Interlochen Arts Academy	2018, Cinematic Arts
Elena Gonzalez	Cutler Bay, FL	New World School of the Arts	2018, Theater
Ishmael Gonzalez	Hialeah, FL	New World School of the Arts	2018, Theater
Jacqueline He	San Jose, CA	Harker School	2017, Writing
David Hou	Hawthorn Woods, IL	Adlai E. Stevenson High School	2018, Classical Music
Noah Lee	Oakland, NJ	Don Bosco Preparatory High School	2017, Classical Music
Sanna Legan	Los Angeles, CA	New Roads School	2018, Visual Arts
Xavier Lightfoot	Milwaukee, WI	Pius XI High School	2018, Photography
Anilee List	Los Angeles, CA	Los Angeles County High School for the Arts	2017, Voice
William McGregor	Malvern, PA	Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School	2018, Classical Music
Shreyah Mohanselman	New Albany, OH	Columbus Academy	2018, Dance
Ameya Okamoto	Portland, OR	Catlin Gabel School	2018, Visual Arts
Emir Price	Dallas, TX	Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts	2018, Theater
Julian Rhee	Brookfield, WI	Brookfield East High School	2018, Classical Music
Jace Weyant	Clemmons, NC	University of North Carolina School of the Arts	2018, Dance
Alisha Yi	Las Vegas, NV	Ed W. Clark High School	2017, Writing

**Interviews can be facilitated and images are available upon request.*

BECOMING A U.S. PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLAR IN THE ARTS

The first step to becoming a U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts is to apply to the National YoungArts Foundation, which is the nominating agency for this honor. To be eligible for the YoungArts program, applicants must be between the ages of 15–18 or in high school grades 10–12. To be further considered for nomination as a U.S. Presidential Scholar, applicants must be high school seniors and meet all of the U.S. Presidential Scholars requirements.

YoungArts winners demonstrating excellence in the visual, literary, performing or design arts are selected annually through a blind adjudication process. This year, YoungArts received approximately 8,000 applications and, from this pool, 757 YoungArts winners were selected. In January, approximately 166 Finalists from across the nation were invited to National YoungArts Week in Miami, where they participated in intensive master classes and workshops with internationally renowned artists and shared their work.

During National YoungArts Week, eligible participants are further evaluated, award levels are determined, and nominations are made for that year's U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts candidates. After a rigorous selection process, YoungArts nominates 60 candidates for an invitation to apply to the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. Finally, the Commission on Presidential Scholars selects 20 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts each year.

ABOUT U.S. PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS

In 1964, the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program was established by executive order of President Lyndon B. Johnson to recognize and honor the nation's top graduating high school seniors. In 1979, the program was extended to recognize students who demonstrated talent in the visual, creative and performing arts. In 2015, the program was again extended to recognize students who demonstrate ability and accomplishment in career and technical education fields.

Scholars are selected annually by the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars, appointed by the President, based on academic achievement, personal characteristics, leadership and service activities, and writing ability. This year, more than 5,000 candidates qualified for the 2018 program determined by outstanding performance on the College Board SAT and ACT exams, through nominations made by Chief State School Officers, partner recognition organizations or the National YoungArts Foundation.

Since its inception, the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program has honored more than 7,000 of the nation's high-performing students. During the National Recognition Program, scholars are brought to D.C. to receive a Presidential Medallion, which is given to honorees during the annual ceremony in Washington, D.C.

The 161 2018 U.S. Presidential Scholars are comprised of one young man and one young woman from each state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, and from U.S. families living abroad, as well as 15 chosen at-large, up to 20 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts, and up to 20 U.S. Presidential Scholars in Career and Technical Education.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL YOUNGARTS FOUNDATION

The National YoungArts Foundation (YoungArts) was established in 1981 by Lin and Ted Arison to identify and nurture the most accomplished young artists in the visual, literary, design and performing arts, and assist them at critical junctures in their educational and professional development. Through a wide range of annual programs, regular performances, and partnerships with some of the nation's leading cultural institutions, YoungArts aspires to create a strong community of alumni and a platform for a lifetime of encouragement, opportunity and support.

YoungArts' signature program is an application-based award for emerging artists ages 15–18 or in grades 10–12 from across the United States. Selected through a blind adjudication process, YoungArts winners receive valuable support, including financial awards of up to \$10,000, professional development and educational experiences working with renowned mentors—such as Debbie Allen, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Rebecca Walker, Frank Gehry, Jeff Koons, Wynton Marsalis, Salman Rushdie and Carrie Mae Weems—and performance and exhibition opportunities at some of the nation's leading cultural institutions, including the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (Washington, D.C.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), The Museum of Modern Art (New York) and New World Center (Miami). Additionally, YoungArts winners are eligible for nomination as a U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts, one of the nation's highest honors for high school students who exemplify academic and artistic excellence.

YoungArts winners become part of a thousands-strong alumni network of artists, which offers them additional professional opportunities throughout their careers. YoungArts alumni who have gone on to become leading professionals in their fields include actresses Viola Davis, Anna Gunn, Zuzanna Szadkowski and Kerry Washington; Broadway stars Raúl Esparza, Billy Porter, Andrew Rannells and Tony Yazbeck; recording artists Josh Groban, Judith Hill and Chris Young; Metropolitan Opera star Eric Owens; musicians Terence Blanchard, Gerald Clayton, Jennifer Koh and Elizabeth Roe; choreographers Camille A. Brown and Desmond Richardson; visual artists Daniel Arsham and Hernan Bas; internationally acclaimed multimedia artist Doug Aitken; New York Times bestselling author Sam Lipsyte; and Academy Award winners Doug Blush and Tarell A. McCraney.

For more information, visit youngarts.org, facebook.com/youngartsfoundation, instagram.com/youngarts or twitter.com/youngarts. To watch a brief video about YoungArts, [click here](#).