

NATIONAL YOUNGARTS FOUNDATION NOMINATES 2016 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS IN THE ARTS CANDIDATES

One of Highest Honors Bestowed to Talented High School Seniors

60 Outstanding Nominees from 20 States and Representing 10 Artistic Disciplines Selected on the Heels of National YoungArts Week

MIAMI, FL (February 2016) –The [National YoungArts Foundation \(YoungArts\)](#) today announced the nominees for the **2016 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts**, one of the nation’s highest honors for high school students. YoungArts is an important nominating agency for this high honor, and the 60 candidates, representing 20 states, the District of Columbia and 10 artistic disciplines, are all YoungArts Winners. The students were nominated to the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program for their artistic achievement, following the organization’s annual signature program, National YoungArts Week, which concluded in Miami on January 10.

The 60 candidates will be reviewed by the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars, which will select 20 high school seniors to be recognized as U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts for their academic and artistic accomplishments, leadership responsibilities, community service and outreach initiatives, and overall creativity. In June, the 20 Art Scholars will join the other 141 U.S. Presidential Scholars from across the country for the **National Recognition Program** in Washington, D.C. During the program, all Scholars will receive a Presidential Medallion presented on behalf of the President of the United States and participate in several other recognition activities. The 2016 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts will present their work at the **John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts** through a special exhibition and performance.

“YoungArts is thrilled to nominate these outstanding YoungArts Winners for this year’s U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts, as they have all gone above and beyond to become leaders in their schools and communities,” stated Lisa Leone, Vice President of Artistic Programs for YoungArts. “We are delighted to partner with the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars and the U.S. Department of Education once again to identify and celebrate the most accomplished young artists who embody creative and academic excellence, and serve as shining examples to all emerging talent committed to pursuing a career in the arts and changing our world.”

The 2016 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts nominees are:

- Courtney Allred, Washington
- Tehillah Alphonso, Nebraska
- Sein An, Pennsylvania
- Tiarra Bell, Pennsylvania
- Kalyn Berg, New York
- Dyanna Bohorques, New York
- Madeline Boreham, Texas
- Jared Brown, Texas
- Victoria Canal Tinius, Georgia
- Evan DeBenedetto, Connecticut
- Sekai Abeni Edwards, Oregon
- Ruwanthi Ekanayake, California
- Lindsay Emi, California
- Diana Eusebio, Florida
- Saxton Fisher, Texas
- Ethan Fuller, Florida
- Zlatomir Fung, Massachusetts
- Gabrielle Gorman, California
- Lydia Graham, Kentucky
- Julia Gutierrez del Barrio, California
- Catherine Hayman, California
- Lauryn Henry, New Jersey
- Whitney Hester, Texas
- Lauryn Hobbs, Ohio
- Ryan Hurley, Michigan
- Alexis Lehrman, Florida

- Geneva Lewis, California
- Rachel London, Maryland
- James McCarthy, New York
- Katerina McCrimmon, Florida
- Rhiannon McGavin, California
- Hana Mizuta, California
- Pavithra Nagarajan, California
- Dario Natarelli, New York
- Isabella Nilsson, Ohio
- Philip Norris, North Carolina
- Nushrat Nur, Florida
- Terri Ogwulumba, New York
- Griffin Olis, Michigan
- Aubree Oliverson, Utah
- Rachel Page, District of Columbia
- Chase Park, New Jersey
- Sarah Pippin, North Carolina
- Rebeca Posadas-Nava, Virginia
- Zachary Rapaport, Florida
- William Robinson, Kentucky
- Ben Ross, California
- Lucy Silbaugh, Pennsylvania
- Nicole Smith, California
- Audrey Spensley, Ohio
- Sean Stack, Florida
- Kaylin Sturtevant, Texas
- Jeremy Tai, California
- Kris Theorin, Pennsylvania
- Cornelius Tulloch, Florida
- Jonathan Wade, Florida
- Tammy Wei, New Jersey
- Nadia Wolff, Florida
- Katherine Woo, South Carolina
- Shoshana Zhang, Texas

**Photos and bios are available upon request. Interviews can be facilitated.*

The U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts nominees are actors, dancers, singers, classical and jazz musicians, photographers, filmmakers, visual artists, designers and writers. Once selected, the 2016 awardees will join an illustrious group of YoungArts 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**.

The 2016 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts, and details regarding the National Recognition Program and public festivities will be announced in the coming months. For additional information, please visit: <http://www.ed.gov/psp>

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 and 18 or in high school grades 10-12. To be further considered for a 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 more than 12,000 applications, and from this pool, nearly 800 YoungArts Winners were selected. In January, approximately 170 Finalists from across the nation were invited to National YoungArts Week in Miami, where they participated in a week of intensive master classes and workshops with internationally renowned artists, and shared their work through performances, readings, exhibitions and screenings that were open to the public.

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 5,500 candidates qualified for the 2016 program determined by outstanding performance on the College Board SAT and ACT exams, through nominations made by Chief State School Officers 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 flown to D.C. to receive a Presidential Medallion, which is given to honorees during the annual ceremony in Washington, D.C.

The 161 2016 U.S. Presidential Scholars will be 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, 20 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts, and 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 from a pool of more than an average of 11,000 applications (in 2015, the organization received a record-breaking number of more than 12,000 applications), YoungArts Winners receive valuable support, including financial awards of up to \$10,000, professional development and educational experiences working with renowned mentors—such as Mikhail Baryshnikov, Plácido Domingo, Frank Gehry, Jeff Koons, Wynton Marsalis, Robert Redford, Rebecca Walker and Bruce Weber—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 also 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 leaders 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 and Jennifer Koh; choreographer Desmond Richardson; visual artists Daniel Arsham and Hernan Bas; internationally acclaimed multimedia artist Doug Aitken; television writer, producer, and director Jenji Kohan; New York Times bestselling author Sam Lipsyte; and Academy Award winning filmmaker Doug Blush.

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

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