

## 2017 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS IN THE ARTS NOMINEES ANNOUNCED BY NATIONAL YOUNGARTS FOUNDATION

### One of Highest Honors Bestowed to Talented High School Seniors

### 60 Outstanding Nominees from 21 States and Representing 9 Artistic Disciplines Selected On the Heels of National YoungArts Week

**MIAMI, FL (February 1, 2017)** –The [National YoungArts Foundation \(YoungArts\)](#) today announced the nominees for the **2017 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts**, one of the nation’s highest honors for high school students who exemplify academic and artistic excellence. YoungArts is the sole nominating agency for this high honor and the 60 candidates, representing 21 states, the District of Columbia and 9 artistic disciplines, are all YoungArts Winners. The students have been nominated to the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program for their artistic achievement on the heels of the organization’s annual signature program, National YoungArts Week, which concluded in Miami on January 15.

The 60 candidates will be reviewed by the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars, which will ultimately 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 Arts Scholars will join the other 141 U.S. Presidential Scholars from across the country in Washington, D.C. for the **National Recognition Program**. During the program, all Scholars receive a Presidential Medallion presented on behalf of the President of the United States and participate in several recognition activities while in Washington, D.C. The 2017 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 proud to be the nominating agency for this high honor and congratulates all of this year’s nominees, their teachers and their parents,” said Carolina García Jayaram, YoungArts President and CEO. “Each year, we are amazed by the artistry of the students who come through our program, but this year raised the bar – the sheer talent and tenacity of the artists coming from all walks of life and every corner of the country was astounding, and we celebrate their work and look forward to what they will do next.”

The 2017 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts nominees are:

<i>Name</i>	<i>School City, State</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>YoungArts Winner Year and Discipline</i>
Grace Abbott	Minneapolis, MN	Southwest High School	2017, Visual Arts
Olivia Alger	Interlochen, MI	Interlochen Arts Academy	2016, Writing
John Andreas	Los Angeles, CA	Los Angeles County High School For Arts	2017, Cinematic Arts
Todd Baker	Dallas, TX	Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts	2016, Dance
Shreya Bhadriraju	Missouri City, TX	Elkins High School	2017, Voice
Blaire Bilton	Delray Beach, FL	American Heritage-Boca/Delray	2017, Theater
Jarren Blair	Hendersonville, TN	Beech High School	2017, Voice

Alexa Bleasdale-Curnutte	Interlochen, MI	Interlochen Arts Academy	2017, Writing
Catherine Camargo	Miami, FL	New World School Of The Arts	2017, Visual Arts
Alberto Checa	Miami, FL	New World School Of The Arts	2017, Visual Arts
Carissa Chen	Exeter, NH	Phillips Exeter Academy	2015, Writing
Karisa Chiu	Palatine, IL	Homeschool	2017, Classical Music
Julia Cooper	Midland, PA	Lincoln Park Performing Arts	2017, Theater
David Correa	Miami, FL	New World School Of The Arts	2017, Visual Arts
Elle Cox	Houston, TX	High School for the Performing and Visual Arts	2017, Visual Arts
Nicholas Cummings	Dallas, TX	Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts	2017, Dance
Adriana De La Torre	Miami, FL	New World School Of The Arts	2017, Visual Arts
Matteo Debole	Los Angeles, CA	Los Angeles County High School For Arts	2017, Voice
Micaela Diamond	New York, NY	Fiorello H. Laguardia High School Of Music & Art and Performing Arts	2017, Theater
Katherine Du	Greenwich, CT	Greenwich Academy	2017, Writing
Kali Duffy	Miami, FL	New World School Of The Arts	2017, Photography
Salvador Flores	Galena Park, TX	Galena Park High School	2017, Classical Music
Samuel Gee	Greenville, SC	South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts & Humanities	2017, Writing
Jeremy Gill	Interlochen, MI	Interlochen Arts Academy	2017, Theater
Jayden Gillespie	San Diego, CA	Canyon Crest Academy	2017, Cinematic Arts
Stephanie Godsava	Allen, TX	Allen High School	2017, Dance
Harry Goldstein	Los Angeles, CA	Los Angeles County High School For Arts	2017, Cinematic Arts
Ricky Goodwyn, Jr.	Windsor, VA	Windsor High School	2017, Voice
Aaron Greenberg	New York, NY	Fiorello H. Laguardia High School Of Music & Art and Performing Arts	2017, Theater
Andrea Guo	Chicago, IL	Homeschool	2017, Classical Music
Nicole Ishimaru	Bloomington, IN	Indiana University High School Online	2015, Dance
Korri Lampedusa	Miami, FL	Design & Architecture Senior High	2017, Design Arts
Jamiya Leach	Greenville, SC	South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts & Humanities	2017, Writing
Derek Louie	New York, NY	Professional Children's School	2016, Classical Music
Kaylin Maggard	Columbia, MO	Columbia-Rock Bridge Senior High School	2017, Dance
Jessica McCallum	Central, SC	D. W. Daniel High School	2017, Cinematic Arts
Andrea Medina	Richmond, VA	Maggie L Walker Governors School	2017, Visual Arts
Chester Milton	Los Angeles, CA	Los Angeles County High School For Arts	2016, Cinematic Arts
Juliana Missano	Bloomsburg, PA	Keystone National High School	2017, Dance
Lumia Nocito	New York, NY	Dalton School	2016, Photography
Evren Ozel	Natick, MA	Walnut Hill School For The Arts	2016, Classical Music
Mia Pak	Salinas, CA	North Monterey County Center For Independent Study	2016, Theater
Elizabeth Pesavento	Interlochen, MI	Interlochen Arts Academy	2016, Classical Music
Isabella Pete	North Canton, OH	Hoover High School	2017, Dance

Joshua Reinier	San Mateo, CA	The Nueva Upper School	2015, Voice
Kele Roberson	Austin, TX	The Austin School For The Performing and Visual Arts	2017, Dance
Hunter Schafer	Winston Salem, NC	University of North Carolina School of the Arts	2017, Design Arts
Aidan Schaffert	St. Petersburg, FL	Gibbs Senior High School	2017, Visual Arts
Samuel Siegel	San Francisco, CA	Independence High School	2016, Voice
Amir Siraj	Brookline, MA	Brookline High School	2017, Classical Music
Lianah Sta. Ana	Farmingdale, NJ	Howell High School	2016, Theater
Meilan Steimle	San Jose, CA	Harker School	2017, Writing
Kathryn Stenberg	West Palm Beach, FL	Alexander W. Dreyfoos Junior School	2017, Visual Arts
Clayton Stephenson	New York, NY	Dalton School	2017, Classical Music
Vivian Valls	Miami, FL	Miami Arts Charter School	2017, Voice
Regina Vestuti	Providence, RI	Classical High School	2016, Design Arts
Benjamin Wenzelberg	Tenafly, NJ	Tenafly High School	2017, Voice
Wade Winslow	Los Angeles, CA	Ramón C. Cortines School of Visual and Performing Arts	2016, Visual Arts
Meghan Wright	Rockville, MD	Thomas Sprigg Wootton High School	2017, Theater
Elliot Wu	San Jose, CA	Valley Christian High School	2017, Classical Music

*\* Interviews can be facilitated upon request.*

The U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts nominees are actors, dancers, singers, classical musicians, photographers, filmmakers, visual artists, designers and writers. Once selected, the 2017 awardees will join an illustrious group of YoungArts and U.S. Presidential Scholars 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**.

The 2017 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 a record number of applications, and from this pool, 691 YoungArts Winners were selected. In January, approximately 160 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 5,000 candidates qualified for the 2017 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 flown to D.C. to receive a Presidential Medallion, which is given to honorees during the annual ceremony in Washington, D.C.

The 161 2017 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, Plácido Domingo, 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-winning filmmaker Doug Blush.

Carnival Foundation is the YoungArts National Premier Sponsor.

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

# ##