

**TWENTY NATIONAL YOUNGARTS FOUNDATION WINNERS  
NAMED 2015 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS IN THE ARTS****High Honor Bestowed to Talented High School Seniors Representing 7 Artistic Disciplines**

**Debbie Allen, Three-time Emmy Award Winner, Drama Desk Award Winner, Olivier Award Winner, Actress, Dancer, Choreographer, Director and Producer, and Former Member of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, to Direct U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts in Dance, Theater, Music and Voice in a Public Performance at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts celebrating the accomplishments of 141 Scholars from across the U.S.**

**Visual & Design Arts and Writing Scholars' Work on View in the  
John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Hall of Nations**

**MIAMI, FL (May 4, 2015)** –The [National YoungArts Foundation \(YoungArts\)](#) congratulates the 51<sup>st</sup> class of **U.S. Presidential Scholars**, announced today by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. The 20 Scholars in the Arts, all YoungArts Winners, were nominated to The White House Commission on Presidential Scholars by YoungArts for their artistic achievement, and then selected based on academic achievement, personal characteristics and leadership and service activities. The award, presented on behalf of the **President of the United States**, is one of the nation's highest honors for high school students and symbolically honors all graduating high school seniors of high potential. Each year, up to 141 high school seniors are recognized as U.S. Presidential Scholars.

The 2015 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts are dancers, classical musicians, actors, visual and design artists, singers and writers. They join an illustrious group which includes Tony Award-nominated dancer and choreographer **Desmond Richardson**; American Ballet Theatre Chief Executive Officer **Rachel 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**.

"Presidential Scholars demonstrate the accomplishments that can be made when students challenge themselves, set the highest standards, and commit themselves to excellence," U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said. "These scholars are poised to make their mark on our nation in every field imaginable: the arts and humanities, science and technology, law and medicine, business and finance, education and government—to name a few. Their academic and artistic achievements reflect a sense of purpose that we should seek to instill in all students to prepare them for college, careers, civic responsibilities, and the challenges of today's job market."

During the National Recognition Program from **June 21-23, 2015**, all Scholars will be honored in Washington, D.C. Each Scholar will be presented with the Presidential Scholar Medallion at an award ceremony on June 21.

On **Monday, June 22** at the **John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts**, an exhibition of the works of the recognized visual artists and writers will be on view at the **Hall of Nations**. At **8:00pm** in the **Concert Hall**, the U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts specializing in dance, theater, music and voice will participate in "**A Salute to the 2015 U.S. Presidential Scholars**," a free public performance that celebrates all of the awardees, directed by three-time Emmy Award-winning actress, Drama Desk Award Winner, Olivier Award Winner, actress, dancer, choreographer, director and producer, and former member of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, **Debbie Allen**.

"As a former member of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities and a YoungArts Master Teacher, I am honored to help celebrate and showcase the talents of the 2015 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts," said Debbie Allen. "I have experienced firsthand the ability of the arts to lift communities and I am grateful to the National YoungArts Foundation and the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars for the work that they do to support young artists and to encourage them to pursue careers in the arts. I look forward to meeting and working with this year's Scholars."

The 2015 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts are\*:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Hometown</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>YoungArts Winner Year and Discipline</i>
Adam Bernstein	Los Angeles, CA	Los Angeles County High School for the Arts	2013 Winner in Dance/Ballet
Kevin Broom	McLean, VA	Thomas Jefferson High School for Science & Technology	2013 Winner in Music/Euphonium
Jennifer Choi	Rancho Palos Verdes, CA	Palos Verdes High School	2015 Winner in Visual Arts
Oonagh Davis	Harrison, OH	Interlochen Arts Academy	2014 Winner in Design Arts
Claire Dickson	Medford, MA	Home School	2014 Winner in Voice/Jazz
Mark Fleuridor	Miami, FL	Miami Arts Charter School	2015 Winner in Visual Arts
Victoria Gebert	Princeton, NJ	Princeton High School	2014 Winner in Visual Arts
Sydney Lee	Oakland, NJ	Ramapo High School	2015 Winner in Music/Violoncello
Charles Lilley	Olney, MD	DeMatha Catholic High School for Boys	2015 Winner in Music/Saxophone
Antonia Matias-Bell	San Clemente, CA	Orange County High School of the Arts	2015 Winner in Writing/Poetry
Julia McDermott	Manhattan Beach, CA	Mira Costa High School	2014 Winner in Theater/Musical

Daniela O'Neil	Wellington, FL	Alexander W. Dryfoos School of the Arts	2015 Winner in Dance/Ballet & Modern
Sangbin Park	Haverford, PA	Harrington High School	2014 Winner in Music/Violoncello
Anagha Prasanna	Elizabeth, NJ	Academy for Allied Health Science	2015 Winner in Dance/Classical Indian
Christina Qiu	Livingston, NJ	Livingston High School	2014 Winner in Writing/Short Story
Brianna Ray	Orem, UT	Timpanogos High School	2015 Winner in Voice/Singer/Songwriter
Javier Spivey	New York, NY	Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts	2015 Winner in Theater/Musical
Oriana Tang	Livingston, NJ	Livingston High School	2015 Winner in Writing/Short Story & Poetry
Adriane Tharp	Adamsville, AL	Alabama School of Fine Arts	2015 Winner in Writing/Creative Non-Fiction
Dominique Thorne	Brooklyn, NY	Professional Performing Arts School	2015 Winner in Theater/Spoken

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

From **June 15 to 19 and 21 to 22**, leading up to the National Recognition Program, YoungArts will present its seven night performance series [YoungArts@KennedyCenter on Millennium Stage](#), featuring YoungArts Alumni as well as U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts Alumni. Performance highlights include *Home, Again*, a play written by **Danny Rothchild**; a classical Indian dance performance by **Ranjani Murthy**; a classical piano performance by **Joel Fan**; *A Jazz Sound*, a jazz quartet led by **Teo Avery**; *Shape Dance* by contemporary dance artist **Brittany Bailey**; the **Chicago Harp Quartet** led by **Marguerite Williams**; and *Lost & Found*, a singer/songwriter showcase with **Tyne Freeman, Miranda Scott, Kelley Kessell, Melissa Goldstein** and **Jack Schunk**. These free performances begin at 6pm, and no RSVP or tickets are required.

### **U.S. PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS IN THE ARTS PUBLIC EVENTS**

#### **Monday, June 22, 2015**

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts  
2700 F Street NW, Washington, D.C.

#### **Exhibition of Artwork and Writing**

*Exhibition of Artwork and Writing by the 2015 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts*

John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Hall of Nations

*No RSVP or tickets required.*

### **8:00 p.m. / A Salute to the 2015 U.S. Presidential Scholars**

*An Evening of Performances by the 2015 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts Directed by Debbie Allen*

John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Concert Hall

*Event is FREE and open to the public, but tickets are required.*

To reserve tickets, call the U.S. Presidential Scholars line after **June 9 and before June 17** at (202) 401-0961 or email [presidential.scholars@ed.gov](mailto:presidential.scholars@ed.gov).

General public tickets can be picked up at the U.S. Presidential Scholars Will Call table in front of the Kennedy Center Concert Hall on **Monday, June 22**, starting at 6:45 p.m. Tickets not picked up by 7:45 p.m. will be released on a first-come, first-served basis.

The performance at the Kennedy Center will be streamed live on YoungArts' website ([www.youngarts.org](http://www.youngarts.org)).

### **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 (as of December 1, 2015). 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. The 2016 YoungArts application is currently open through October 16, 2015 and available online at <http://www.youngarts.org/apply>.

YoungArts Winners demonstrating excellence in the visual, literary, performing or design arts are selected annually through a blind adjudication process. Each year, YoungArts receives more than 11,000 applications. From this pool, close to 800 YoungArts Winners are selected, and approximately 170 Finalists from across the nation are invited to National YoungArts Week in Miami each January, where they participate in a week of intensive master classes and workshops with internationally renowned artists, and have the opportunity to share their work in performances, readings, exhibitions and screenings that are 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.

After a rigorous adjudication 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.

If students have any questions, they can reach programming staff at (305) 377-1140 or [apply@youngarts.org](mailto:apply@youngarts.org).

### **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.

Scholars are selected annually by the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars, whose members are appointed by the President, based on academic success, artistic excellence, essays, school evaluations and transcripts, as well as evidence of community service, leadership, and demonstrated commitment to high ideals. This year, more than 3,900 candidates qualified for the 2015 program determined by outstanding performance on the College Board SAT and ACT exams and 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 6,500 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 2015 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 and 20 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts.

#### **ABOUT THE NATIONAL YOUNGARTS FOUNDATION**

The National YoungArts Foundation (YoungArts) was established in 1981 by Lin and Ted Arison to identify and support the next generation of artists in the visual, literary, design and performing arts; assist them at critical junctures in their educational and professional development; and raise appreciation for the arts in American society. Each year, there are approximately 11,000 applications to YoungArts from 15-18 year old (or grades 10-12) artists, and from these, approximately 800 winners are selected.

YoungArts provides these emerging artists with life-changing experiences and validation by renowned mentors, access to significant scholarships, national recognition and other opportunities at critical junctures throughout their careers to help ensure that the nation's most outstanding emerging artists are encouraged to pursue careers in the arts. To date, YoungArts has honored more than 20,000 alumni, including Doug Aitken, Josh Groban, Jenji Kohan, Desmond Richardson and Kerry Washington, with over \$12 million in monetary awards; facilitated in excess of \$60 million in college scholarship opportunities in the past two years; and enabled its participants to work with master teachers who are among the most distinguished artists in the world, such as Marina Abramović, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Plácido Domingo, Zaha Hadid, Jeff Koons, Robert Redford and Bruce Weber.

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](#).

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