



NFAA Encourages Arts Students to Follow Their Dreams

BY LEON M. RUBIN

You're probably familiar with Vanessa Williams, the Tony and Grammy Award-nominated actress, singer and former Miss America.

You probably *haven't* heard of Courtney Clarkson or Trenard Mobley (yet). But remember their names, because they're bright young stars in our nation's cultural firmament. And, like Ms. Williams, they have been beneficiaries of the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts' (NFAA) annual quest to identify young people with a passion for the arts – and then to help them find the means to pursue their dreams.

Created in 1981 by the late Ted Arison, founder of Carnival Cruise Lines, and his wife, Lin, NFAA is celebrating its 25th anniversary in January with a gala performance and fundraising event in Miami. NFAA will present its First Annual Alumni Award to Williams, while acclaimed conductor Michael Tilson-Thomas will receive the Sixth Annual Arison Award in recognition of his achievements.

But the spotlight will also shine on 160 high school seniors from across the country who will be attending NFAA's annual ARTS Week. Representing nine distinct disciplines within the performing, literary and visual arts, these young people will participate in workshops, master classes and personal adjudications culminating in the opportunity to receive financial awards as large as \$10,000.

Through its first quarter of a century, more than 150,000 high school

students have applied to NFAA's Arts Recognition and Talent Search® (ARTS) program. During that time, approximately 50 Broward County students have been chosen as Finalists (qualifying them to participate in ARTS Week) or have received Honorable Mention or Merit Awards. Two of the most recent Finalists from the County are the aforementioned Mobley and Clarkson – both of whom are dancers.

Mobley, who lives in Miramar and attends the New World School of the Arts College in Miami, actually was recognized twice by NFAA. He received an Honorable Mention in Dance/Modern in 2004 and then returned as a Finalist in 2005, when he was judged a Level III (\$1,000) Winner during ARTS Week.

"It meant a lot to me," Mobley says. "I've only been dancing for four years. It reinforced that it's never too late to pursue what you believe is destined for you. With a little more hard work you can get anywhere in

life." Mobley has already apprenticed with the Philadelphia Dance Company, Philadanco!, and worked with a number of prominent choreographers. Ultimately, he says, his sights are set on Broadway.

Clarkson, meanwhile, is already living her dream: she's performing in her second season with the San Francisco Ballet. A 2004 Level I (\$3,000) ARTS Week winner in Dance/Ballet, she still bubbles with enthusiasm as she recalls the time in Miami. "It was a really rewarding experience. Everyone was so encouraging and willing to help each other," she notes. "It was so inspiring to be around my peers who were so dedicated to their art form.

"I left with a new perspective that you can be encouraging and willing to help each other," she continues. "I approached all my auditions with the attitude that anything can happen." Despite being told that, at 5-feet-10, she was too tall for ballet, the former Coral Springs resident got the job in San Francisco following her

2006 NFAA Winners Announced

Broward County winners, announced December 1, include:

Barbara Greenberg, Davie – Merit Winner in Writing

Lili Gu, Weston – Merit Winner in Writing

Alana Barnett-Adkins, Miramar – Honorable Mention
Winner in Theater/Spoken Only

Samantha Benoit, Fort Lauderdale – Merit Winner in Dance/Ballet

Krista Ettinger, Hollywood – Finalist in Dance/Ballet



Courtney Clarkson

graduation from North Carolina School of the Arts. "It definitely was a dream come true," she says.

(Another local connection can be found in the person of Ricardo Zulueta, the Broward Cultural Division's new Public Art and Design Administrator, who was the recipient of an NFAA fellowship in photography in the early 1990s.)

Encouraging talented students is what NFAA is all about, observes Dr. William H. Banchs, the nonprofit organization's president. "Clearly, the arts are the common language of every generation, and it gives us great pleasure to continue to help empower them for America's future. It's a way of telling these young people that they are really outstanding on a national level and that they have the potential for making important contributions in their art form."

Banchs notes that while there are nearly always one or two Finalists from Broward County in each year's ARTS Week class, NFAA would like more students from the County to apply. Information can be found at www.nfaa.org.

"So much attention is paid to academics and athletics. This is the only program that affords that kind of attention to the arts," Banchs states. "It's like going to the Olympics. This program has changed the course of many young people's lives." ★

Leon M. Rubin is editorial director of Cultural Quarterly.

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combining our financial contributions, our members could accomplish far more for the arts than any of us could do individually. We wanted to build audiences and appreciation for the arts, so we started luncheon programs that feature up-to-the-minute details about "what's new" in the arts in our community. We are just into our third season and, thanks to the hard work of our members, we are a success story!

The exciting thing is to see the impact that we have made in such a short time. With an all-volunteer staff, the hours that our dedicated members are logging are very impressive! We give 100 percent of that back to the community. Members are joining grant teams and constantly learning about the arts and cultural programs in the community. The County is benefiting because new and innovative programs are being sponsored.

Francie Bishop Good is an award-winning visual artist and one of the founders of Funding Arts Broward! She is married to David Horvitz. She served on the Broward Cultural Council's Public Art and Design Committee from 2000-2004.

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tion, and is a member of the American Association of Museums, the National Art Education Association and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

► **Maestro James Brooks-Bruzzese**, director of the internationally acclaimed Symphony of the Americas, was honored with the



Maestro James Brooks-Bruzzese

2005 Hispanic Heritage Award for the Arts on October 24 at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington. Maestro Brooks-Bruzzese is the first Hispanic to successfully tour the former Soviet Union and conduct at the famed Vigado Theater in Budapest, the prestigious Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires. He is also the first Hispanic to bring music education programs from the United States to young children in Latin America. As part of the celebration, Maestro Brooks-Bruzzese opened the awards ceremony by leading a performance featuring members of the Symphony of the Americas and the National Symphony Orchestra.

Correction:

A caption accompanying the Ashanti 10th anniversary story of the Fall 2005 Cultural Quarterly mistakenly identified the person in the photo at the top of page 13 as Linda Houston-Jones, rather than Anita Macbeth. We apologize for the error. ★