

Varsity Arts Artists of the Week: Nicole Dostanic and Kim Nguyen

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Singer Nicole Dostanic, 17, of Irvine has been invited to perform at Carnegie Hall in December as part of the international American Protégé competition. She will sing in the opera and musical theater categories. JEFF ANTENORE, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

By STAFF REPORT

For two Orange County singers, this year represents landmark performance opportunities. Both have been chosen to sing at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

Nicole Dostanic of Irvine will perform a solo in the international American Protégé singing competition's winners' recital. She was chosen to sing in the opera and musical theater categories and will fly to New York in December for her performances.

Kim Nguyen, also of Irvine, will sing in February as a member of the Honors Concert Choir in the 2016 Honors Performance Series. She was one of 750 finalists selected from 18,000 applicants worldwide

Name: Nicole Dostanic

School: Woodbridge High School

Grade: 12

Hometown: Irvine

How did you get involved in music? For as long as I can remember, I was always surrounded by music at home. My mom fed my interest in singing by enrolling me in piano/singing lessons and had me join our church choir. I am fortunate to have an extremely supportive family. Their love, encouragement and sacrifice inspires and motivates me. They are my favorite audience.

What is your favorite song to sing? One particular song that I enjoy singing is "Lascia Ch'io Pianga" from the opera "Rinaldo" by George Frideric Handel. I like the sound and flow of Italian language, which makes singing Italian songs fun.

Who have been your influences? Did you have a mentor in your development as a singer? If so, how did they help you? Gorjana Zekic, my Serbian Orthodox church choir director, opened the door to the world of music for me when I was 12 by accepting me in her adult choir. Gorjana taught me singing and music theory basics and also helped transition me to more serious vocal training with renowned opera singer and music instructor Dubravka Zubovic. Dubravka is a fantastic voice instructor and mentor, with a great passion for music, singing techniques and foreign language pronunciations. She inspires me to keep focused and strive for performance perfection.

What inspires you? Amazing performances by famous opera singers, stage singers and popular bands inspire me to work harder and reach for the stars.

Other than music, are you involved in any other activities? If yes, what are they? School keeps me busy. Besides singing in one of the school's top choirs, the Entertainers, I'm also on the varsity tennis team.

Outside school I like playing piano and studying voice. For the past six years, I've been a student of two vocal music programs. I'm involved with a California program, Certificate of Merit, and an International program, Associated Board of the Royal Schools in Music, based in London. Training consists of music theory, aural testing, ear training and singing. This year I completed both programs with high marks, which qualifies me to perform with other recognized students at both programs' annual conventions.

What do you get out of singing? Singing is fun and it makes me happy. I was always sung to as a little girl. Those memories and lullabies are childhood souvenirs I'll always cherish, and they helped mold me into the person I am today. Singing to others lets me share that feeling of joy I experienced as a child. I love to sing, share emotions with my audience and, hopefully, put a smile on their faces.

How do the arts figure into your long-term goals? I would like to pursue a career in singing and performing by furthering my musical education. I enjoy working and being around talented people. There are no other thrills that compare to being on stage in front of a live audience.

What is the best advice you have received? Be yourself and have fun, but don't just sing it ... feel it. Own it. Share it. Like you do a story or a worry with a close friend. Make the audience feel like it is that friend.

Do you have any other thoughts about being a singer that you would like to share with us? I find myself applying the same techniques I use to achieve my musical goals in other aspects of my life. Sure, not all my goals are as fun as singing, but I'm doing my best to achieve them all with dedication, determination and a smile.

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