

YOUNG TALENT BIG DREAMS  
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**ACTORS' PLAYHOUSE AT THE MIRACLE THEATRE  
AND THE CHILDREN'S TRUST ANNOUNCE THE WINNERS OF  
2023 YOUNG TALENT BIG DREAMS COMPETITION**

**CORAL GABLES, FL – May 24, 2023** – Actors' Playhouse at the Miracle Theatre, together with presenting sponsor The Children's Trust, are proud to announce the 2023 winners of **Young Talent Big Dreams**, the most widespread, local **FREE** youth talent competition in Miami-Dade County. Nicole Becker, 14, from Miami Arts Studio 6-12 @ Zelda Glazer and Emma Van Assche, 13, from International Studies Charter School, were the Overall Grant Prize Winners. They took home \$500 in cash provided by Actors' Playhouse, and four tickets to Universal Orlando along with a hotel stay for two nights courtesy of WSVN 7News.

A marathon of preliminary and semifinal competitions for student performers ages 8-17 culminated in the finals held on Saturday, May 13, 2023, at the Miracle Theatre. Prizes ranged from cash awards, master classes with industry professionals and performance opportunities to performing arts scholarships sponsored by SouthState Bank and the Coral Gables Rotary Club. Hundreds of hopeful contestants attended six preliminary auditions held over the past three months in distinct geographic neighborhoods including the Miracle Theatre in Coral Gables, the

Dennis C. Moss Cultural Arts Center in Cutler Bay, Sandrell Rivers Theater in Liberty City, and Miami Arts Studio 6-12 @ Zelda Glazer in Kendale Lakes. Participation was free and was specifically for residents of Miami-Dade County. The competition featured a total of six individual categories: pop/rock/rap vocals, musical theatre/jazz standards/classical vocals, dance, musical instrument, original spoken word, and original vocal and/or instrumental composition. Group categories (six or fewer members) included dance, musical instrument/bands and vocal groups.

Semifinals and finals were held before live audiences; up to five acts in each individual category and up to three acts in each group category advanced to the finals, where judges selected a winner in each category as well as a grand prize honoree.

"The amazing talent among Miami-Dade County's young people is inspirational," said Actors' Playhouse Executive Producing Director Barbara S. Stein. "Actors' Playhouse is proud to be part of nurturing young performers so that they can continue to soar in their experiences, whether or not it be in the performing arts or other meaningful careers. We are glad the individuals who participate all work hard to succeed, and if they do not win placement in one year, they return the next year striving for first place. Partnering with The Children's Trust is part of a community-wide effort to reach out to all young people across Miami-Dade County in this one-of-a-kind talent contest."

"I want to congratulate all the winners of this year's Young Talent Big Dreams Competition. Year after year this event demonstrates the incredible talent in Miami-Dade County," said James Haj, resident and CEO of The Children's Trust. "We are a vibrant community that supports the arts, and it was fantastic to see everyone's talent on display."

Young Talent Big Dreams follows the popular TV talent show model; judges have included a host of industry professionals from the performing arts community. Judging the May 13 finals were David Arisco, artistic director, Actors' Playhouse at the Miracle Theatre; Howard Cohen, breaking news reporter, the *Miami Herald*; Kerine Jean-Pierre, professional dancer, choreographer, teacher and actor; Shamele Jenkins, artistic director of Lip, Tongue & Ear Poetry Productions and executive director/CEO of the Miami-Dade County Foster & Adoptive Parent Association; and Ruby Romero-Issaev, executive director/CEO of Arts Ballet Theatre of Florida.

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**2023 YOUNG TALENT BIG DREAMS CONTEST WINNERS:**

**Group Vocal and Overall Grand Prize Winner**

Nicole & Emma

Nicole Becker, 14, Miami Arts Studio 6-12 @ Zelda Glazer and Emma Van Assche, 13,  
International Studies Charter School

**Individual Dance Winner**

Daniel Rodriguez, 9, iMater Academy Elementary School

**Individual Original Composition Winner**

Julieta Valle, 11, Homeschool

**Individual Vocal – Broadway/Jazz/Classical Winner**

Ciara Martinez, 16, New World School of the Arts

**Individual Vocal – Pop/Rock/Rap Winner**

Shantel Ruiz, 11, Norma Butler Bossard Elementary School

**Individual Original Spoken Word Winner**

Nailah Robinson, 17, Miami Norland Senior High School

**Individual Musical Instrument Winner**

Drumongus (Angel Cerra), 12, South Miami Middle School

**Group Dance Winner**

AP Mays Pointe Team

Emelyn Jarquin, 11; Lorena Lacerda, 14; Emily Luna-Martinez, 16; Luis Miranda, 17; Hayley  
Riley, 13; Nyla Smith, 14; all students of Arthur & Polly Mays Conservatory of the Arts

**Group Musical Instrument/Bands Winner**

Headrush

Zoe Assis, 16 and Julian Quintero, 16 of True North Classical Academy and Sebastián De  
Varona, 17 and Hugh La Fontisee, 17 of Westminster Christian School

For more information, visit [www.actorsplayhouse.org](http://www.actorsplayhouse.org). To learn more about The Children's Trust,  
please visit [www.TheChildrensTrust.org](http://www.TheChildrensTrust.org).

*On-camera and in-person interviews available with Actors' Playhouse, The Children's Trust,  
contestants and their parents.*

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**About Actors' Playhouse at the Miracle Theatre**

Actors' Playhouse is an award-winning nonprofit regional professional theatre company celebrating 35 years of artistic excellence. Located in the historic Miracle Theatre on Miracle Mile in downtown Coral Gables, Actors' Playhouse is a Florida Presenting Cultural Organization and one of 13 major cultural institutions in Miami-Dade County. The company produces five Mainstage and four professional Children's Theatre productions annually, a year-round Theatre Conservatory and Summer Camp Program, educational arts outreach programs, and the Young Talent Big Dreams countywide youth talent contest in partnership with The Children's Trust. To learn more about Actors' Playhouse, visit [www.actorsplayhouse.org](http://www.actorsplayhouse.org)

**About The Children's Trust**

The Children's Trust is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. For two decades, The Trust has helped improve the lives of all children and families in Miami-Dade County. Among its initiatives and programs, The Trust has a free, monthly Book Club for children from birth to 5 years old, offers free parenting workshops as part of its Parent Club initiative, and funds hundreds of programs to help children grow, learn and thrive. Visit [www.thechildrenstrust.org](http://www.thechildrenstrust.org) to learn more.

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