

# Performers vie for chance to shine

BY LAYLA GARMS  
THE CHRONICLE

The lighthearted banter in the hallway outside the audition room dropped to barely a whisper as 12-year-old Nicholas Brown's clear, bright voice rang out just beyond the doors at the Arts Council Theatre Tuesday night.

Fellow candidates for the North Carolina Black Reparatory Company's first-ever Marvtastic Talent Extravaganza paused to hear the Paisley Magnet School sixth grader overcome his walking pneumonia to belt out an impressive version of the late Whitney Houston's "I Look to You."

Nicholas, who took home the third place award in the 2011 National Black Theatre Festival's talent showcase, was one of more than a dozen locals who came out to wow NCBRC officials Mabel Robinson, Gerry Patton and Sylvia Sprinkle-Hamlin with song, dance and spoken word, in hopes of landing a slot in the Extravaganza, slated for June 1-3. The winner of the event will pocket \$500 and perform during the 2013 National Black Theatre Festival. Patton, the NCBRC's executive director, said she conceived of the contest to highlight the Twin City's wealth of local talent.

"We have all this talent in this community and I feel that they're just waiting for an opportunity to be seen and heard," she remarked. "We just wanted to make that a reality."

Twenty-four year-old Shirika X showcased her unique blend of African and hip hop dance.

"I'm very inspired by the hip hop movement, as well as the African dance," explained Shirika. "In order to connect with people of different generations, I like to combine hip hop with the African dancing."

She was out of breath but grinning from ear to ear after her audition.

Singer/songwriter Monica Clark and her fiancée Tika Douthit gave their hearts and souls during an impassioned performance as the duo Klevah Flavah. Clark banged out an



Nicholas Brown with his mother, Christie.



Dancer Shirika X



Judges (from left) Sylvia Sprinkle-Hamlin, Mabel Robinson and Gerry Patton take in a performance.



Tamaya Arnette gives it her all.

original tune on the keyboard and lifted her voice to the rafters as flautist Douthit played along.

"We're both just musi-

cians by trade," Clark said of their motivation to try out for the Extravaganza. "We've really been wanting to put our creativeness out into the atmosphere."

Tamaya Arnette, a seventh grader at Mineral Springs Magnet, called the experience "nerve racking." Yet, Tamaya, who has auditioned for "Triad Idol," where she made the cut several times, and "The X-Factor," said she can't resist the urge to share her gift.

"I just like seeing people, how they react when I sing and how they get touched by the words I sing," said the 13 year-old, who rendered a gospel piece in a powerful voice far beyond her years.

The Marvtastic Talent Extravaganza will begin on Friday, June 1 with an 8 p.m. Hip Hop/Spoken Word competition, and continue on Saturday, June 2 with events

highlighting Gospel and Opera performers, followed by R&B, Pop and Jazz competitions. Audience members will vote to decide which contestants will move on to the final "Best of the Best" round on Sunday, June 3.

Tickets are \$8 for June 1 & 2 performances and \$10 for the Best of the Best competition, and are available online at [www.ncblackrep.org](http://www.ncblackrep.org) or at the NCBRC office, 610 Coliseum Dr. For more information, call 723-2266.



From left: Attorney A. Stanley Mitchell, Ehren Allen, Attorney Eric Ellison, Latoia Hawkins, Juane Morris, Jalen Hatton, Attorney R. Todd McIver, Attorney Travis Simpson, Chloe Wilborn and Attorney Stacey Rubain.

## Essays

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nantly black Winston-Salem Bar Association. Principal Richard Watts believes the partnership has been beneficial to his students.

"I think it encourages them to see role models, to see professionals who are giving back to the community," said Watts, the 2011-2012 Principal of the Year for Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools. "Hopefully, it will instill in them when they get to that level in their career that they will give back as well."

District Court Judge Denise Hartsfield founded the contest after presiding over a particularly bad day of juvenile delinquency court. Hartsfield said she was inspired to ask the WSPA students to write about the importance of having a good attitude.

Hartsfield said the contest is about much more than who wins and loses.

"My hope is that they'll understand and see that there is a community of folks who care about them, who want them to do well," she said of the contestants. "We are not

buying into the negative press that we see about our young folks."

Morris, an aspiring physical therapist, said the essay topic resonated with him.

"The topic inspired me because I think it's really important to smile and to try to reach the youth of today," he remarked. "I thought it was important for me to do the essay and really express how I feel. Whether I won or not, I could be heard. Smiling, as I said in the essay, it can be contagious, but it's up to you to spread it."

Morris holds a variety of leadership positions at his school. He serves as president of his class, the Crosby Scholars program and Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA). As a student leader, he says he is compelled to set a positive example for his peers.

"It's part of my job to basically try to be influential so that's what I try to do," he commented. "You never know how it will affect somebody's day just to smile and say good morning."

Many of the other finalists also wrote about the difference a simple smile can

make.

"We should counter the effects of a bad attitude with a smile," wrote Allen, a junior. "...Having a smile is the best way to overthrow any negativity in your life."

Hawkins, a sophomore, said she works hard to maintain an upbeat outlook on life.

"Many people try to tell me I can't do something, but I smile and say, 'Anything is possible,'" wrote Hawkins, who plans to study sports medicine in college. "...We are too blessed to be stressed. We should just be thankful for what we have."

Hartsfield praised all five winners, each of whom received a \$100 check from a WSBA member.

"These were all well written; my heart was happy," said Hartsfield, who added that good writing skills are becoming rare in the era of text messaging. "I had a stack full of folks who can still write, and you should really be proud of that."

The sponsors will continue the relationships beyond the contest by serving as mentors to the students, Hartsfield explained.

Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce

# Spotlight



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Title: Cake Designer  
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