



Gary Metze Crowned as Star of Tomorrow

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The winner of the 2010 "Stars of Tomorrow" competition proved to be a model for faith, family and fun and surprised himself by taking home top honors as he had set out to support his son in taking on the first-ever competition sponsored by Alton Little Theater and Riverbender.com. Gary Metze(51) of Troy won with a moving original arrangement of "Hallelujah" , a southern gospel embraced by K.D. Lang's performance at last year's Olympics.

Gary's talent and modeling undoubtedly did help his son, Kyle (16) become a tie-winner for first runner up with another moving musical selection, "You Raise Me Up" by Josh Groban. Sarah Taylor (16) of Edwardsville shared the Runner up spot with a rich vocal rendition of "The Rose" . A total of nine individual performers and a quartet, ranging in ages ten to fifty-seven made it to the final competition and performed before a packed house and a panel of expert judges.

"The audience and judges had difficult choices to make", says event coordinator, Lee Cox, " the talent and heart in the room was amazing". Cox believes that Gary's edge might have been his musical interpretation and pure strong voice saying, "Gary doesn't need any gimmicks, he just brings the audience into his world and he sings to them".

Cox knows that some may be surprised that a fifty-one year old took home top honors and a \$500 Cash prize in a competition that was designed in part to benefit the new Riverbender Community Teen Center, but she points out that there were no age restriction place on the rules in the inaugural year's event.

"We wanted to offer talented people in the Riverbend area exposure, accessibility to other performance options, and experience in working with a wide range of musical

directors at the theater." Cox says, "Gary may already have had a little more experience than some of our performers but he also gave them an example of hard work, practice, and embracing different styles".

MC for the evening Ron Tanner, after hearing both father and son perform and learning about the musical talents of the whole Metze family said, " I wonder what Christmas sounds like at their house".

Linda Nevlin, who was present at the competition representing the interest of First Night Riverbend was so impressed with all the performers that she is proposing to offer all the contestants the chance to sing again during the celebrations on December 31st. Gary and Kyle Metze and Sarah Taylor will all have opportunities to perform again during the next year as part of Alton Little Theater's Community outreach programs.

Cox feels sure that the theater will host another "Stars of Tomorrow" competition in June of 2011 saying, "it was a great summer fundraiser and a wonderful way to showcase talent of all ages - everybody who can sing has dreams of those magical moments in the spotlight and we gave them a moment of that shining dream". For more information about the contestants or plans for next year's competition, please contact Lee Cox through ALT at 462-3205.