

The Talent Competition Show - 2009

Max W. Cheung (張永新)

The second year's edition of the Chinese American Idol drew a large audience at TACAS Chinese New Year Festival. Participation was overwhelming and the registration was terminated by 2:00 pm. Thirty-four contestants in twenty-four groups, young children and adults, with cross-cultural backgrounds (Chinese, Asian, Caucasian, and African-American) competed in three auditions with a variety of performing arts: singing, dancing, violin playing, Kung Fu, Karate Kata, and Martial Arts Routine.

The Show's organizers/emcees, Max W. Cheung (張永新) and LanChien Tallant (薛蘭茜), along with the assistance of Shirley Cheung (陳雪儀), Liu Mao Kung (劉茂功), Ying Fan Yi (邢芳義), and Cynthia Tang (陳美琪), managed the production smoothly, with one technical issue of cross-stage sound interferences remaining to be resolved in the future.

The Show's organizers assembled a distinguished panel of six judges with a wide range of backgrounds: an NC State University Professor and lead band singer (Dr. Jason Shih), a lyric soprano (Agnes Kuo Rehquate), an IBM senior IT specialist and band director (Howard Su), a seasoned news reporter from NBC-17 (Shirley Min), a Duke MBA graduate, singer, song writer, guitar player (Julia Cai), and an acting coach at John Robert Powers and TV producer (Martha Whitt King). After several hours of intense competition, our judges selected seven finalists in six performing groups to compete on the Main Stage. Based on skill level, presentation, creativity, uniqueness, rhythm, personality, degree of complexity, and audience interaction, the judges selected the following winners:



Grand Prize: Lily (Liming) Wang (王荔茗): Singing,
Second Prize: Wesley Shang (尚元甫) & Joanna Mills (穆潔安): Martial arts routine,
Third Prize: Athena Kuang (况紫穎): Solo dance,
Honorable Mention 1: Dick Smith: Singing,
Honorable Mention 2: Asia Yu-Robinson (余鐘艾): Karate Kata, and
Honorable Mention 3: Amber Wang (王安泊): Singing.

Their total combined scores were 57.2, 56.1, 55.2, 54.9, 53.5, and 53.1, respectively, evidence of a very competitive contest.

The Show, the brainchild of Tan Yih-Shin (譚逸心) in 2008, is a popular one because it provides a stage for everyone in the Triangle area to show off their talents, to interact with the public, and to meet the challenge. All the performers, first-time or returning, strived for excellence, without a hint of stage fright.

I witnessed quantum-jump improvements in our returning competitors, Wesley Shang, Amber Wang, and Athena Kuang. Wesley went to China last summer, learned choreography first-hand from a Shaolin Master in Henan. He and Joanna Mills created their own East-meets-West martial arts routines and excelled in their unique performance. Amber, who won grand prize last year playing violin, sang a beautiful song this time. Athena, now 8, incorporated the 2008 Beijing Olympic theme tune into her ballad dancing choreography, an amazing improvement from last year.

First time participant Asia Yu-Robinson showed her form in performing Karate Kata movements, young violinist Jessica Zhong, 6, is inspirational in playing a classical piece, and the young trio, Truman Qu, Tanya Qu, & Jim Lee (5,6,&7), showcased their synchronized dancing steps & song.

This Show sets a stage for all, particularly our younger generation, to express and excel, to gain a sense of responsibility, and to enhance their ability to become all-rounded future leaders. I thoroughly enjoyed their performances and witnessed their achievements and growth.