



SPOTLIGHT

2012 PROGRAM OVERVIEW & PARTICIPANT SURVEY REPORT

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Kamella Tate, MFA, EdD
Director of Research and Evaluation
August 24, 2012

**Taking part in Spotlight Awards was a blessing in my life, and
an experience that I will carry with me the rest of my days.**

– A Spotlight Participant



The remarkable Spotlight program highlights a core aspect of the Music Center’s mission – the advancement of quality arts education. As we celebrate the most talented young artists in Southern California, we also want to underscore the importance of the arts in the development of all students.

The Spotlight program strives to make a difference on many levels. Most visibly, it showcases exceptionally talented young artists, many of whom will go on to successful professional careers in the arts. The program also provides an invaluable and unique opportunity for high school students to hone their skills through auditions and master classes, gaining individual feedback through interaction with leading professional artists. Most significantly, Spotlight helps reinforce the value of arts education for participating students, their dedicated teachers and families, as well as their friends and peers.

We salute and thank our supporters who are key to the success of this program. **Bank of America** continues its commitment as the lead sponsor for Spotlight and as a vital corporate citizen in our community. This program would not be possible without Bank of America's remarkable leadership. We are very grateful for the long-standing generosity of **Helen and Peter Bing**. We warmly thank **Fred Roberts, Founding Chairman**, and **Walter Grauman, Creator and Executive Producer of Spotlight**. It is through their sustained commitment that Spotlight has been able to make a difference for so many young people.

Kent Kresa
Chairman
The Music Center

Stephen D. Rountree
President & CEO
The Music Center

Mark Slavkin
Vice President, Education
The Music Center

Bank of America



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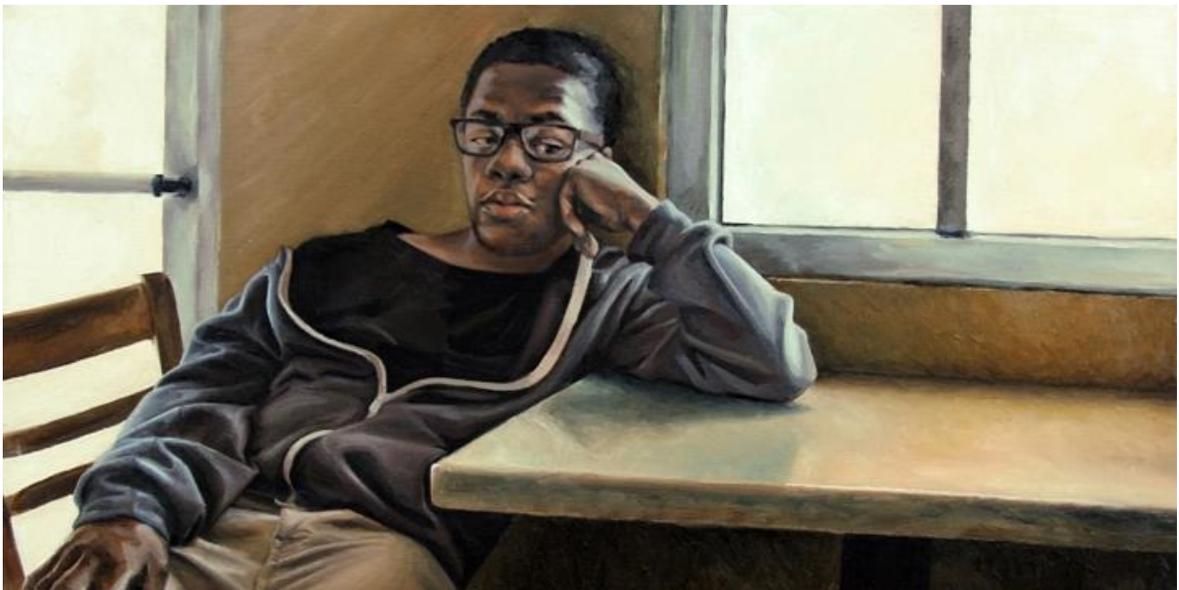
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Sophie Levine, 14, Freshman
Crossroads School for Arts and Science
Photography Finalist



Brian Wang, 18, Senior
John F. Kennedy High School
Two-dimensional Art Finalist

SPOTLIGHT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2013, Spotlight will be celebrating 25 years of bringing young people together in and through the arts: 25 years of discovering unrecognized talent; of showcasing the next generation of highly accomplished artists; of welcoming novices to the anxious camaraderie of waiting to be called into the audition room. The program focuses its attention not only on

potential Grand Prize winners, but also – and perhaps more so – on teenagers whose Spotlight experience is one among many they will explore during high school. An experience full of opportunities for learning, for exposure to new ideas and identities, and for building the cultural capital that they will be able to call on as they move from high school to college to careers.

Launched as part of The Music Center's WinterFest in 1988, Spotlight's Performing Arts competition became an annual spring event in 1990.

In 1996, a Two-Dimensional Design Competition was added to the program, and in 1999 the Photography Competition began.

Over 25,000 young people have participated in Spotlight since 1988.

Unlike many of its peers, Spotlight is a free program, open to all who apply regardless of financial circumstances. And apply they do: During the 11/12 Spotlight season, **1,892 young artists** successfully completed **952 preliminary auditions** (ballet and non-classical dance, classical and non-classical voice, and classical and jazz instrumental) and **1,121 panel evaluations** (two-dimensional art and photography).

The Participants

Spotlight reaches into a remarkably varied landscape of people and neighborhoods. Varied in geography and resources, in income and ethnicity, and in customs and traditions – as varied as Southern California itself.

- **Geography.** In 2012, Spotlight participants came from all over the region. Three-hundred and ninety-eight unique zip codes, 214 cities, 323 schools, and seven counties were represented in the 2012 applicant pool.
- **Income.** The weighted mean household income for applicants in 2012 was only slightly higher than that for the seven-county service area – \$60,103 compared with \$59,657.
- **Race and ethnicity.** The Spotlight participant population was highly representative of the racial and ethnic diversity seen in the region generally – somewhat fewer Hispanic/Latino applicants were nearly balanced by greater numbers of Asian, African American, and "Other" (including people of more than one race/ethnicity) applicants.
- **Age and category.** Most were twelfth graders, with over half (55 percent) applying in the visual arts and the remainder in performance or both VA and PA (45 percent).

The Experience

Beginning in 2008, Spotlight performing arts applicants (those who successfully complete the first round of auditions) have been asked to complete a Participant Survey designed to elicit

information about their *experience*. In it, 20 self-report items are used to measure four constructs: Nervousness, self-efficacy, expectations and comparisons, and learning.

- Overcoming and managing one's **nerves** is critical not only for performers but for anyone needing to demonstrate his or her skills in a high stakes environment – at any age or level of accomplishment. Survey findings indicated that while most participants experienced at least some anxiety, it was largely **dispelled by Spotlight's safe, friendly environment.**
- **Self-efficacy** refers to personal beliefs about one's capabilities to be successful in tasks and situations with novel, unpredictable, or ambiguous elements – all of which characterize auditions whether one is a beginner or skilled professional.
 - Over 90 percent of all respondents perceived they had "more" of characteristics associated with **self-efficacy** after their audition(s) – they felt more capable and confident, and better able to control their nerves.

Spotlight auditions are private! Only the student and judges are present, relieving young artists of potentially unnerving pressure. from parents, friends, teachers, or other students.

Emphasizing technical feedback, confidence-building, and pre-professional guidance, Spotlight judges provide both one-on-one coaching and hand-written notes – the latter sent in hard copy to each auditioner following his or her preliminary audition.

- Similar to self-efficacy, **expectations** – anticipation of high or low achievement in known or imagined circumstances – affect important behaviors and emotions such as choice making, persistence, effort, and anxiety.
 - Thirty-nine percent of first-time applicants said their audition experience was "different from what [I] expected." Applicants **expected** to be judged harshly, to feel anxious, to be treated coldly or disrespectfully, and instead found themselves in a warm and supportive environment before a panel of judges interested in seeing their best work.
- A majority of students (61 percent) reported they "**learned something new**" – about auditioning, about controlling their nerves, about their material, about instrument- or domain-specific techniques, and about how to present themselves as individuals and as artists.

Education First

Built on an educational rather than a competitive philosophy, Spotlight aspires to cultivate desire and talent in all applicants rather than in a small handful who might become professionals or even "stars." The welcoming and supportive atmosphere described by participants does not come about by happenstance; rather, it is produced deliberately and purposefully, meant to calm nerves and allow young artists to do their best work. Freed of some of their anxiety, they not only present themselves better but also are better able to listen to and absorb judges' notes.

Which is not to say Spotlight is not competitive; however, the vast majority of young people are involved because they have found the arts to be a "way in" to adulthood, to the artists they imagine they can be, to feelings they believe they cannot express elsewhere, and to a community in which they feel at home. Although their Spotlight experience will be just one of many they will have during their high school years, for a significant number it will be remembered as seminal, a developmental pivot in their personal and artistic journeys.

Marking 25 years of supporting young artists throughout southern California, The Music Center's Spotlight program is committed to providing a supportive environment in which high school students can gain the knowledge and develop the skills they need to pursue their artistic dreams. Spotlight was designed to:

- Offer distinctive learning opportunities to young people at every stage of their artistic development.
- Cultivate the personal characteristics and capacities that lead to success not only in the arts but in all of life's endeavors – self-discipline, communication skills, tenacity, dedication, poise, and cooperation.

Since its inception, Spotlight has been a cornerstone of The Music Center's fundamental commitment to arts education. Whether participants go on to careers in the arts or choose other pathways to achievement, the program contributes to the confidence and self-presentation skills they will need to excel wherever they find themselves.

A Focus on Development

Unlike similar programs focused solely on competition, Spotlight emphasizes the achievement of artistic goals through the development of skills, knowledge, and discipline – all within a positive and supportive environment. Regardless of his or her level of achievement, every Spotlight applicant is provided with comprehensive and personal feedback from working professionals, artist-judges with national and international reputations.

Applicants who advance as semifinalists are invited to participate in master classes and workshops while competing to perform at The Music Center, exhibit their artwork in a professional gallery, and receive cash scholarships.

Spotlight finalists often go on to successful careers in the arts, whether in pop music (Adam Lambert), dance (Misty Copeland at American Ballet Theatre; Matthew Rushing with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre), Broadway (Erin Mackey, Glinda from *Wicked*), or classical music (Liang Wang, Principal Oboist with the New York Philharmonic).

Every year, Spotlight distributes nearly \$100,000 in scholarships and cash awards to students who place as finalists, semifinalists, and honorable mention recipients.

2012 SPOTLIGHT The Young Artists' Journey

In 2011/12, Spotlight held 952 preliminary auditions (ballet and non-classical dance, classical and non-classical voice, and classical and jazz instrumental) and 1,121 panel reviews (two-dimensional art and photography) – **1,892 young artists** applied in one, two, or even three different categories (see Table 1, page 6 for a breakdown of the **2,073 total applications**).

- **New in 11/12: Spotlight Academy.** In October 2011, The Music Center hosted a "Spotlight Academy" – a day of free workshops and seminars held before the application deadline. Thanks to presentations from outstanding artists and university educators, over

250 students, parents, and teachers learned not only about Spotlight but also about training, performance, and exhibition opportunities available for young people.

As happens every year, each student received a personal letter with targeted feedback from the judges identifying his or her strengths and suggesting areas for improvement – a level of individual engagement that sets Spotlight apart from similar programs.

- Fifteen semifinalists were selected from each category to move on to master classes, portfolio reviews, and the next round of auditions.
 - Pieces created by visual arts semifinalists were exhibited at Plaza de la Raza Cultural Center for the Arts & Education.
- 2012 Spotlight culminated on the stage of the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, where 12 performing arts finalists danced, sang, and played their instruments before a packed house of celebrity judges, families, friends, teachers, and the public.
 - The work of our four visual arts finalists – two in photography and two in two-dimensional art – was highlighted in documentary films produced for the gala.

**I learned to keep on going
even if you mess up.
It will be OK.**
– A Spotlight Participant

The Participants: Who Are They and Where Are They From?

In 2011/12, Spotlight participants came to The Music Center from . . .

- 398 unique zip codes
- 214 cities – from Ojai to San Diego to Temecula to South Pasadena
- 323 schools – including public, private, charter, and on-line institutions
- 7 counties – Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Santa Barbara

Figure 1. 2012 Spotlight Applicants by County of Residence

(N=1,892)

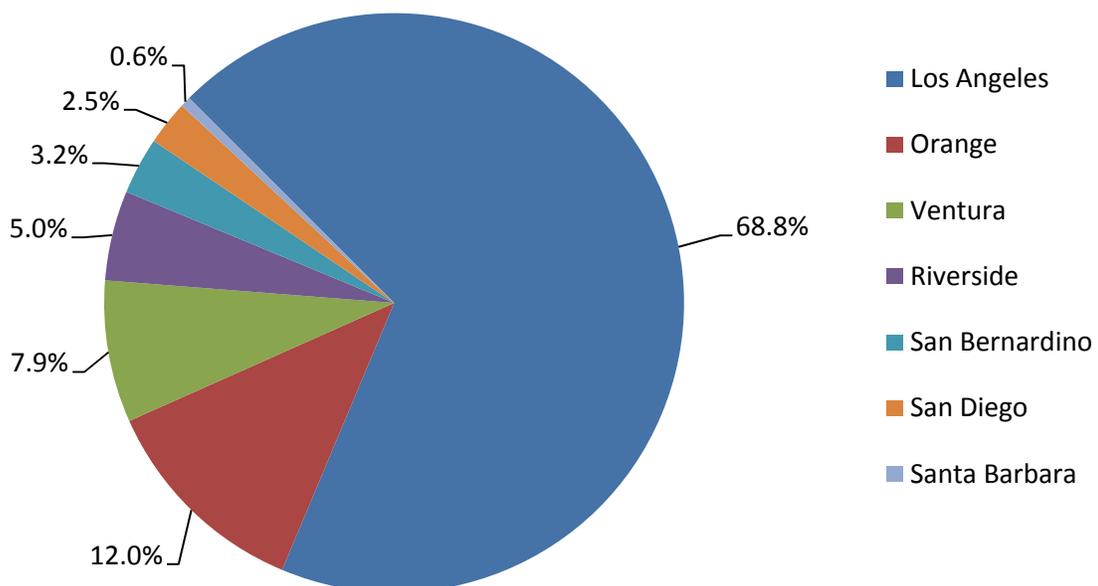
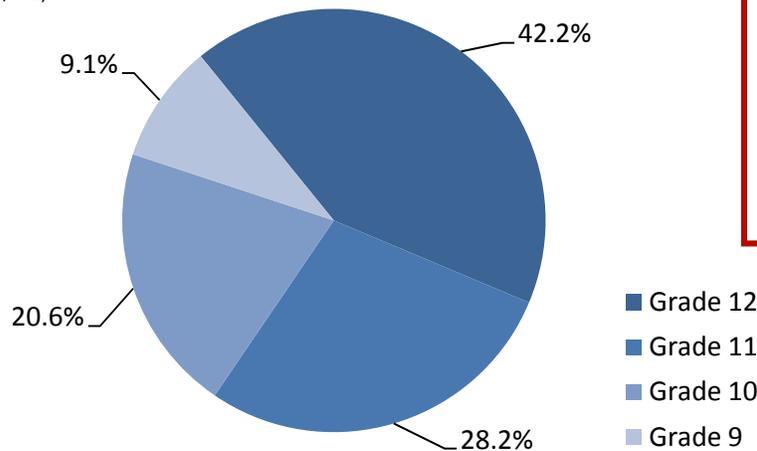


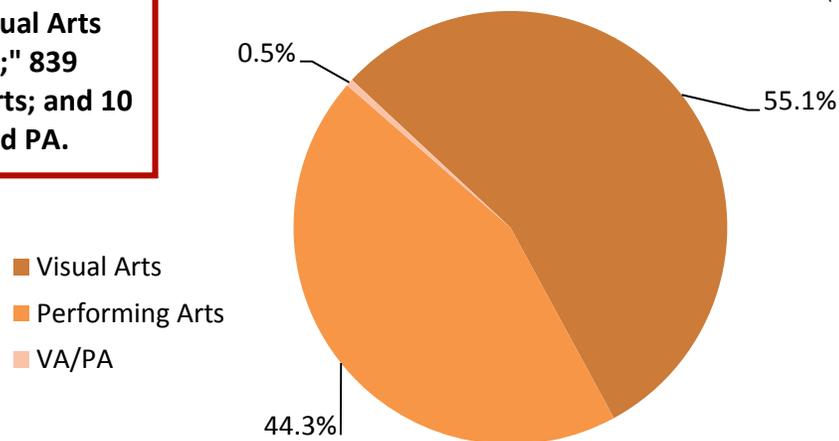
Figure 2. 2012 Spotlight Applicants by Grade
(N=1,892)



As would be expected, the majority of applicants were in 12th grade. Visual Arts applicants were on the whole older, with Performing Arts applicants distributed more evenly between the grades.

By the numbers: In 2012, 1,043 applicants marked Visual Arts as their primary "type;" 839 marked Performing Arts; and 10 entered in both VA and PA.

Figure 3. 2012 Spotlight Applicants by Type
(N=1,892)



Spotlight participants completed 2,073 auditions and panel evaluations, with applications by category shown in Table 1. (Why is the total here greater than the number of participants, 1,892? Because students can apply in more than one category – and in 2012, 181 did just that.)

Visual Arts	Photography	652	31.5%
	2D Art	469	22.6%
Performing Arts	Non-Classical Voice	353	17.0%
	Non-Classical Dance	157	7.6%
	Classical Instrumental	154	7.4%
	Classical Voice	141	6.8%
	Ballet	94	4.5%
	Jazz Instrumental	53	2.6%
TOTAL		2,073	100.0%

Table 1. 2012 Spotlight Applications by Category

Demographics: Equity and Diversity

Flagship institutions such as The Music Center are sometimes perceived as being cultural strongholds for wealthy, older white people. However, our analysis of Spotlight participants (386 zip codes, Census 2010 [<http://bit.ly/NJYVWC>]) contradicts such assumptions to a significant extent.

Spotlight challenges commonly held beliefs about which young people can and do begin to explore and train in an art form at an early age. The applicant pool is not only representative of the *geography* of southern California – with a special focus on the Los Angeles region – but also of the families and households that comprise the *community* of southern California.

A Question of Equity

While it is true the program – along with the "traditional" art forms it cultivates – attracts more advantaged families and children (especially in the performing arts, domains that demand resources not present in lower-income households), as shown in Table 2 the weighted mean household income for our 2012 applicant pool was only slightly higher than that for the seven-county service area (again using Census 2010, <http://bit.ly/NJYVWC>).

All Applicants Mean Household Income (weighted)	\$60,103
Visual Arts Applicants	
VA Applicants Mean Household Income (weighted)	\$57,376
VA Applicants Median Household Income	\$49,499
Performing Arts Applicants	
PA Applicants Mean Household Income (weighted)	\$63,319
PA Applicants Median Household Income	\$53,499
Seven-County Service Area Mean Income (weighted)	\$59,657

Table 2. 2012 Spotlight Applicants' Household Income Comparisons

As expected, mean household income for visual arts applicants (237 unique zip codes) was less than that of applicants in the performing arts (313 unique zip codes) – unexpectedly, it was also less than the weighted mean for the seven-county service area.

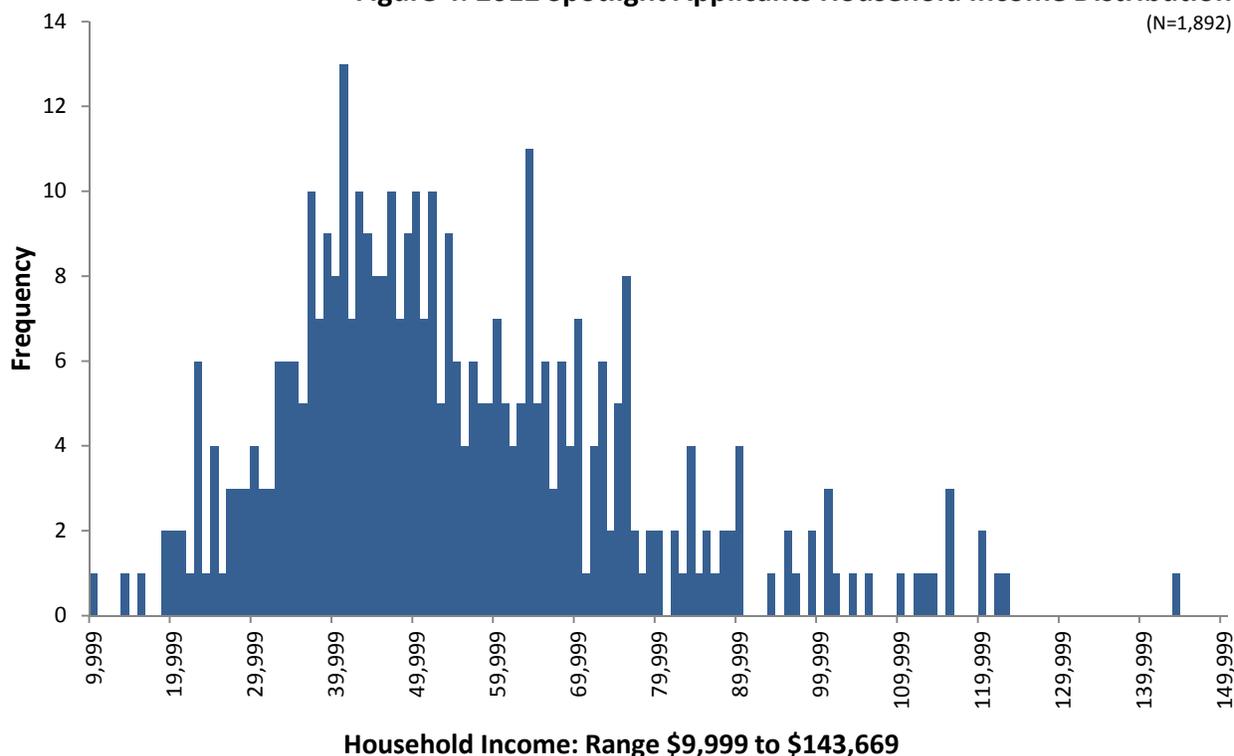
Furthermore, while the program certainly provides opportunities for wealthier students, the distribution of median household incomes for zip codes of 2012 applicants was positively skewed (Figure 4).

- **What does that mean?** More moderate- and lower-income families (households living at or below the mean for the applicant pool) participated than might be expected, while those with higher incomes were spread over a long "tail" that points to the right.

I learned that I have the confidence to try things I am not as comfortable with. I learned that if I try, I can do much more than I expected.

– A Spotlight Participant

Figure 4. 2012 Spotlight Applicants Household Income Distribution
(N=1,892)



A Question of Diversity

While we use "equity" to refer to the *equitable distribution of public and private resources* through programs such as Spotlight, "diversity" refers to *inclusion* – in this case, we are using race/ethnicity as a proxy for the construct.

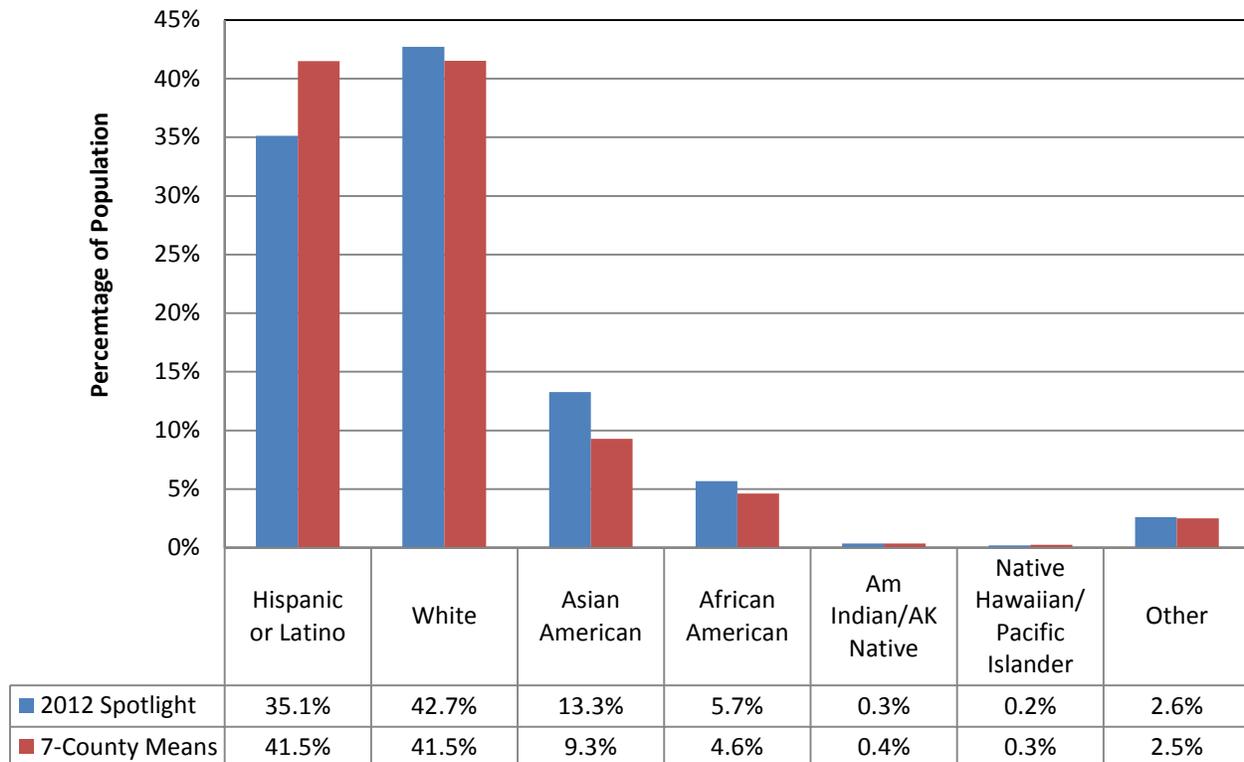
Figure 5 illustrates the race/ethnicity of 2012 Spotlight participants (mean of each Census category) in comparison with unweighted means derived from County-level demographic analyses for each of the seven counties served.

- Findings:** The 2012 Spotlight participant population was highly representative of the racial and ethnic diversity we see in the region generally – somewhat fewer Hispanic/Latino applicants were nearly balanced by greater numbers of Asian, African American, and "Other" (including people of more than one race/ethnicity, using Census-defined categories) applicants.



Justin Lewis, 17, Senior
Los Angeles County High School for the Arts
Classical Voice Finalist

Figure 5. 2012 Spotlight Applicants Race/Ethnicity Compared With Means for 7-County Service Area
(N=1,892)



Discussion

Organizations must look inside their programming and operations, and 'outside their four walls,' to create meaningful partnerships, participate in and listen to the community, and generally embody the spirit of being a good neighbor.

– Partners for Livable Communities, 2011, p. 7

Questions about access and diversity often – and should – arise in conversations about the roles and responsibilities of large-budget, flagship arts organizations. The current economic climate combined with three decades of wide-ranging social and political realignments have brought such questions to the forefront in ways that suggest institutional survival may mean getting the answers right. While education, enjoyment, and self-discovery are certainly criteria for judging the achievements of the Spotlight program, at The Music Center we are equally concerned with the challenges of representativeness and institutional advancement.

1. Are the people served by the program – in this case, high school students engaged in the arts, from novices to pre-professionals – **broadly representative** of the community or region whose tax dollars support The Music Center?
2. Does the program forward The Music Center's strategic goals of **accessibility** and **diversity**?

Considering the first, the findings discussed here show convincingly that Spotlight reaches into a remarkably varied landscape of people and neighborhoods. Varied in income and ethnicity, in geography and resources, in customs and traditions – as varied as Southern California itself.

This is not to say there are no barriers to participation in lower-income communities, especially in the performing arts. Dancers and musicians typically start training early – they require costumes and instruments, coaches and teachers, trips to auditions and competitions, maybe even physical therapy to counteract the effects of rigorous training on their growing bodies. Programs such as Spotlight cannot unravel the political and economic issues that cause some communities to be under-resourced; however, they *can* act as bridges and guides, contributing to the conditions necessary for people of all ages to access, enjoy, and benefit from the region's cultural assets and opportunities.

The visual arts fare better, as drawing and painting can be done with very few supplies and camera phones are nearly ubiquitous at all socioeconomic levels. You do not need a studio or pointe shoes or sequins or drum kit. (Although most VA submissions are figurative, we believe that is because young people have not yet developed either the eye or the skill to work effectively in abstract or conceptual visual frames.) The ease with which one can engage in the visual arts at even an intermediate level of accomplishment could account for the greater number of VA Spotlight applicants, as well as for their lower median household income. The visual arts are simply more accessible across the socioeconomic spectrum.

- **Think about:** How can the VA component of Spotlight be better highlighted? Could arrangements be made with local museums for free admission for Spotlight applicants? What might be done to engage high school art teachers in the program? Projects such as Shirley Brice Heath's *ArtShow: Youth and Community Development* (1999) and Boston's RAW (<http://www.rawart.org/>) offer tantalizing glimpses at the potential for youth-driven community arts programs.

There is also the issue of the program's emphasis on Western or European art forms. Do potential applicants with skills and interest in non-European performance traditions and instruments think there is no place for them in the program? In the past, Spotlight has welcomed superb young dancers, singers, and musicians with expertise in a specific "world dance," folk tradition, or other hybrid or ethnic-fusion performing style. Their participation is uncommon, however, suggesting the program may be missing opportunities to engage with and "spotlight" the accomplishments of talented and passionate students of non-traditional art forms.

- **Think about:** Could culturally specific performing arts find a home in Spotlight? What more could be done to identify and recruit studios and teachers from within the rich "cultural kitchens" of Southern California? Perhaps young artists could be called on to help plan and organize a "Spotlight on the World" festival.

In addition to cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic factors, and other indicators such as health and age, there are a number of less quantifiable factors that are useful to understand. Learning about local social networks and talking with key leaders and leadership nodes in communities can provide valuable entry points to finding out about a community's values, challenges, and ongoing tensions.

– *Partners for Livable Communities, 2011, p. 28*

- **Think about:** Discussions are ongoing about adding a theatre arts/monologue category to Spotlight. Besides offering an outstanding opportunity to engage with a creative sector that has long shaped the economy and communities of Southern California, such a move could be an entry point to the program for young people without the cultural capital or school/family resources to participate in the other performing arts categories.

Finally, we looked the twinned concerns of accessibility and diversity in relationship to The Music Center's mission of community inclusiveness. Education and outreach allow an institution to build value and broaden participation for members of groups not typically included among its regular patrons. Spotlight is no exception to this pattern: While obviously younger than The Music Center's single ticket buyer's 50-51 median years, Spotlight participants are also significantly more ethnically diverse and come from neighborhoods that are, overall, less socioeconomically advantaged (Table 3).

	Spotlight	TMC Single Tix*
Household Income		
Median Household Income	\$60,103	\$95,000
Race/Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino	35.1%	12.7%
White	42.7%	69.5%
Asian American	13.3%	8.1%
African American	5.7%	7.2%
American Indian/AK Native	0.3%	NA
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.2%	NA
Other/Multi	2.6%	2.5%

Table 3. 2012 Spotlight Applicants' and The Music Center Single Ticket Buyers Compared

* Music Center single ticket buyers, FY12 to-date. Subscribers and donors skew somewhat differently; i.e., median age 62-63; median income \$100,000-\$125,000.

As with other community arts and education programs, more can always be done to ensure representativeness – of neighborhoods, communities, age groups, income levels, etc. However, it is clear even from the wide-angle view we have taken in this study that Spotlight's investment in inclusiveness has paid off. Welcoming young people from a seven-county region, from both low- and high-income households, and from a rich assortment of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, the program does not wait for applicants to stumble upon it. Rather, through persuasive and imaginative outreach, networks of committed teachers and artists, and relentless attention to personal relationships, Spotlight staff have built a creative safe haven for the youngest of the many "dreamers of dreams" making art in Los Angeles.

When people share the experience of works of art, either by discussing them or by communally experiencing them, one of the intrinsic benefits is the social bonds that are created . . . Intrinsic benefits accrue to the public sphere when works of art convey what whole communities of people yearn to express.

– McCarthy et al., p. xiv

2012 SPOTLIGHT PARTICIPANT SURVEY

Introduction

Beginning in 2008, Spotlight performing arts (PA) applicants (those who successfully complete the first round of auditions) have been asked to complete a Participant Survey designed to elicit information about their *experience* – self-reports of feelings of confidence or anxiety, of reality-versus-expectation, and of learning. Primarily a program monitoring and feedback strategy, survey responses have been used to identify emergent issues or problems, build understanding of participants' needs and interests, and support outreach and fundraising efforts.

Method

Instrument

The Spotlight Participant Survey (SPS) is a 20-item, mixed-response format instrument with the following types of questions and answer categories (Appendix A).

1. Multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank (characteristics and outreach information) – 6 items
2. Dichotomous (Yes/No; Similar/Different) – 2 items
3. Scaled – 9 items
 - a. Very Nervous = 1; Nervous = 2; Not A Little Nervous = 3; Nervous At All = 4
 - b. Less Positive = 1; About The Same = 2; More Positive = 3
 - c. Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; Agree = 3; Strongly Agree = 4
4. Short-answer – 3 items

In 2012, the SPS was altered to include five scaled items (3.c above) measuring perceived changes in self-efficacy – the belief that one is or is not capable of successfully accomplishing a task or activity. The five were selected from the 10-item General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) and the language modified to be contextually appropriate.

Procedure

Following each day of preliminary auditions, a Spotlight staff member emailed an invitation to participants with a link to the survey on Constant Contact (<http://www.constantcontact.com>). For the first time, a completion incentive was offered in the form of a drawing for eight \$25 iTunes gift cards. A "tickler" email was sent within 10 days to non-respondents, and a final invitation was sent to all non-respondents before the survey was closed on March 11, 2012.

- Of the 849 unique PA applicants (including the 10 students who applied in both PA and VA), 372 submitted completed surveys for a 43.8% response rate.
 - **Response rate.** This represents a significant increase over the average rate for the four prior years (28.8%). It is possible the incentive drove the higher response rate; however, there may be other factors involved.
 - **Representativeness.** All participants were given an equal opportunity to complete the survey; hence, the sample can be considered randomly selected (selection bias notwithstanding). Referencing Isaac and Michael (1995), an N=849 requires an S=265; hence we can consider our sample of 372 representative of the population.

Constant Contact supports several approaches to tracking, analyzing, and exporting survey results. From the site, we downloaded summary data (descriptive) and "text details," as well as the raw data in .csv format. We used Excel and EzAnalyze to sort and analyze multiple choice, dichotomous, and scaled data, and CDC EZ-Text to code short-answer narratives.

Participants

Of the 372 respondents, fully two-thirds were first-time Spotlight applicants. Twenty-one percent were auditioning for a second year, while ten and two percent were applying for their third and fourth years respectively.

- Three-quarters had heard about Spotlight from a friend, a teacher (school or private), or at a dance studio (students could select more than one source of information); parents, siblings, and arts-related social or educational settings were the next most common sources.
- Somewhat over half (57 percent) said they did not know anyone who had considered auditioning but had not; those who did rated "Did not feel 'ready' to compete" and "Forgot about the deadline" as the deciding factors for non-participants. "Concern that it would take too much time away from school/other commitments" was a distant third.

Relative to the distribution among categories in the population (Table 1), more Ballet and Non-Classical Dance/Voice applicants responded to the survey than did those from the Classical Voice and Instrumental categories.

- Why might this be? Are dancers and non-classical singers more inclined to let people know how they feel? Did they have more satisfying audition experiences either because of skill and training or simple enjoyment of performing? Were there characteristics of the judges in those categories – either overall or in the teams put together for 2012 – that led applicants to be more forthcoming? Is there something inherent in the art form itself that stimulates responsiveness? Finally, should future surveys be modified in content, format, delivery, or timing to collect data better weighted to reflect the applicant population?

Findings

Fourteen self-report items (two for new applicants, two for returning applicants, and ten for all applicants) were used to measure experiential constructs: Nervousness, self-efficacy, expectations and comparisons, and learning.

Nervousness

Nerves and anxiety can derail a promising career. Fear of failure can sabotage an artist's hard-earned capacity to deliver a quality performance, causing cognitive overload and a psychophysical reaction that in some cases is literally paralyzing. For young people, overcoming – and learning to manage – such feelings is critical, and Spotlight puts special emphasis on creating a safe, welcoming environment that inspires novices to high levels of performance.

Respondents reported on three conditions that can set off feelings of nervousness (4-point scale, Not Nervous at all = 1 to Very Nervous = 4). On a scale with a theoretical mean of 2.5:

Item	Mean
Item 3. My ability to compete with other students.	2.10
Item 4. How I would perform in my audition.	2.38
Item 5. How the judges would react to me.	2.12

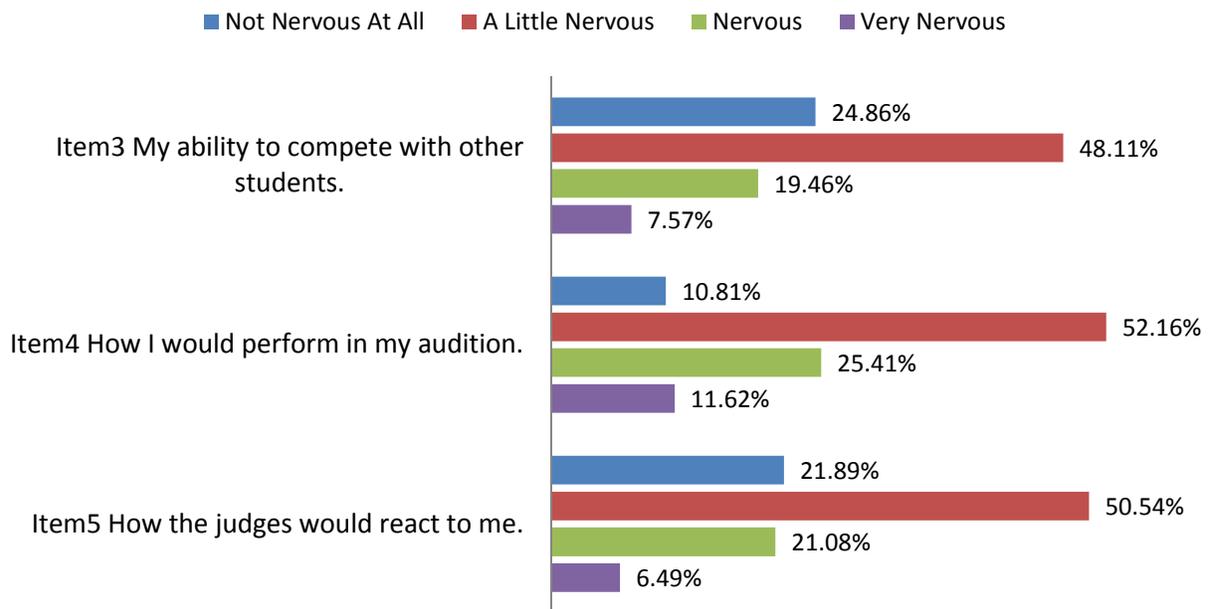
Table 4. 2012 Spotlight Survey Nervousness Items and Item Means

Responses are broken out and illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6. 2012 Spotlight PA Applicants: Nervousness

(N=370)

In preparing for your audition, how nervous were you about:



Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, as opposed to self-esteem, self-image, or self-confidence, is a cornerstone of socio-cognitive learning theories (Bandura & Locke, 2003). The term refers to personal beliefs about one's capabilities to be successful in tasks and situations with novel, unpredictable, or ambiguous elements – all of which characterize auditions whether one is a novice or skilled professional. Self-efficacy is not a fixed characteristic; rather, it is domain-specific and involves both skills and knowledge. A belief – or lack of the same – that "I know what to do and I know I can do it" shapes our choices in work and relationships, how much effort we expend, how long we "stick to" a task or strategy, and how well we learn and recover from mistakes (Grendler, 2005).

The five items developed to measure perceived self-efficacy, on a 4-point scale with a theoretical mean of 2.5, appear with their item means in Table 5.

Item	Mean
Item 10. I feel more capable of performing well at other auditions.	3.32
Item 11. I feel more confident when I think about my next audition.	3.36
Item 12. I think I'll be better able to stay calm when I'm performing.	3.28
Item 13. I'm excited about preparing for my next audition or performance.	3.52
Item 14. I think I'll be able to handle anything that comes up in an audition situation.	3.20

Table 5. 2012 Spotlight Survey Self-Efficacy Items and Item Means

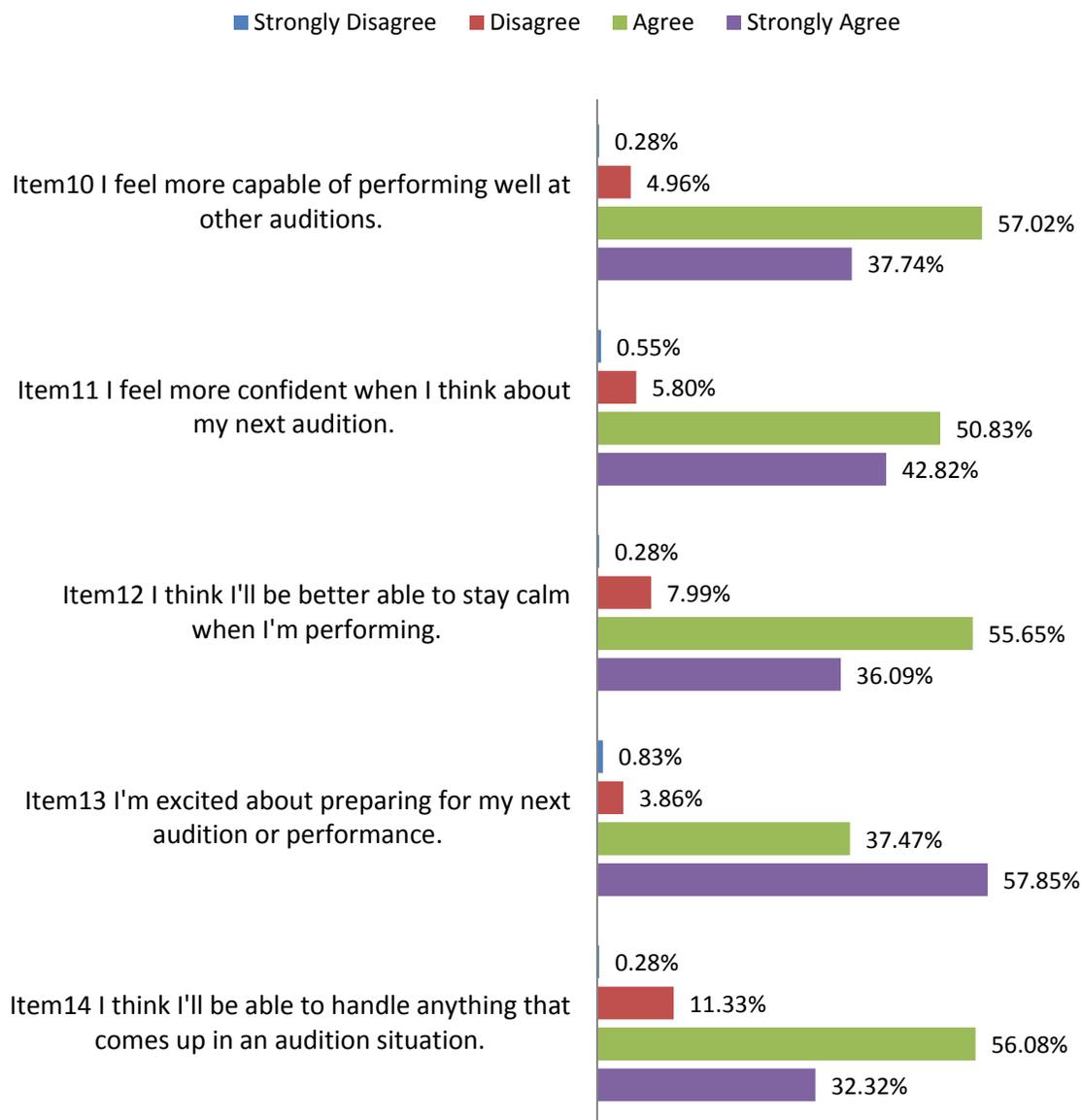
As illustrated in Figure 7, over 90 percent of all respondents perceived they had "more" of a characteristic associated with self-efficacy after their audition(s) – they felt more capable and confident, and better able to control their nerves (Items 10, 11, and 12).

- A similar proportion (Item 13) reported being excited about their next audition because of participating in the program, with an interesting flip seen here from majority "Agree" on the other items to majority "Strongly Agree."
- Item 14 was scored nearly as highly as the other four, with somewhat more students doubtful of their capacity to handle "anything" the next time around. A constructive moment of sober self-reflection after a fun and exciting experience, perhaps?

Figure 7. 2012 Spotlight PA Applicants: Self-Efficacy

(N=363)

After my Spotlight experience:



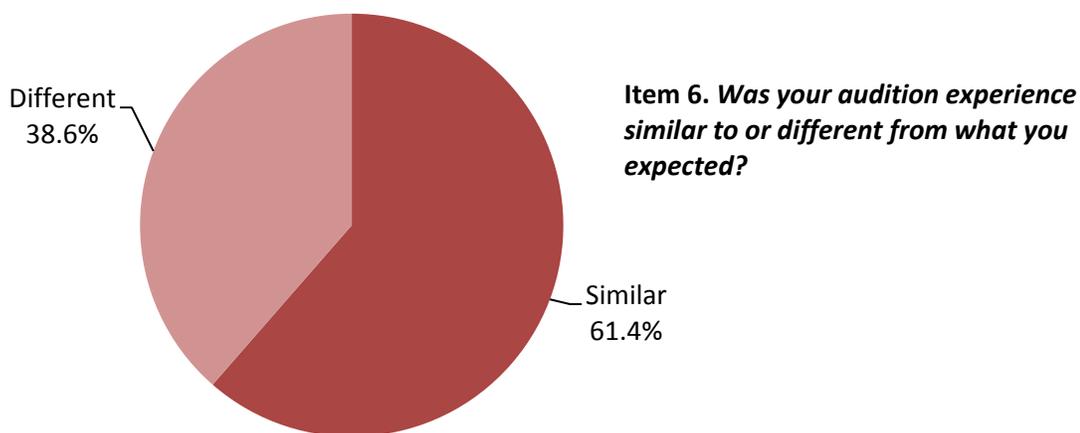
Expectations and Comparisons

Expectancy – anticipation of high or low achievement in known or imagined circumstances – influences not only motivation but also gives rise to causal explanations for success or failure (Ormrod, 2004). Similar to self-efficacy, expectations affect important behaviors and emotions such as choice making, persistence, effort, and anxiety.

While 61 percent of first-time applicants (N=283) said their audition experience was comparable to what they expected, 39 percent selected "different from" for Item 6: *Was your audition experience similar to or different from what you expected?* (Figure 8). Overwhelmingly, the reported "difference" was quite positive – applicants expected to be judged harshly, to feel anxious, to be treated coldly or disrespectfully, and instead found themselves in a warm and friendly environment before a panel of supportive judges interested in seeing their best work.

Figure 8. 2012 Spotlight PA Applicants: Expectancies

(N=283)

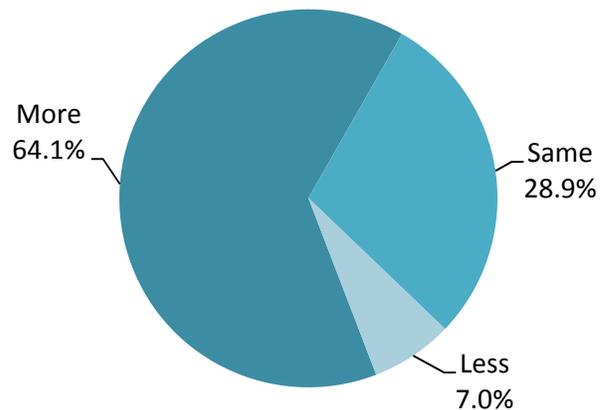


The most common word used to describe the judges and Spotlight staff was "nice," while the atmosphere was reported as being "welcoming" and "comfortable." Applicants felt they performed better and had a better experience as a result. Representative comments include:

- **I was expecting much more judgment, much less warmth.** I was shocked yet pleased by how welcoming and helpful everyone was, and the judges were delightful. I felt comfortable and relaxed: it **allowed me to perform my music at the best of my ability.**
- It was a lot more **relaxing** than other auditions. The judges were **very nice and gave very informative feedback.**
- I knew the judges were going to be nice but I didn't expect them to be so nice and the audition to be so fun. I messed up in my dance but **left feeling more confident than I did going in.** Overall, it was a **great learning experience.**
- I didn't think the judges would be so **helpful and pleasant.** I assumed I would sing and leave the room. I enjoyed it much more than I thought I would because of the **judges' great attitudes.**
- I was expecting very harsh, or just not friendly judges, and a less welcoming environment. I was **completely surprised by how nice and welcoming the judges were, and how the setup was comfortable.** I liked how even though I did not perform very well, the judges were **still encouraging and they complemented me.**

Reflective **comparisons** with previous experiences are the opposite of expectancies. The latter *give rise* to beliefs and responses, whereas the former *shed light* on observed characteristics of an event relative to similar events. Item 8 (Figure 9) asked returning participants (N=128) to *compare your Spotlight audition this year with those you've done in past years. Would you say that your overall experience this year was:*

- Less Positive: 9
- About The Same: 37
- More Positive: 82



**Figure 9. 2012 Spotlight PA Applicants:
Comparisons**

(N=128)

Item 8. Compare your Spotlight audition this year with those you've done in past years.

Two essential themes emerged from the short-answer follow up to Item 8, *Please tell us how your experience this year was more or less positive than previous years* (Item 9).

1. **Experiential knowledge** (of the process, the venue, the people) and **improved skills** (better preparation, more proficient) made the applicant feel **less nervous**; and
2. Less nervousness led to a **better audition and/or interview**.

Respondents most often said they felt more "confident" and "relaxed" than at previous Spotlight auditions, able to "enjoy" themselves and "focus on improving."

- I just felt a little more **confident** and **comfortable** going into the process. I was also **less nervous**, which allowed me to **enjoy** myself more than I expected to.
- This time around, I believe I was **better at channeling my nerves** towards a positive energy which I think helped **improve my overall performance** quality.
- I was **more at ease** after performing and was **able to listen to the judges corrections**.
- I think this year I felt much more **confident** in myself so that I could go into the audition, **enjoy** it, and then really **use the criticism** rather than be so focused on feeling really insecure the whole way through.
- With **last year's feedback I was able to grow and improve** with my singing. I was more **confident because I have improved**.
- I was able to **prepare myself to be able to talk with the judges** and actually **absorb the information** rather than being flustered and letting information pass by.
- I was much **more relaxed** because I knew how things worked and **how to prepare** for the audition. It was much easier **because I knew how much practice was needed** and what songs were the best choice for my voice.
- I felt more **comfortable**, more **ready** for my performance and the songs I was going to sing, more **able to introduce and carry myself with confidence and ease** through the audition. Going through this process several times certainly has **made nerves less of an issue** and given me the opportunity to **let the music be the primary focus**.

Like first-timers, Spotlight "veterans" made highly favorable comments about the judges – however, theirs were noticeably more nuanced and many associated their positive feelings with their interactions with the judges.

- Some of the judges remembered me from previous years and **it felt nice that they knew my name**. They gave me positive feedback in the room and **made me feel very comfortable**.
- The ice breaking conversation the judges and I had was **more enthusiastic** and I was a bit **more confident** in my playing.
- I thought the judges' **feedback was genuine** and [they] **recognized the improvements I have made** over the past years.
- The judges were kind and **offered valid criticism in a constructive way**.
- They **asked me about my future plans** and which school I was interested in. They didn't ask me questions like that before. It made me **feel like they were really interested** in whether I was choosing dance for my life or not. It made me **feel very good and comfortable** with my audition.

Learning

A majority of students (61 percent, 218 out of 360 respondents) reported they "learned something new" (Items 15 and 16) – about auditioning, about controlling their nerves, about the material they selected, about instrument- or domain-specific techniques, and about how to present themselves as individuals and as artists. Responses can be broken into two rough categories: *Learning about my art form* and *learning about myself*.

Learning about my art form

- I learned that I need to **focus more on the acting** during an audition and not just the vocal performance.
- **Breathing** is critical and that **working hard** prior to my audition pays off and makes me less nervous during the actual audition.
- One of the judges told me that **I have a habit of "nervous swaying."** In all my performing years, no one has ever told me I have that performance flaw. On my next audition, I know now to watch my "nervous swaying" which will create a better performance.
- That I may be **most suited** for pop vs. musical theater.
- I learned **how to prepare myself** in a fast and efficient way, without depending on a teacher's help with a warm up; I learned to be more **independent in my preparation**.
- I learned **what an "Art Song" is**.
- I learned to **go bigger** than I think I ought to in an audition setting.
- I learned **how to play my instrument better** in a more jazz sense.
- The **acoustics of my environment should be observed** before I begin playing. I knew what to expect because of the way the room was built, but it is always smart to **balance the band before I play** so that we sound good from the first note.
- I learned that it's important to **choose a focal point** that doesn't strain my neck when I sing and also to **be comfortable showing emotions** in the song.
- **Be careful what bass player you choose** because mine screwed up the form.
- I learned **specifics about my voice** that I had ever been told before.
- Take more **pauses**, learn more **scales**.

Learning about myself

- To be **more confident** in my abilities because I often tend to sell myself short.
- I can just **have fun** with it and really **enjoy** the whole thing! After all, singing is my passion, and this audition just pushing me along further into success! I loved it!
- I learned that even if you do mess up as long as you're **well-presented and have a good attitude** that judges will hopefully look past the little mistakes and look above and beyond just your performance and look more into seeing if you're a hard worker and focused and from there they can mold you into what they need for the job.
- Even if you're different from the competition **don't give up**.
- I learned to just **be yourself!** Be musical and smile!
- I learned that I can have **confidence**, if I just keep an **open mind**.
- I learned that it doesn't matter how well you performed it or what other people say about your performance, **it only matters how it makes you feel**.
- It was easier to **just be myself** than try to act differently.
- I experienced **having multiple responsibilities**, tasks and deadlines and at the same time having an audition. Basically, I learned to **manage and focus my energy** for the audition.

I learned that the audition really isn't about the judges or how they receive you; it's about having the courage and strength to do what you love and knowing that you did it.

– A Spotlight Participant

Discussion



Phoebe Pan, 14, 9th Grade
Pacific Academy
Classical Instrumental Finalist

If we were to assemble a composite portrait of a Spotlight applicant based on findings from the Participant Survey, who would she be? Perhaps someone like this . . .

She dances/plays/sings at a better-than-beginning level of accomplishment, with several performances and/or auditions behind her. Keenly aware of her nervous tension, she discovers when she arrives that there's not a lot to be nervous about: The people are supportive, the setting is warm and welcoming, the judges openly interested in her and her presentation. She realizes she can relax a bit; she controls her nerves by focusing on her technique and having a positive attitude; she performs at a higher level than she had hoped and she has achieved in the past. The judges' feedback is appreciative, targeted, and practical, giving her both a sense of accomplishment and several new skills to work on when she gets back to class. She leaves knowing that she has learned about not only her art and the audition process, but also about who she is and how she wants to develop as an artist and as a person.

THE APPLICANT

While we recognize and certainly must consider the limitations of the Participant Survey when discussing the program's impact (e.g., it is not given to visual arts applicants; students with more favorable experiences will be more likely to respond; etc.), nevertheless the quantity and quality of the responses speak to a number of favorable conclusions.

- Built on an educational rather than a competitive philosophy, Spotlight aspires to **cultivate desire and talent in all applicants** rather than in a small handful who might become professionals or even "stars."
- This aspiration – admirably achieved based on survey results – is clearly reflected in the **care paid to setting the tone at the auditions**. The welcoming and supportive atmosphere does not come about by happenstance; rather, it is produced deliberately and purposefully, meant to **calm nerves and allow participants do their best work**.
- Freed of some of their anxiety, students not only **present themselves and their work better** but are also **better able to listen to and absorb the judges' notes**. They can pay closer attention to their surroundings, observing what works and what does not, how people are responding to them, and what they are doing to prepare mentally and physically for their performance.
- Many participants – especially those with more experience – expect and plan to **incorporate the skills they acquired and judges notes into their next auditions and interviews**.



Tyler Donatelli, 15, 9th Grade
Huntington Beach High School
Ballet Finalist

Which is not to say Spotlight is not competitive; however, the vast majority of participants are involved because they have found the arts to be a "way in" to adulthood, to the artists they imagine they can be, to feelings they believe they cannot express elsewhere, and to a community in which they feel at home. High school is a time when we are learning to think critically and use evidence to make decisions, to link our experiences and interests to life goals and career paths.

On the whole, the cognitive skills addressed at the high school . . . level [in the arts] are connected to students' abilities to 'put it all together' – refine their technical skill, creating work with an original point of view, and understanding their work and the work of others within broader contexts. (Charleroy et al., 2012, p. 8)

Although their Spotlight experience will be just one of many this year's applicants will have during their high school years, for a significant number of them it will be remembered as seminal, a developmental pivot in their personal and artistic journeys. Some will build a life in the arts, some will not; but it appears that many will be able to look back and say:

I learned to believe in myself more.

– A Spotlight Participant

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About The Music Center A leader at the cultural heart of Los Angeles County, The Music Center brings to life one of the world's premier arts destinations by creating opportunities for arts participation, enabling compelling programming and providing first-class venues and services.

The Music Center is one of the largest and most highly regarded performing arts centers in the country, creating a cultural hub that is central to L.A.'s status as "the creative capital" of the world. Celebrated for its illustrious dance presentations and home to four world-class resident companies, The Music Center is the place to experience the most innovative and critically-acclaimed performing arts in the nation. Each year, over one million audience members delight in the excitement of live performances on The Music Center's stages and enjoy free community arts events all year long across its outdoor campus. Approximately 500 full-time, seasonal, and part-time staff members are employees of The Center and contribute to its operation and success.

The Music Center was developed as an unprecedented public-private partnership with Los Angeles County. Through the support of the Board of Supervisors, the County of Los Angeles plays an invaluable role in the successful operation of The Music Center. This relationship has cemented the importance of the arts to the cultural fabric of Los Angeles.

About Education at The Music Center The story of arts education in America today has two distinct yet complementary plots: That of learning and teaching *in* the arts and another of learning and teaching *through* the arts. At The Music Center, neither is a subplot: *In* and *through* are core strategies of student- and teacher-centered processes designed to address the decline in access to quality arts education while contributing to the conditions that underlie broad-based academic achievement. Our educational mission is two-fold:

- To make quality arts education part of the core curriculum for all schools in L.A. County.
- To establish The Music Center as a welcoming and inclusive venue for children, families, and the larger community where they come to develop deeper appreciation and understanding of the arts.

APPENDIX A
SURVEY INSTRUMENT



2012 Spotlight Awards Survey

Congratulations on completing your Spotlight Awards audition!
Each year the Music Center strives to improve the Spotlight program to provide the best possible learning experience for students.

Your responses on this survey will help us identify areas for future refinements.

*** Required Question(s)**

*** 1. This is my _____ year participating in Spotlight.**

- First
- Second
- Third
- Fourth

*** 2. How did you learn about the Spotlight Awards? Please choose all that apply.**

- A Friend
- Teacher in School
- Private Teacher
- Dance Studio
- Bulletin Board
- Parent
- Web
- Received an email
- Other

3. In preparing for your audition, how nervous were you about the following:

	Not Nervous At All	A Little Nervous	Nervous	Very Nervous
My ability to compete with other students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How I would perform in my audition.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How the judges would react to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. *For first year participants:* Was your audition experience similar to or different from what you expected?

- Similar
- Different

5. **For first year participants:** If different from what you expected, in what way(s) was it different?

6. **For returning participants:** Compare your Spotlight audition this year with those you've done in past years. Would you say that your overall experience this year was:

Less Positive About The Same More Positive

7. **For returning participants:** Please tell us how your experience this year was more or less positive than previous years.

8. **For all participants:** After my Spotlight experience:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel more capable of performing well at other auditions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel more confident when I think about my next audition.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think I'll be better able to stay calm when I'm performing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm excited about preparing for my next audition or performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think I'll be able to handle anything that comes up in an audition situation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Did you learn something new or unexpected from your audition experience?

- Yes
 No

10. If yes, what did you learn?

* 11. Please select the category/categories you participated in this year:

- Ballet
 Classical Instrumental
 Classical Voice
 Jazz Instrumental
 Non-Classical Dance
 Non-Classical Voice

12. Do you know another student who considered applying for Spotlight, but did not?

- Yes
 No

13. What factors do you think led this other student to not apply? Please check all that apply.

- Forgot about the deadline.
- Concern that it would take too much time away from school/other commitments.
- Did not feel "ready" to compete.
- Worried that it would be a negative experience.
- Doesn't like the idea of a contest or competition in the arts.
- Other

*** 14. Please enter the zip code where you live:**



SPOTLIGHT

2012 Spotlight Staff

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2012 Spotlight Finalists

Non-Classical Voice

Elizabeth Romero

Mason Alexander Park

Non-Classical Dance

Sam Cantoria

Cammi Nevarez

Classical Voice

April Cho

Justin Lewis

Jazz Instrumental

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