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Photos & Bios of Winners available upon request

## **2007 LIBERACE PIANO COMPETITION WINNERS ANNOUNCED**

LAS VEGAS (Sept. 20, 2007) -- The Liberace Foundation for the Performing & Creative Arts ([www.Liberace.org](http://www.Liberace.org)) announced today the winners of its 2007 Liberace Piano Competition by presenting sponsor The BIAFORE Group of Merrill Lynch.

### **Classical-Junior (age 12 and under)**

**Nicholas Rule, an 11-year old middle school student and Las Vegas/Summerlin resident**, has studied piano for four and a half years. During the finals, he performed: "Etude Opus 1 No. 9" by Franz Liszt

### **Classical-Senior (age 13 and over)**

**Ray Kim, a northwest Las Vegas resident and high school senior**, has played the piano since the young age of six. He performed: "Prelude in G Major Alla Marci Op 23 No. 4" by Sergio Rachmanifnoff.

### **Classical-Adult**

**Carolyn Villavicencio Grossmann of Henderson, Nev.**, professional piano teacher and UNLV honors graduate, Master of Music Piano performance in 2006. She performed: "Reflets dans L'eau (Reflections on the Water)" from Images Book 1 by Claude Debussy

### **Showmanship-Professional**

**Jon England of Wilmington, NC and native of Great Britain** ([www.velvetpiano.com](http://www.velvetpiano.com)), who since 1979 at the young age of 19 has been giving his enthusiastic audiences of his sparkling and unique renditions of everything from "New York, New York" to Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue." He performed a Hollywood and Broadway Rhapsody (medley) that he arranged.

The four winners, who were recipients of a beautiful crystal piano-shaped trophy and a \$250 cash prize, each performed a five-minute glittering showcase of music on a Yamaha Grand Piano, along with their 10 competitors (14 finalists total) for 400 family, guests and supporters at the Community Lutheran Church auditorium, just a few minutes drive from the fabulous Liberace Museum. Proceeds from ticket sales will benefit the Liberace Foundation Scholarship Fund, the Liberace Adopt the Collection Fund, and Family Promise.

The event's talented emcees, Rebecca Spencer and Bruce Ewing, cast members from "PHANTOM: the Las Vegas Spectacular," provided their own amazing brand of entertainment throughout the competition. Spencer kicked off the competition with a tribute solo and video presentation to honor Liberace's life and legacy by singing one of his signature songs, "I'll Be Seeing You," accompanied by

pianist Philip Fortenberry. Russell Eiffert, a 2006 competition winner in the showmanship professional category, traveled from Flemington, NJ to be a featured guest and performed a Cole Porter medley.

Judges for the competition were Evangelina Duke, regional manager for Bosendorfer Pianos of Las Vegas and former Miss Montana 2004; Jack Gaughan, musical director and conductor of "PHANTOM – the Las Vegas Spectacular"; Anna Nateece, a member of the Liberace Foundation Board of Directors and Liberace's long-time fur designer and friend; Philip Fortenberry, one of Broadway's most sought after pianists and who is currently the associate conductor for "Mamma Mia" production at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas; and, Dr. Richard McGee, one of the founders of the Las Vegas Philharmonic who is the current associate conductor and producer and conductor of the Philharmonic's youth concert series.

Contestants were judged in the areas of piano technique, overall performance, stage presence and composure, as well as distinguishing technical skills and artistic interpretation. For the Showmanship category, judges will also be looking for piano technique, overall performance, stage presence, composure, and the capturing of the spirit and enthusiasm of Liberace through stage presence or costume.

Five hundred spectators gathered at the Liberace Museum in early August for the competition's live auditions, where 23 piano contestants shined during each of their piano performances, as the Showmanship competitors performed on Liberace's very own rhinestone-covered Baldwin piano. The Classical category contenders, some as young as seven years old, showcased their musical gifts on a beautiful Bosendorfer Imperial Concert Piano, loaned by the competition's founding sponsor, Bosendorfer Pianos of Las Vegas. The preliminary judges who selected the 14 finalists during the live auditions were Jay Alger, associate music director of "PHANTOM- The Las Vegas Spectacular; Dr. Joan McGee, the founding dean of the new School of Arts at Nevada State College; and Linda Murphy, an accomplished accompanist, principal cellist with the Henderson Symphony Orchestra, and owner of a thriving local music studio.

The Liberace Piano Competition has evolved from a 14-year tradition at The Liberace Foundation and Museum to inspire enthusiasm for the wonderful performance legacy given to us by Mr. Showmanship himself during his 40 years of performing for millions of people around the world. Many pianists have competed over the years, and only a select group of winners are chosen. Liberace himself studied classical music for 17 years at Wisconsin Conservatory of Music and received a scholarship for his studies. Accordingly, The Liberace Piano Competition features two categories: classical and showmanship.

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#### **ABOUT THE LIBERACE FOUNDATION & MUSEUM:**

[www.liberace.org](http://www.liberace.org) Liberace transported audiences to a dazzling world of color, jovial music, glittering costumes and humor. His legend lives on in the Liberace Museum, considered to be Mr. Showmanship's greatest encore performance. Liberace opened his Museum in 1979 to share his collections with the world and to support his love of being an active patron of the arts, and most importantly to support his mission of helping talented students pursue careers in the performing and creative arts through scholarship assistance. To date, the Liberace Foundation has awarded in excess of \$5 million in scholarships to almost 2,500 students at over 110 colleges and universities throughout the U.S.

The Liberace Museum serves as a significant funding source for the Liberace Foundation. It features Liberace's collections of rare and antique pianos, classic cars, famous sequined and bejeweled costume, glittering stage jewelry and rare antiques, as well as Liberace's private papers and memorabilia. The Museum is located at 1775 E. Tropicana Avenue in Las Vegas and open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and noon to 4 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is \$12.50 for adults and \$8.50 for seniors age 65 and older, and students with valid ID. Museum and Foundation members and children ages 10 and under are free. Nevada residents receive free admission the second Sunday of each month. The Museum also presents a "A Musical Tribute to Liberace," On With The Show starring Wes Winters ([www.weswinters.com](http://www.weswinters.com)) every Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday at 1 p.m., and admission price is \$17.50 per person. For more information and to become a member of the Liberace Foundation, call 702.798.5595 or visit the website at [www.liberace.org](http://www.liberace.org).