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Jessica Fishenfeld Wins Eisenhower Park's Reach for the Stars Teen Talent Search!

By Amy Serwitz

"Great job!" Andy Jacklin of the New York Islanders beamed to South High senior, Jessica Fishenfeld.

Great Neck's Jessica Fishenfeld did not score a goal for the Islanders, however this gifted classical and coloratura operatic soprano surely dazzled eight judges, an enthused crowd of over 600 people and Jacklin on Friday, Aug. 8 when she very beautifully performed Adam Guettel's *The Light in the Piazza* at the Reach for the Stars teen talent search, and placing first in the annual summer competition. The event was held outdoors at the Harry Chapin Lakeside Theatre at Eisenhower Park.

In addition, this was Jessica's first time that she participated in a competition with other aspiring singers, and according to the event coordinator, over 100 teens from Long Island, ages 13 to 18, auditioned in July. Each singer had two minutes to sing their song a cappella in front of a panel of three judges, and 25 teens were selected to compete at the August finals.

"I was very surprised," Jessica commented when asked about her success in the contest. She explained, "When I was backstage listening to the other contestants I thought I made a mistake by choosing a classical song because 23 of the 25 finalists sang pop songs. I had a chance to change my song, but I am trained classically and I enjoy singing operatically!" Jessica paused and confidently said with a chuckle, "I didn't have to think long about that," referring to her decision to sing what she enjoys.

"I believe in myself," Jessica shared, and added, "I accept constructive criticism because it always gives me something to work on."

Jessica has been singing since she was 11 years old. She is praised by Pamela Levy, who is the music director of South High, for her work ethics, and she is admired by theatergoers for her professionalism and her excellent performances.

For Jessica, she attributes her musical success to her vocal teacher New York City's Ron Cappon, whose many students have gone on to perform at the Metropolitan Opera House, and of course, to Dr. Levy. "Dr. Levy is one of the most committed teachers that I know. She is extremely supportive and she has given me confidence in my auditions," Jessica said and added, "She always makes the time to help her students individually...it is such a great quality." Dr. Levy accompanied Jessica on the piano on the pre-recorded CD for her August 8 performance.



Singer Jessica Fishenfeld proudly shows off her winning trophy from the Reach for the Stars teen talent search. Pictured with Jessica is her brother, Andrew. Jessica also won \$1,000 dollars worth of gift certificates and a date with the New York Islanders!



Dr. Pamela Levy (L.), music director of South High and singer Jessica Fishenfeld. Dr. Levy accompanied Jessica on the piano on the pre-recorded CD for the Aug. 8. event.

Photos by Amy Serwitz

When asked to share her recent achievements, Jessica smiled and proudly said, "In my junior year I achieved a perfect score of 100 in NYSSMA; I performed *Deh Vieni* on the stage of the New York State Theatre at Lincoln Center in the High School Partnership Program and the Acting for Vocal Students' Workshop; I was president of the chorus board, vice-president of Theatre South, leader of a cappella troupe and co-leader of South singers." Plus, she was captain of the girls varsity foil fencing team and she is an advanced artist, to boot.

In addition, Jessica is best remembered by Great Neck theatergoers for her two stellar performances at Ruel E. Tucker's opera house for her role of Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute* and Countess in *Marriage of Figaro*.

When asked what advice she would give to those singers who are starting out, Jessica thoughtfully said, "I would tell singers who are starting out to stay confident, and not to let people bring you down. If you are rejected, try again, and take criticism that is

important to you to use for your benefit, and leave what doesn't help you."

With the summer coming to an end, Jessica is very much looking forward to her senior year, graduation day, and going away to college where she plans to study operatic voice and psychology. "It's exciting...it is a stepping stone to being on my own," she said.

Jessica's presence and her contribution to Theatre South and Ruel E. Tucker's opera house will surely be missed. But before she says goodbye to her family and friends she has a special date with Andy Jacklin and over 10,000 Islander fans. In November, Jessica is to bring her art to the Nassau Coliseum where she is to perform the national anthem a cappella at an Islander home game. "I am so excited," Jessica smiled warmly.

Without a doubt, Jessica's rendition of the anthem will stir the emotions of the large crowd and her voice will be remembered by many for a long, long time.

For information and a schedule of Theatre South and the music department productions, call 773-1600.