

valley youth theatre

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Valley Youth Theatre is Giving Budding Talent their Start in Showbiz

Seven Local Young People Making National Headlines in their Pursuit of Stardom

(February 1, 2007) Valley Youth Theatre is fast becoming THE jumping off point for young artists who are finding fame on the national scene. This year has seen at least seven VYT alumni poised to make their mark as professional performers across the nation. "Valley Youth Theatre is proud to have played a role through the years in many young people's quest to reach for the stars. The fact that we have been a part of these and many other young people's professional development speaks to the quality performances for which Valley Youth Theatre prides itself." says Bobb Cooper, Producing Artistic Director. The seven VYT alumni are:

- 1) *Arizona Idol* contestant, **Jordin Sparks**, has made the cut and is pursuing the national title of *American Idol* on the FOX Network. When she was just 12 years old, Jordin appeared in Valley Youth Theatre's Production of *Cinderella* and two times in *The Wiz* during the 2002-2003 season. Shortly after her stage debut, her singing career began to take off when she won the title of "Arizona's Rising Star" in a contest sponsored by Coca Cola.
- 2) Ahwatukee native **Max Crumm** is making a name for himself as one of the finalists in NBC's *You're the One That I Want: The Search for Danny and Sandy*, a reality based series in which the public will help to select the lead performers for an upcoming Broadway revival of GREASE. Max started out as a member of VYT's performance troupes, and later moved to mainstage productions, appearing in both of Valley Youth Theatre's productions of *Grease* in 2001 and again in 2004. He also performed in *Little Shop of Horrors* in 2001, *The Wiz* in 2003 and *Titanic* in 2003.
- 3) **Emma (Emily) Stone** was a Valley Youth Theatre regular between 2000 and 2003, appearing in more than a dozen VYT mainstage productions, including *Titanic*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *The Wiz* and *Cinderella*. She has been appearing in several television series over the past two years, and has just landed the lead role in the FOX Network series, *Drive*, which will premiere in April. She will also be starring in a movie this summer.
- 4) In 1998, **Columbus (Keith) Short** played the Cowardly Lion in Valley Youth Theatre's production of *The Wizard of Oz* at the Herberger Theater Center in 1998. Now known as Columbus Short, he has the lead role in the box office smash movie STOMP THE YARD.

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- 5) **Whitney Steele** performed in the 2001 productions of *Grease* and as Kanga in *A Winnie the Pooh Christmas Tail* at Valley Youth Theatre. She has gone on to become a recording artist, releasing a CD featuring her song “You Won’t See Me Crying” featuring Robin Wilson of the Gin Blossoms. She is now competing for the title of best band in the CW Network’s on-line competition.
- 6) Valley Youth Theatre alum **Matt Dallas** is finishing his first season as the title role in the ABC Family Channel series *KYLE XY*. Matt was a cast member of VYT’s 2000 award-winning production of *West Side Story*.
- 7) **Chelsea Staub** of Scottsdale has a recurring role in the Disney Channel’s *The Amazing Hannigans*. She appeared in Valley Youth Theatre performances of *The Wiz* in 2002 and *Titanic* in 2003.

For 18 years, Valley Youth Theatre has been giving young people the tools to become the very best they can be and besides the artists listed above, many others have gone on to become successful as journalists, lawyers, teachers and other highly productive professionals.

More information on these and other VYT Alumni is available on the Valley Youth Theatre website at <http://www.vyt.com/Alumni.php>. For more information, contact Carolyn McBurney at 602-253-8188 x 301 or email Carolyn@VYT.com.

Photos available from VYT performances.

Valley Youth Theatre is a non-profit organization that targets young people age 7 – 19 for participation in and attendance at quality live theatre productions. Its positive impact on youth provides them with lifelong lessons through a wide range of performing arts opportunities. VYT is an award-winning theatre company most recently winning 32 ariZoni Awards for theatrical excellence in the 2005-2006 season. Valley Youth Theatre is supported in part by the Arizona Commission on the Arts with funding from the State of Arizona and the National Endowment for the Arts. Partial funding also is provided by the Phoenix Arts Commission through appropriations from the Phoenix City Council. ###