

Visual artist leads the way with two arts award nominations

Annual awards to be handed out Sept. 30

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Folk/roots singer Trevor Tchir, a *École Secondaire St. Marguerite d'Youville* grad, is up for the established artist award.

The Mayor's Celebration of the Arts Gala nominees were announced this week and one St. Albert visual artist is leading the race with two nods.

Pat Wagenveld, a prominent visual artist, is competing for an arts leadership award and a second nomination for a lifetime achievement award.

"She has shown great leadership in the arts community. She started the VASA (Visual Arts Studio Association) and continues to support new artists who need a place to show work. She's a real advocate for artists and recognizes the value of art in St. Albert," says Nancy Watt, the Mayor's Gala chair.

Traditionally, the Mayor's Gala opens the StArts Festival, a three-day grass roots cultural event that runs in mid-September in conjunction with Alberta Arts Days.

However, Alberta Arts Days has synchronized its festivities with National Culture Day to take place Sept. 30 to Oct. 2. "This year there's been a bigger push from the federal government. Alberta Heritage Days went in synch with the federal government and we're in synch with Alberta Heritage Days," Watt explains.

This year's slate features 19 nominations in seven categories, a decline from the 2010 batch of 33 submissions.

"I don't know why there is a drop. We thought we'd have a few more as we gained presence in the community. We did the same marketing and I'm puzzled by the response," Watt says.

The awards categories celebrate artists, arts organizations, educators and arts supporters associated with the city.

All the awards shine a spotlight on the accomplishments of deserving arts promoters. For instance, The St. Albert Singers' Guild, a growing presence in the community for 25 years, is nominated for a community arts group award.

The guild's current artistic director Criselda Mierau and founding director Lillian Upright are both nominated in the lifetime achievement category.

A delightful semi-surprise is Trevor Tchir, an École Secondaire St. Marguerite d'Youville grad who's up for the established artist award. Tchir is now a resident of Edmonton, where he's created a presence as one of the area's most prominent folk/roots singers.

In the youth artist category, chamber music pianist Lara Hyrak is vying for a prize along with Sarah Kelly, a Paul Kane grad who received the nod for her writing, artwork and musical accomplishments.

And dancer Paige Tirs, vocal performer Aly Yusuf and visual artist Samantha Williams-Chapelsky are in contention for the emerging artist award. Williams-Chapelsky has also been contracted to design and create the work of art that is part of all recipients' awards.

Judges will have to consider arts teachers Colleen Hewitt, Darryl Kari and Judy Smallwood as well as dance teacher Sherri Urkow for the excellence in arts teaching award.

There were few surprises in the lifetime achievement award category as second-time nominees Elke Blodgett, Michael Lazar and Laura Watmough were listed. The only new nominee is visual artist Alan Nuttall.

The semi-formal gala is Friday, Sept. 30 at the Arden Theatre. Tickets go on sale on Monday, Aug. 22 at 9:30 a.m. Call 780-459-1542.

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