

THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER OF THE
TOURETTE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
PRESENTS



Artis**TIC**
Expressions
A Virtual Showcase



JULY 19, 2020
4:00 PM PST



Tourette Association of America

Southern California Chapter



PERFORMANCE ORDER

Elliana and Lexi - Tap
Nicky Bohm - Poetry
Sophie Liotti - Violin and Vocal Music
Liam Lubitz - 3D Animation
Jason Duika - Opera Singer
Elizabeth MacDonald - Visual Art
Hunter Morris - Piano
Rheagan Nelson - Vocal Music
Emma O'Connell - Youtuber (lifesatwitchemma)
Bethany DeLuca - Visual Artist
Aiylee Blair - Vocal Music
Daniel Uhlenberg - Creative Writing and Voice Recording
Hannah Geeb - Visual Art
Nolan Gross - Vocal Music
Tank Koscinski - Visual Art
Sydney Raby - Vocal Music
Trey Lomax - Percussion
Tiffany Meredith - Vocal Music
Meliné Topouzian - Authored and Illustrated a Book
Cole Davis (formerly Megan) - Vocal Music
Camilo Chamorro - Drums
Anne Ford - Poetry
Donovan Rickson - Stage Acting
Yestin Morris - Skateboarding
Grace Taylor - Vocal Music and Ukelele
Sarah Steben - Trapeze
Kyle Taylor - Guitar



PERFORMER BIOS



AIYLEE

Aiylee Blair is 11 years old. She was diagnosed with Tourette's syndrome at the age of Five. Aiylee loves to sing. In this video she is singing "Someone to Love" by Lewis Capaldi.



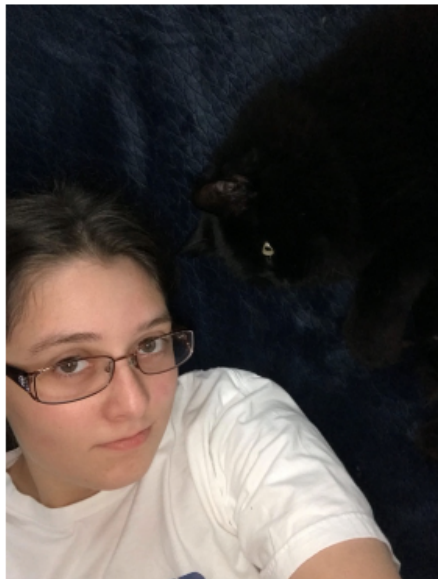
ANNE

I'm Anne Ford. I'm seventeen years old from Midwest America. When I was in middle school, I noticed my shoulder rolling during class. I didn't think much about it, and for a year or two that's all it was. But in eighth grade, more tics started surfacing. I was moving my feet, and squeaking my voice.

I didn't want anyone to know and thankfully, nobody really said anything until tenth grade. Then my mom took me to the doctor, and I was diagnosed with Tourette's Syndrome.

I started writing poetry about a year ago as a way to express my feelings. I didn't plan to share these poems with anyone else, but a couple months ago, I decided to publish a book! I'm currently editing it with the help of my family. I hope this book will help spread awareness about Tourette's and be a light to the world. I have always enjoyed expressing myself creatively, but just recently got over my anxiety and decided to share with others.

I know that I am capable and ready to finally show other people who I am and what TS is. I am not afraid to tell my peers and authority figures about my Tourette's. I plan to be advocating TS for years to come. 2 Corinthians 3:12 says, "Therefore, since we have such hope, we become very bold." I am not ashamed of my story. I'm ready to let my light shine.



BETHANY

I am twenty-five years old and I live in Rhode Island. I am attending an art school (RISD) to become a jewelry designer and hope to continue to grow as an artist. I enjoy creating things out of clay, metal, and other materials and get my inspiration from the creatures and plants that God has created. I love the different colors and patterns of nature that are out there; from the wings of a butterfly to the petals of each flower, there is incredible beauty all around us. In my life, these things also point to God, who gives me the strength I need to get through each day.

Living with TS is a challenge at times but does not define who I am. My tics sometimes mess up my art but even when it does, I persevere and continue to create. My family and friends are always supportive and continually encourage and inspire me.

The purple creature in my drawing is my view of what my TS looks like; it is an uncontrollable and difficult thing to deal with and has a bit of a wild animal personality.

Living with Tourette's has shown me how to be more compassionate towards others who struggle with different things. It has opened my eyes to see others in need and who struggle each day.



CAMILO

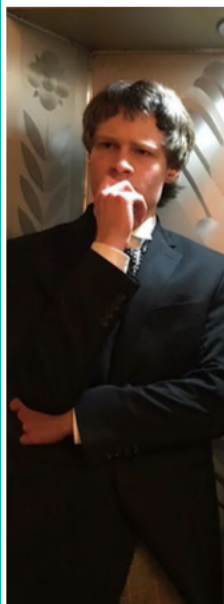
I'm Camilo Chamorro and I'm 12 years old. I've been playing the drums for 3 years. I've even continued with virtual lessons as the pandemic forced the permanent closure of my music studio!

Green Day is my favorite band, and I had tickets to see them in my home town of Houston this month, but then you guessed it, pandemic strikes again... I was diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome and ADHD when I was 4 years old. As you might imagine from my early diagnosis, both affect me quite severely. The Briarwood School for children with differences like me has been heaven-sent for the support and advocacy I've needed to learn. Despite my differences, playing the drums gives me relief from my tics and is something where I feel like I really excel. My dream is to be a drummer or a race car driver. I hope other kids with Tourette Syndrome know they're not alone and that TS comes with gifts that just happen to come in the same package with tics, just reveal your gifts and chase your talents!



DANIEL

Daniel is a writer, voice actor, and video producer who frames his tics as a charming quirk and shames anybody who dares to assert otherwise.



DONOVAN

Donovan is 16 and a junior in high school. His interests are video games and electric guitar. He was also in his first stage play earlier this year and that is what he is sharing with you tonight.

In Shakespeare's 'As You Like It', Donovan played Touchstone, the court fool. In this scene, Touchstone is offering up some better rhymes for Rosilind, improvements to the lame one her suitor made in a letter.



ELIZABETH

My name is Elizabeth MacDonald and I'm a 27 year old Business Marketing student living in Santa Rosa, California. I was diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome in 2019. You can find more of my artwork on Instagram @peyerate, please check it out!



ELLIANA AND LEXI

Elliana and Lexi are 13yrs old best friends from Washington State. They are so thrilled to be performing "Friend Like Me" with together. And they hope you enjoy the show. Jeremiah 29:11

Elliana has been dancing for 11 1/2yrs, and is currently with Riot Dance Center, in Puyallup, Wa. Elli loves performing in our local music theater, in her free time.

Some of her most recent and favorite roles have been as a featured dancer and Ensemble "Singin' in the Rain", Ensemble, The Enchanted Carpet, & Baby Wolf "Beauty and the Beast" & Little Eva "King and I" (ASTRA), Ensemble/Featured Tapper "Christmas Story" & Ensemble "Music Man" (ManeStage Theatre), Ensemble "All Shook Up" (Stahl JrHS), Ensemble & Contortionist "Seussical" (Rogers HS).

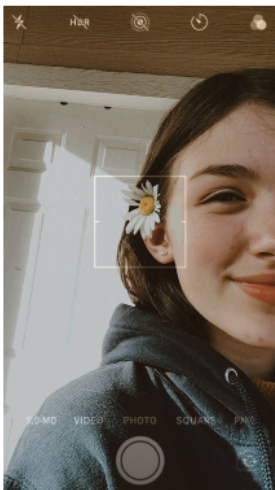
Lexi has been dancing for 11 years and is currently with Riot Dance Center in Puyallup. She has been on their competitive dance team for 5 years where she has brought home innumerable trophies for placing in the Top 5 in all genres of dance. Her passion is tap dance and she has competed in large groups, trio's, duo's and even a solo in four national competitions.



EMMA

My name is Emma and I am the creator of the YouTube channel [lifesatwitchemma](#), a Rising Leader for the Tourette Association of America, and overall a Tourette syndrome advocate! I am 22 years old and from North Carolina.

My favorite thing to do is to create YouTube videos about Tourette syndrome in order to decrease stigmas surrounding it, help those who have it feel less alone, and educate my viewers.



GRACE

My name is Grace Taylor, I am 14 years old, and have had Tourette's since I was about 7 years old. Music and art has always been my outlet for Tourettes. Whenever I sing, play ukulele, or another instrument, I almost forget I have Tourettes. The song I'm singing in my submission is called "here I am" which is sort of about the feeling of when you hit rock bottom after trying to be like someone you aren't just to impress someone else; It's also inspired by when those of us with Tourette's try to hide our tics- and how we want to just let them out and say "here I am"





HANNAH

Hannah Geeb is a creative 10 year old from Chillicothe Ohio. She thoroughly enjoys any type of art: paint, charcoal, chalk, diamond painting, makeup artistry and baking! She is always trying out new techniques and just really enjoys having a creative outlet because it helps her manage her tics and anxiety.

She paints everything, all the time! Art is very therapeutic for her and she has recently joined a weekly art class. If she is not creating art, she is watching home renovation shows, riding her bike, doing tik tok videos with her cat, or listening to music.



HUNTER

My name is Hunter Duke Morris and I am 11 years old. I live in Apopka, FL and I will be starting 6th grade this year. I was officially diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome in 2018 and while I cycle through many different tics, I've found an outlet in playing the piano.

I have an amazing teacher and she helps me express myself through music. I'm not ashamed of my TS because I know my Heavenly Father made me this way for a reason."





JASON

Baritone Jason Duika is quickly making a name for himself in the classical music world. Most recently, he sang the title role in Verdi's "Nabucco" to great acclaim in October of 2019 with West Bay Opera, in California and last June, he sang the Baritone solos in Vaughan Williams "Dona Nobis Pacem" with Mid America Productions at Carnegie Hall's 3,000 seat Isaac Stern Auditorium.

In last Spring's portrayal of "Herode" in Massenet's Herodiade, with New Amsterdam Opera, John Yohalem of Parterre Box noted, "Jason Duika has a sizable and remarkably lofty baritone, which should serve him well for Verdi roles - he topped "Vision Fugitive" with an A-flat. And yet his delivery seemed effortless, lyric, a melting, manly sound." Also, last February, Jason sang his first Verdi title role, 'Francesco Foscari' in "I Due Foscari" with West Bay Opera. He also sang "Marcello" in 'La Boheme' there, in October of 2018, where the reviews said, "Jason Duika sang with glorious round tone, and unimpeachable legato."

In February of 2018, Jason was asked to return to his Alma Mater, the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music and sing the lead Baritone role of Enrico, Lucia's brother in Donizetti's 'Lucia di Lammermoor'. In his portrayal of "Enrico", the critics said, "...A beautiful instrument, manly, generous and assured in timbre. Not only some, but many really stunning, thrilling notes in his delivery. Clearly an ideal role for him. Bravo! Onwards and upwards." -Martin Snell

Jason lives in Dexter, Michigan, and is 37 years old.



KYLE

My name is Kyle Taylor and my band is called the "Kyle Taylor Band." It was around 4 years ago when I had discovered my deep passion for music. Playing instruments such as the guitar really helps me cope with my mild case of Tourette's Syndrome, and I've never looked back since then.



LIAM

Hi! My name is Liam Lubitz (as stated in the video :P). I'm 21 years old, from New Jersey, and this December, I'll be graduating with an associate's degree in 3D animation and Digital Design! So far, I've managed to maintain straight A's, but that doesn't mean I didn't struggle. Last semester was extremely difficult - making the transition to do work at home - PLUS my tics put a constant strain on my hands. However, I made it to the end of the semester again with an A and an awesome portfolio piece which is what I'm showing here today!

I want to thank The Tourette Association for putting this on. I hold a massive respect to my fellow artists with TS. This isn't by any means easy to deal with but you all are constantly breaking the barriers set in front of you. You're all amazing and you prove that any dream truly is achievable.

If you want to collaborate with me, you can find me on social media @liamlubitz and my portfolio on liamlubitz.wixsite.com/website-2
I look forward to hearing from you! ---Liam



COLE

(Formerly known as Megan, but has changed their name)

Hi! My name is Megan Davis. I'm 21 years old and I'm from La Crescenta, California. I moved here from Dekalb, Illinois when I was 11 years old. Basically, lived half of my life there and half here.

I have Tourette syndrome along with a ton of comorbidities like OCD, ADD, anxiety, sensory issues, etc. I go to Community college and struggle just like I'm sure everyone else here does, but most people really don't care about my TS. A lot of the time I warn them ahead on days when my TS is acting up. Everyone is really accepting. When you get to college, NO ONE CARES. It's so nice. Aside from TS bothering me, I have really bad ADD and forget things in a millisecond. Most of my professors are understanding and help me when I need them to repeat something. I'm sure I've annoyed them at some point or another from having to repeat something 5 times.

This would've been my first year going to Artistic Expressions, until COVID shut everything down. I go Camp George every year that I can. It's a Tourette's camp held in Simi Valley. I have been going for about 5 years now. I am also a counselor there! Have been for either 2 or 3 years. That whole camp is my family and I love everyone. Thanks to them, I've learned coping skills and to accept my TS. I was actually going to miss it this year to go to Scotland to see my brother's graduation and I was so sad. THEN I WAS MISSING BOTH. THEN I got virtual camp George! Anyways, hopefully next year I will be able to experience Artistic Expressions in person!

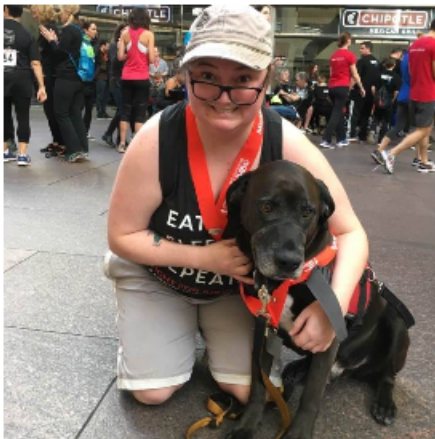


MELINÉ

My name is Meliné Topouzian, I am 29 years old and currently live in Massachusetts (originally from Michigan). I am a social worker and an artist, and work in the mental health field.

Growing up with TS was definitely stressful at times. Since I was 6 years old, I was picked on by peers and teachers, medication never seemed to work, and my body was tired of twitching all the time. Art and sports were the only things that helped them “go away,” and I am lucky that my parents encouraged those areas of my development.

For my senior project in college, I had created “Comoddiquirk” as a tribute to my family and pediatric neurologist, because they taught me to laugh at my tics! Let’s be real, some tics are just flat out ridiculous...the unprompted arm jerks (or “flapping like a chicken,” as my second grade teacher liked to point out), humming while eating, or the whole body clench that makes me look like I was hit by an invisible soccer ball. During my appointments, my doctor acted out each tic, saying, “are you doing this one?...okay, how about this one?” and I would spend more time laughing, and less time feeling self-conscious. My TS has also become a great excuse for dancing off-beat during my family’s sporadic pre-dinner dance parties! I am proud to say that I wouldn’t be who I am today without my tics.



NICKY

My name is Nicky B. Bohm (34 Years old) I am from Minnesota. I have had Tourette since the age of 5 but wasn’t diagnosed till the age of 25. This poem was inspired by an incident that happened at a store. I didn’t have a good school experience so that motivated me to become a special education teacher. I have worked in the field since 1999 as a paraprofessional until 2007 when I became a Teacher.

Now, I am married, have one young daughter (4 months old), and I am a behavior specialist at Cyber Village Academy in Saint Paul, Minnesota and a Lead Autism Specialist at West Metro Learning Connections in Excelsior, Minnesota. In this photo, I climbed 680 stairs for the fight for air climb with my service dog named Abe.





NOLAN

My name is Nolan Gross, I'm from Santa Cruz California and I am 17. For this showcase I'll be performing my song called, "12 In The Neck," off of my debut album, "The Path To Forever." This song is about my struggle with Tourette Syndrome. I have been dealing with facial tics and neck pulls since the age of 7 and after years of not being able to accept that it's a part of me, making this song helped me find peace in this experience.

I tried botox for my neck tics to try and suppress them. Getting botox wasn't to keep me looking younger, it was because it's known to help with facial tics and helping them dissolve overtime. Making this song helped me break free of trying to hide my tics and this is a way for me to show & express how I feel about having Tourettes.

RHEAGAN



Hello! My name is Rheagan Nelson, I'm 20 years old, and I'm from Virginia!

SARAH



Sarah Steben and her twin sister are former performers in Cirque du Soleil. Sarah has Gilles de la Tourette syndrome and was diagnosed when she was 19. She found Trapeze being her outlet to feel better about herself and lift herself up after the failures she experienced at school. And it worked!!! Only in the air she did not tic.

"On the floor I have my sister to accept me with my struggles with Tourette, In the air I have the danger I face to keep me away from Ticking."





SOPHIE

Sophie Liotti, 14 year old diagnosed with Tourette's at age 8. She auditioned to sing the National Anthem for the Pirates baseball Spring training in Bradenton FL and made it! Unfortunately baseball spring training was cancelled before she had an opportunity to sing.

The second video is her playing violin at Solo and Ensemble competition where she received a Superior rating as an 8th grader for the State of FL.

She is a competitive dancer and enjoys dancing, singing and playing music!



SYDNEY

Hi guys!! My name is Sydney, I am 16 years old, and I am from MA. My favorite things to do are perform, play sports, and do math (I know, I'm both a theater nerd and a math nerd 😊). Some fun facts about me are that I have two different colored eyes, I have pink hair, I have a dog named cocoa, and I have lots of tics. My happy place is on stage. I get to transform myself into someone else, and live life as another person for a little while. It's so cool; we can never do that in real life! Also, (as you might notice) most of my major, complex, and noticeable tics disappear while I am performing.

That never happens any other time, and it feels so nice to be tic free for a while. Today I will be performing two contrasting pieces, Popular from Wicked, and Burn from Hamilton. These two songs are so much fun both to sing and to act. If you want to see more musical theater songs, geek out together, or just talk, my Instagram is [@sydneymaya_raby](#) and my email is Sydneymr19@gmail.com. I hope you enjoy!



TIFFANY

I'm Tiffany and this is what I came up with over quarantine hope you like it :)





TANK

My name is Tank Koscinski, but I have been using Tank James as my professional name. I am 22 years old and I live in Oviedo, Florida which is 45 minutes east of Disney World. Currently, I am taking classes at Crealde School of Art, with a specific focus on sculpture- clay, metal, and masonry. However I love working with all mediums especially graphite and acrylic paint. At this time I am working professionally as a commissioned artist. However, one of my long term aspirations is to work in the themed entertainment industry. I want to thank my family, mentors, and teachers for all of their help and support. I hope you enjoy viewing my work as much as I enjoyed creating them.



TREY

My name is Trey Lomax and I am 14. I live in Las Vegas, Nevada. I have TS and OCD, diagnosed in elementary school but it does not define me. I will be attending Las Vegas Academy of the Performing Arts for percussion this year as a freshmen. I enjoy practicing JuJitsu, reading and playing video games. The piece I am performing is "Eruption of Sakurajima" by Jessica Muniz.



YESTIN

My name is Yestin Morris and I am 11 years old and live in San Diego, Ca. I love to do many sports but decided to send you a video of me in my local skate park. I have had TS for about a year now but I don't let that stand in my way of having fun. Enjoy the video and see what makes me tick 😂

ArtisTIC Expressions Team



RHIANNA WICKEN

Rhianna Wicken had small tics since early childhood, but she was thirteen years old when she began having full body jerking movements and loud outbursts. A year later, she received a diagnosis of Tourette Syndrome, which introduced her to the Tourette Association of America and led her to meet many other people with TS, giving her a huge support network and friends who truly understood what she was living with. As a senior in high school, she was trained as a Youth Ambassador in 2014 and attended the "Trip to the Hill", meeting with congressmen in Washington D.C. about continuing CDC funding for research and continued education on Tourette Syndrome.

In the same year, she also created and organized ArtisTIC Expressions, a now annual event which brings the Southern California Tourette Community together to celebrate the performing and visual artistic talent of persons living with Tourette Syndrome. She has also volunteered at Camp George since 2014, was trained as part of the inaugural class of TAA Rising Leaders in 2019, and most recently became a member of the Board of Directors for the Southern California Chapter of the TAA.

She is currently pursuing her B.A. in Anthropology at California State University – Long Beach, with hopes of continuing on to receive a Ph.D. in Medical Anthropology. She is deeply focused on researching not only the medicalized aspects of health, but on the effects of stigma, personal responsibility for care, and the cultural and social aspects of living with chronic health conditions.



SHANA CHANCE

Shana Chance is the Executive Director of the Tourette Association of America (TAA), Southern California. In this role, she is responsible for the chapter's consistent achievement of its mission. This includes delivering effective local programming with impact and excellence, as well as achieving annual fundraising goals.

Prior to her position with TAA, Ms. Chance served as the Director of Corporate Relations for the School of Engineering and the School of Information and Computer Sciences at the University of California, Irvine.

In this capacity, she was responsible for engaging with companies to build relationships that advanced various strategic priorities as defined by the Deans.

During her career, Ms. Chance has raised tens of millions of dollars for a variety of initiatives including, but not limited to: health disparities; STEM education; scholarship support; leadership development for high-school and college students; museum exhibitions and; social justice training for young women.

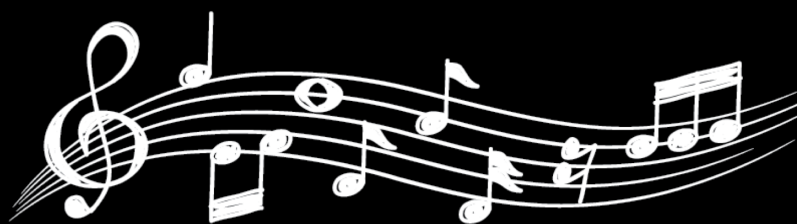
Shana is also a dedicated community volunteer, giving her time to nonprofit organizations such as 100 Black Women of Orange County (where she was the Vice President of Membership).

Ms. Chance was born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts. She received her B.S. in Communication from Boston University and her M.A. in Mass Communication from the University of Georgia. Shana relocated to Irvine, CA in January 2015 from Atlanta, GA, where she held the position of Corporate and Foundation Relations Officer for Spelman College.



ERIC MCGOWAN

Eric has been involved with the TAA Southern California Chapter since 2016 and has served as a member of the SoCal volunteer Board of Directors since 2018. While he was diagnosed with TS at an early age, Eric had never knowingly met another person with TS until moving to Los Angeles as an adult and becoming involved with the SoCal Chapter. Knowing firsthand the difficulty of facing TS alone, he is driven by his passion to help everyone living with and affected by TS receive the support and resources they need to navigate this often misunderstood and challenging condition. Professionally, Eric works as an acoustical consultant in the Southern California building industry. He is a graduate of Columbia College Chicago where he earned a BS in Acoustics, and from the University of Kansas where he completed his MA in Architecture.



ArtisTIC
Expressions

A Virtual Showcase

TOURETTE SYNDROME





The ArtisTIC Expressions team and the TAA Southern California Chapter Board of Directors would like to thank the following people for their help and generosity in making this year's virtual event a reality. We could not do this without them!

All of the 2020 event participants for sharing their talents and inspiration

The Tourette Association of America for promotional and administrative support

The Southern California Chapter volunteer social media team

Saint Rocke in Hermosa Beach, CA for their very generous support of our live ArtisTic Expressions events (we hope to see you there in person in 2021!)

ALL OF YOU FOR ATTENDING AND SUPPORTING!

