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NEWS

For immediate release

OBU alum Caitlin Secrest named finalist in National Music Theatre competition

By Chelsea Whelpley

September 15, 2014

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Caitlin Secrest, a 2014 Ouachita Baptist University graduate and Arkadelphia native, was named a finalist in this year's National Music Theatre competition hosted by the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS). The finals were held during the 53rd NATS National Conference in Boston, Mass.

Secrest advanced through three rounds of competition to be named one of eight finalists. She performed from seven musical selections to demonstrate her vocal and dramatic abilities. Competition winners are awarded cash prizes, recording packages and career management services along with stage experience and exposure.

"We couldn't be prouder of her—to see what she has done with her commitment to her art and the gift that God has given her," said Caitlin's mother and vocal instructor, Dr. Glenda Secrest, professor of music at Ouachita. "It was really fun to see the progress that she's made. Just to see her grow and develop as an artist has been really rewarding as a teacher and also as a parent."

Dr. Glenda Secrest and her husband, Dr. Jon Secrest, have served as Caitlin's vocal instructors, team-teaching her since high school.

"What a great pleasure to know that the work Caitlin has put into her performance skillset was recognized by the judges of all three rounds of competition," said Dr. Jon Secrest, Addie Mae Maddox Professor of Music at Ouachita. "But what I am particularly proud of is her attitude, her work ethic and her dedication of talent to the Lord."

This is the second National Music Theatre Competition that NATS has sponsored. In 2012, Jacob Watson, another OBU alumnus, won the inaugural competition. "It tells you the quality of the education and training that our students are receiving here," Dr. Glenda Secrest noted. "We're proud of all of our students."

"Recognition and exposure of this kind could possibly lead to opportunities for professional work as a performer, singer and actor," said Dr. Jon Secrest. Since graduating, Caitlin has auditioned for opportunities such as Disney Tokyo, Carnival and Royal Caribbean cruise lines and the Silver Dollar City Christmas Show.

"Had I not attended Ouachita Baptist, I would not be so brave and confident in today's audition world," Caitlin said. "Ouachita has everything it takes to create a successful, thriving singer and actor who is capable of taking the world by storm in her own special way."

In the final round of competition, Secrest performed "I Think I May Want to Remember Today" from *Starting Here, Starting Now*; "When Did I Fall in Love?" from *Fiorello!*; "Adelaide's Lament" from *Guys and Dolls*; "Pretty Funny" from *Dogfight*; and "Gorgeous" from *The Apple Tree*.

Secrest received the Martha Mack Award of 2014 for participants of Opera in the Ozarks, first place in the 2014 Mary Shambarger Competition for Singers at Ouachita, honorable mention in the 2014 National Hal Leonard Vocal Musical Theatre competition and was the 2013 state winner of the National Federation of Music Clubs Women's Collegiate vocal competition.

"One of the most important lessons that I have learned, and one that is very encouraging to me and all other performers, is that you are the only person who has to offer what you have to offer," Caitlin said. "God created us all as individuals with incredibly unique abilities and we just have to figure out what they are and use them to serve Him."

For more information, contact Dr. Jon Secrest at secrestj@obu.edu or (870) 245-5134.

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