

Olivia Freeman crowned 2018 Aurora Teen Idol



By Brock Weir

Olivia Freeman has never set foot in a recording studio, but she's about to do just that after being crowned Aurora's 2018 Teen Idol on Canada Day.

Olivia, 14, who just graduated from Grade 8 at Holy Spirit Catholic Elementary School, was named the winner, with Vianna Ek taking the sash as first runner up.

Olivia, who will begin high school in the arts program at St. Elizabeth Catholic Secondary School in September, clinched the title with her pitch-perfect performance of Defying Gravity from the Broadway musical Wicked.

"I am really shocked and excited," said Olivia after receiving her sash from Mayor Geoff Dawe.

Six of the eight Aurora Teen Idol contestants — Nicolina Bozzo, Rose Richardson, Olivia Freeman, Vianna Ek, Jessica Richer, and Nicole In — took over the stage on Saturday afternoon, performing not only before an audience of family, friends, and fans, but also a judging panel of industry professionals, including music producer Philip Trow, co-founder of Opera York, and singers Carla-Grace Colagouri, who evaluated each contestant on criteria ranging from pitch to diction, from tone quality to stage presence.

"I was so surprised to see how much talent there was at such a young age," said Diego. "I was very impressed."

Added Carla-grace: "I was looking for someone who acts when they are singing, not just singing but being a character when they sing. [Olivia] had beautiful stage presence."

Diego said he agreed, noting: "She is so young, but she was nailing those high notes like nothing else. It is a musical theatre piece and very hard to sing — as singers, we know what it takes to sing a piece like that."

In addition to the chance to perform at various Town events over the next 12 months, and, of course, the glory, this year's aspiring singers had an added reason to audition: Highway 11 Entertainment came on board this year to offer the 2018 Aurora Teen Idol with a full original song production package, including the writing, arranging recording, mixing and mastering of one song, along with the storyboarding, shooting and post-production of a music video.

"I am excited about the recordings because I have never done anything like that," said Olivia. "I am really excited and it is a really great opportunity."

Perhaps it is not surprising Olivia chose a number from Wicked to wow the judges. She says she has always had a love for musical theatre, having immersed herself in that world at the age of eight.

"I just fell in love with acting and being on stage," she says. "I love The Sound of Music and I got my dream role of Maria this year at Marquee Theatrical Productions. I am just really thankful for this opportunity."