

MaMA waves magic

By LUCILLE RICH
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Exists there a "wanna be" performer who in the privacy of his or her own dream world does not give way to whimsy about a fairy godmother with a magic wand (more like magic money tree), who with a wave of a telephone wire, could cut through red tape, make the contacts and "whosh," present him in public concert? This would be the lucky break! Instant recognition. It's a heady thought.

It could happen, perhaps not quite like that. But consider a patron saint by another name: Music and More Inc., a non-profit organization that brings music enrichment programs to inner-city public school children and general-public concerts at Merkin Hall.

The group's newest activity — and this is the "patron saint" part — is MaMA (Music and More Awards) designed to seek out talented minority performers and launch their musical careers.

Auditions are open to singers and instrumentalists 18 to 32 years old who have completed their musical studies or just about to, and are ready to start their stage careers but financially can't go it alone to present themselves in concert. MaMA's president and

founder, Israela Margalit, renowned concert pianist and recording artist, brainstormed the idea. As a young budding performer trying to get off the launch pad in New York City — Mecca of the music world — Ms. Margalit "has been there." "I know what it's like," she said; "it's not easy and money, or the lack of it, is always a problem."

Months of search and discover by the Events Committee led by MaMA's auditions coordinator Bess Pruitt produced 21 contestants in a marathon battle of impressive talents at Cami Hall on Nov. 17 before a panel of music judges. Seven hopefuls made it to the finals. Given the extraordinary talent and technical skill, undoubtedly, these "wanna-be's" one day, "will be."

Nov. 20, the night of the finals — the atmosphere bristles with excitement, expectation and pre-performance nerves. It is a gala wine-dine benefit at the home of Ms. Margalit, attended by some 100 contributors — a sleek, music-wise audience of patrons, coaches, parents, friends; music-lovers all, rooting for the superbly talented performers. And perform they did.

Pianists Anthony Newton and Felix Spengler displayed a daz-

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wand for minority performers

zling technical virtuosity and an impressive command of the instrument. Sopranos Gabrielyn Watson, Cecelia Tucker-Meyers and Indira Mahajan were polished, composed and possessed of beautiful voices. Nora Lee Garcia played the flute with a sensitivity and skill beyond her young years. Jorge Garcia D'Leon's extraordinary talent and technique on the clarinet led him to first prize, decided by the jury. Soprano Indira Mahajan won honorable mention. Soprano Cecelia Tucker-Meyers won the Popular Performer award, decided by the audience through a ballot. Friends



WINNING SMILES of Jorge Garcia D'Leon, clarinetist, and Cecelia Tucker-Meyers, soprano, greet the happy smile of Music and More President Israela Margalit after their successful performances at the Music and More Awards compe-