

Students interpret the Bard

By Jen Waters
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Carli Fitzgerald, a junior at Magruder High School in Rockville, has a passion for the works of William Shakespeare.

Miss Fitzgerald is one of the 38 high school students who gathered at the Shakespeare Theatre in Northwest on Thursday to take part in the 13th annual Shakespeare Competition sponsored by the English-Speaking Union.

Each participant, who was drawn from a larger pool of contestants throughout the Washington area, presented a memorized version of a Shakespearean sonnet and a brief dramatic monologue.

Carli chose to perform Sonnet 147 and a scene as Helena from "All's Well That Ends Well."

"This is a way to express yourself," said Carli, 16. "You can escape from all the petty stuff stressing you out and sit in someone else's skin for a change."

Carli also is one of the 13 finalists the judges chose to return Monday night, when three finalists will earn monetary prizes for their efforts. The one who places first will receive an expense-paid trip in April to the National Shakespeare Competition at Lincoln Center in New York City. The victor there will win a three-week summer drama course in England.

Elizabeth Wells, a senior at the Madeira School in McLean, is another finalist in the group. She presented a scene as the Princess of France from "Love's Labors Lost" and Sonnet 18.

"I was actually very surprised I was chosen as a finalist," Miss Wells, 19, said. "A lot of people were very good this year. Every time I act, it's reaffirming the fact that I like to act."

Joan Dienzo of Suitland High School in Forestville enjoys taking the stage, but she said she gets the jitters. She was chosen as one of the finalists after doing a scene as Juliet from "Romeo and Juliet" and Sonnet 148.

"I was extremely nervous," the 16-year-old junior said. "I just tried to relax and remembered what I rehearsed."

John F. Andrews, executive director of the English-Speaking Union in Northwest, presented a "conversation" with Sir Derek Ja-



Photos by Michael Connor/The Washington Times

Roya Zarrinnahad, a student at Lake Braddock High School, performed a Shakespearean monologue during the English-Speaking Union's Shakespeare Competition as her image reflected in a backdrop on the stage.



Ebony Williams, a student from Calvin Coolidge High School in Northwest, raised her fist during a Shakespearean monologue.



Eva Kriksciun, a student from Chantilly High School, emoted.

cobi while the judges deliberated the winners. Mr. Jacobi is probably best known for his title role in the British TV series "I, Claudius." He also portrayed another ruler of the same name in the 1996 Kenneth Branagh film of "Hamlet."

Mr. Jacobi offered encouragement to those students who would not be selected as finalists. He quoted wisdom from Genesis of Rome, who is considered the patron

saint of actors, saying the students should be "undismayed by failure and undecieved by success."

"One thing drama schools don't tell you is that you will probably face years of rejection," Mr. Jacobi said from stage. "It requires huge resources of self-discipline and self-awareness."

A. Graham Down, educational consultant and president emeritus of the Council for Basic Education in

Northwest, said he is encouraged to see youth who are excited about Shakespeare.

"To speak is to think," Mr. Down said. "Shakespeare is a master of ambiguity. There's not enough of that in our culture."