



## First Annual Hani El-Masri Student Artist Award Announced at Ryman Arts Graduation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact:**

Shannon Huang

(213) 629-2787

[shuang@ryman.org](mailto:shuang@ryman.org)



**June 26, 2017 – Los Angeles, CA** – The first annual **Hani El-Masri Student Artist Award** was announced at Ryman Arts Graduation on June 21, 2017. The first winner of this scholarship, **XiaoXuan (Ivy) Bi**, received the award from **Bob Weis**, President of Walt Disney Imagineering and **Julie Svendsen**, Disney Imagineer and close friend of the late Mr. El-Masri.

Hani El-Masri was an artist and designer, born and educated in Egypt, who immigrated to the US and became a Disney Imagineer. He also worked at DreamWorks Animation and other studios. At Disney he worked on Mickey's Toontown, the Arabian Coast section of Tokyo Disney Seas, and Blizzard Beach among many other projects. At DreamWorks Animation, El-Masri worked on the animated features, "Prince of Egypt" and "Spirit." Later he returned to Egypt, where he won a national award as a children's book illustrator. He returned to California frequently, and died here in 2015.

"Ever since I was a child, what brought me the greatest joy was drawing, and I realized early on that I was going to be an artist," said El Masri during his 2014 TEDxCairo talk. "That's why I started focusing on all the things that would help me become a good artist."

The purpose of the new award is to celebrate the life of Hani El-Masri by recognizing the accomplishments of an outstanding Ryman Arts student who is, like Mr. El-Masri, an immigrant to the United States, and is planning to pursue higher education after graduation from high school.



*(left to right) Bob Weis, Ryman Arts graduate Ivy Bi, and Julie Svendsen*

Ivy graduated from both Ryman Arts and Glen A. Wilson High School in June 2017 and will enroll at Art Center College of Design in the Fall. In her three semesters at Ryman Arts, Ivy distinguished herself with her great skill and dedication.

Ivy has lived in the US for seven years. Ivy stated: "Being an immigrant...means learning to grow up and almost start over. Learning a new language and culture that is not necessarily easy to fit into, I learned to become more genuine, open minded, and fascinated by colorful cultures."

This Award is underwritten by Bob Weis, with additional support from Leah and Marty Sklar. The Award fund covers the cost of the student's participation in the Ryman Arts education program and a stipend for the student to help cover college expenses.

The Hani El-Masri Student Artist Award fund is a living legacy honoring the life of a remarkable artist. With additional contributions, the fund could support more deserving students each year. **To make a contribution to the Hani El-Masri Student Artist Award fund, please visit <http://rymanarts.org/donate>, call (213) 629-2787, or mail a check, payable to Ryman Arts at 1933 S Broadway, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor, Suite 1138, Los Angeles, CA 90007.**

### **About Ryman Arts**

Ryman Arts is one of the nation's top youth art programs, offering professional studio art instruction along with college and career guidance to artistic high school youth who are serious about a future in art—all at no cost to the student. Almost all graduates go on to college, many alumni work in the creative industries, and all are poised for personal success. Accepted students choose to attend weekend classes on the campus of California State University, Fullerton or Otis College of Art & Design. Founded in 1990—a year after the death of Herbert D. Ryman (1910-1989), the legendary designer for Walt Disney as well as an artist who encouraged young artists throughout his career—the organization carries on Ryman's philosophy of teaching the foundational skills of drawing and painting, and commitment to encouraging young artists to reach their full potential. Over the past 27 years, Ryman Arts has engaged over 6,000 Southern California teens in its core program and provided outreach activities to more than 20,000 inner city students. [www.rymanarts.org](http://www.rymanarts.org)