THOUSANDS of students have the chance to shine in front of a massive audience in next year’s Victorian State Schools Spectacular.

Up to 3000 students will perform in the show – a massed choir, dance and solo extravaganza at Melbourne’s Hisense Arena next September.

The call has gone out to teachers and students keen to be part of the biennial event – a two-hour spectacular production celebrating diverse performance mediums including music, choir, dance, vocal, drama and orchestra.

“Expressions of interest are now open for almost 1600 government schools across the state,” said Mark Laguerre, artistic director of the Victorian Government initiative Joining the Chorus, which produces the show.

Schools can apply for groups of up to 20 students to be part of the choir or dance groups. The Victorian State Schools Spectacular exists to provide Victorian government school students with an unforgettable experience in performing arts,” he said.

While the performers are students of all ages – from prep through to year 12 – the team behind the spectacular show are all veterans of the music and entertainment industries.

There are no auditions for the massed choir or dance groups, but auditions will be held for vocal soloists, musicians, and performance groups including singers, comedians, actors, in-line skaters, BMX freestylers, bands, choirs, marching bands, cheerleading squads and more.

The Spectacular combines great music, drawn from a range of musical styles, dance, singing and acting in a non-competitive theatrical event.

There will be three performances of the Spectacular – two on Saturday, September 18, and one the following day. Joining the Chorus was established in 1995 to give students the opportunity to perform in a professionally-run production to a large audience.

“Sport is always big in schools because sport has a clear outcome – if you are good enough you get through to regional or state finals,” Mr Laguerre said.

“Performing arts doesn’t necessarily have the same ladder of success. The Victorian State Schools Spectacular gives students a very clear performance outcome, new skills and the thrill of performing in a world-class venue.”

Schools are encouraged to select students they think will gain the most from the experience.

Rehearsals are organised for the dancers and massed choirs to teach them the basics, then instructional materials including dance DVDs, music CDs, choir charts, sheet music and a performance floor plan are sent to the schools where students rehearse in individual groups.

All schools and students then come together for regional dance rehearsals and massed choir rehearsals culminating in full rehearsals in the days before the event.

Individual students can also apply to audition to be a musician in the orchestra or a vocal soloist.

Getting involved:
The closing date for expressions of interest from schools, vocalists, specialty groups and musical groups is Friday, November 20. The closing date for individual musicians expressions of interest is Friday, February 26, 2010.
WORKING WITH PROFESSIONALS

THE Spectacular is a professionally run theatrical production with a difference - the performers are primary and secondary school students.

An impressive list of professionals has been pulled together to guide the young performers to their final performance.

Neill Gladwin, one of Australia’s most creative directors, will direct the Spectacular 2010. He put his stamp on the Sydney 2000 Olympics closing ceremony as director of the lawnmower man segment and artistic director of the closing ceremony of the Paralympics.

Mr Gladwin also directed the Australian Outdoor Spectacular on the Gold Coast, and has been a performer and director of Circus Oz. His early work as one half of Los Trios Ringbarkus was also rooted in clowning and vaudeville.

Mark Laggerre, who has spent years as a professional theatre around Australia, is the artistic director of Joining the Chorus, the body that produces the biannual spectaculars and the musical theatre productions that take place every other year. He is choreographer of the Spectacular 2010.

Music examiner and performer Kirk Skinner will take on the role of musical director, having musically directed many award-winning productions including Mark & Mabel, On the Twentieth Century, La Cage aux Folles, West Side Story and Sweeney Todd.

Esteemed production and stage manager Adam Lowe will also bring his extensive knowledge from years in theatrical production which included the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2006 Asian Games and a list of well-known professional musical theatre productions.

ON TO BIGGER THINGS

SEVERAL previous performers have gone on to bigger and better roles in the performing arts world.

Former students include: Sun Aria winner, Nicole Carr; Singer Vanessa Amorosi, Erin Cornell, who played the lead role of Elphaba in Japan Universal Studios production of Wicked, Erin Carr; who was understudy to Glynda the good witch in the recent Melbourne production of Wicked, and Winston Hillier who played the lead role in the German production of The Lion King.

TEACHER

KYABRAM teacher Sue Merking first became aware of the Spectacular when her son, Ryan, was chosen to be a solo singer about 10 years ago. And ever since, she has been bringing students to Melbourne from the Kyabram P-12 school for the biggest performance of their lives.

“It’s an opportunity that’s simply not available in the school setting and to us in the country it’s raising the bar again because we can’t offer such a big venue,” she said.

As well as performing to a large audience, Ms Merking said the event offered students the chance to see how a show comes together from the technical and performance sides – something they would not normally get to experience.

Ryan has continued his musical pursuits with his band Ryan Merking and the Fox, who supported John Farnham during his Melbourne concerts.

PERFORMER

KEAGAN Vaskess can’t wait to get back on stage for her second Spectacular next year.

After her first VSSS performance in 2008, the talented singer went on to perform in the Joining the Chorus production of Barnum this year.

Keagan, 17, who has been singing for 15 years, said her first experience of a Spectacular was incredible.

“It was wonderful just amazing to go down to Melbourne to rehearse and then perform to such a big audience,” she said.

For those wondering whether to take part, she had this advice: “It’s something you will never regret. You meet so many new friends have so many amazing experiences.”

STATE SCHOOLS SPECTACULAR 2010

On Hisense Arena, 18–19 September 2010

It’s your chance to shine!