



Sgt. Christiana Ball, a drill sergeant at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., and the 2013 winner of Operation Rising Star, sings "God Bless America" during a Springfield Cardinals game in Springfield, Mo., in June 2014. She will cap off a year of performances with one at the White House on Nov. 6. (Photo by Michael Curtis)

# Drill Sergeant and 'Rising Star' Winner to Sing at White House

By Army News Service

**S**gt. Christiana Ball, the 2013 winner of Operation Rising Star, has been invited to participate in the music annual gala called "In Performance at the White House," today. The event will be hosted by President Barack Obama and the first lady, Michelle Obama.

Ball, a drill sergeant in the 787th Military Police Battalion, 14th Military Police Brigade, at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., outperformed 12 finalists from Army garrisons around the world and won the Army Entertainment's annual Operation Rising Star competition, conducted by the U.S. Army Installation Management Command.

"I've had an unbelievable year as the winner of Op Rising Star. Singing at the White House will be a great honor," Ball said. "This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to reach out and show my appreciation of my veteran brothers and sisters both past and present. Even in these

stressful times, I'm focused on the idea that I get to be part of such a fantastic tribute."

This year's program "A Salute to the Troops: In Performance at the White House" will be a celebration of the men and women who serve the United States, featuring such nationally recognized acts as Mary J. Blige, John Fogerty and Willie Nelson, according to a White House press release. Grammy award winner Don Was will be the music director.

Ball said the White House program will be the pinnacle of a year full of memorable performances.

"Rising Star has already opened so many doors for me to perform in my Fort Leonard Wood community, as well as to sing for televised sporting events and military ceremonies," Ball said. "I'm so grateful for having performed on national TV as a part of the Academy of Country Music Awards 'Salute to the Troops,' and I sang

a duet with Lee Brice on his hit 'I Drive Your Truck' — a song which captures perfectly the emotion of a survivor working through their pain of loss and grief.”

The Army’s Operation Rising Star program gives active-duty Service members and family members a unique opportunity to entertain their comrades around the world, and fulfill their own personal musical ambitions. The competition starts at the garrison level, and finalists are chosen from among the local winners to compete at Joint Base San Antonio—Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

The 2014 competition is currently underway and the new Operation Rising Star winner will be selected in December. More information about Operation Rising Star can be found at [www.OpRisingStar.com](http://www.OpRisingStar.com).

“I was invited to be a judge for Fort Leonard Wood’s [Operation Rising Star] this year,” Ball said. “So I have definitely been following this year’s competition and am very excited to see what talent ends up competing down in San Antonio for the finals this year.

“I’ve seen first-hand the positive effect that music has had and made on Soldier’s lives,” she said. “Programs like ‘In Performance’ give Soldiers a chance to get the recognition they deserve, and Operation Rising Star

gives them an outlet and a chance to better themselves personally. It automatically makes for a more well-adjusted, purposeful and resilient Soldier.”

“In Performance” will be broadcast at 9 p.m. Eastern Time on Nov. 7 on PBS stations nationwide as part of their Arts Fall Festival. The program will also be available online at [www.WhiteHouse.gov/live](http://www.WhiteHouse.gov/live) starting at 7:25 p.m. Eastern Time. The entire performance at the White House will also be broadcast on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, on the American Forces Network.

“When I perform, I look in the eyes of my audience and try to connect in a personal way,” Ball said. “What do I see? I guess it just depends. If I’m singing to my people in Fort Leonard Wood, I often see a lot of pride in their faces, and rightly so. I can’t wait to bring my voice now to an even wider audience. I’m representing the U.S. Army.”

Ball will soon complete her active-duty contract and plans on joining the Missouri National Guard.

“I’ve created a band of my own now and have been performing as much as my job allows me. Our plan is to take off and do as many shows as I can,” said Ball. “It will be an honor to have a chance work with the National Guard band, too. I can’t wait.” ■



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