

TELEVISION



NBC

Laura Fedor, left, and Sophie Zalokar on the set of "Nashville Star."

Local singers to compete on reality show

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Plain Dealer Television Critic

Although they grew up within twanging distance of Cleveland's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, two Lake County teenagers have set their sights on becoming country stars in Nashville. Willoughby resident Laura Fedor, 18, and her best friend, Eastlake native Sophie Zalokar, 16, are competing together in the field of 12 acts for the sixth season of the reality show "Nashville Star."

Having spent its first five seasons on cable's USA Network, "Nashville Star" migrates to NBC with a new host, singer-actor Billy Ray Cyrus. The show's sixth edition begins at 9 tonight on WKYC Channel 3.

"Country music has always been our biggest thing because it tells a story," said Zalokar, a student at Willoughby South High School. "There's always something that people can relate to in a country song."

The contestants will perform at Nashville's Acuff Theater before the show's three judges: three-time Grammy nominee and former series host Jewel, singer-songwriter John Rich and songwriter-producer Jeffrey

PREVIEW

Nashville Star

What: The competition reality show begins its sixth season with two Lake County teenagers as contestants.

When: 9 tonight

Where: NBC (WKYC Channel 3).

Steele. Fedor and Zalokar's competition includes a 19-year-old male model from Louisiana, a 28-year-old Tex-Mex cowboy from Texas, a 32-year-old mother of five from Texas, a 23-year-old Navy engineer from Oklahoma and three sisters from Tennessee.

Tonight's season opener will feature a performance by Taylor Swift, named best new female vocalist this year by the Academy of Country Music.

Fedor and Zalokar met seven years ago as members of the choral group the Singing Angels.

"We actually met during the auditions for that group, and we connected immediately," said Fedor, who was born in Indiana and has lived in Willoughby for about 16 years with her parents, Gabriel and Sandi. She has two older sisters.

To participate in "Nashville Star," Fedor had to miss her Willoughby South graduation ceremony, which was Sunday.

Zalokar lives in Eastlake with her parents, Ray and Marcia, and her younger brother, Zak.

"I have a more of a belty, Broadwayesque voice, and Laura has more of a choir voice," Zalokar said. "And normally, those two don't go together, but it works to make a very original sound."