

'Idol' favorite visits home

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HIGH POINT — Her hometown fans wanted something to talk about, and Fantasia Barrino delivered.

The Triad's favorite daughter on Fox's "American Idol" television program swooped through North Carolina; an afternoon performance at Providence Place's First Wesleyan Church capped a daylong visit.

Barrino serenaded fans with "Something to Talk About," a cover of Bonnie Raitt's 1991 hit single. And Barrino gushed praise for the friends, family and "real people" of North Carolina whom she credits for success.

"I love y'all! Thank you all so much!" Barrino said. "We're almost there!"

More than 3,000 people showed up to see Barrino, High Point police estimated. Lt. Walter Heaviland said the crowd numbered twice that of the 1,700 available seats.

"For every one person we let in, there's easily another person outside," Heaviland said. "It's a nice little soiree."

Barrino's appearance came a day after placing among the bottom two vote-getters on the show.

The person with the fewest votes leaves the show. On Wednesday, that person was Oakland, Calif., native La Toya London. London and Barrino

were long considered judges' picks for the final showdown between the remaining contestants.

All three judges expressed shock that both "divas" fell short in the vote tallies. Barrino and London gave solid performances the night before, judges said, and did not deserve elimination.

"Honestly, I think Americans got this one wrong," Paula Abdul said. Randy Jackson called it a "travesty."

High Point officials presented Barrino on Thursday with a key to the city. And proclamations were read from the High Point City Council and Guilford County Board of Commissioners, both of which passed resolutions honoring their hometown star.

Barrino wept often at Thursday's show of support. "American Idol" producers plan to use footage of the event in segments during next week's programs.

For the second time in the show's three-year history, North Carolina will be represented during the final round. Raleigh native Clay Aiken finished second last season. He later signed a recording contract with RCA.

"Thank you for supporting me, and don't stop. Get on the phone and vote 300 times!" Barrino told Thursday's audience. "I'm so excited. I can't stop shaking. I'm working hard to bring it home."

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