



THE KURT WEILL FOUNDATION FOR MUSIC

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Outstanding Talents Win Top Prizes in 2016 Lotte Lenya Competition

Jim Schubin and Brian Vu win top prizes of \$15,000 each. Nine prizes granted, total purse of \$79,000, most prizes and prize money ever awarded in the competition finals.

NEW YORK (April 18, 2016) — Jim Schubin of Plainsboro, NJ, and Brian Vu of Los Angeles both earned top prizes in the 2016 Lotte Lenya Competition, sponsored by the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music and held on April 16, 2016 in Kilbourn Hall of the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY. Schubin and Vu each took home \$15,000 for their exceptional displays of vocal and theatrical talent. Nine awards, and a total prize purse of \$79,000 were given in the competition's most competitive year yet.

Dennis Wees of Dallas, TX, the youngest of this year's finalists at age 21, won the \$10,000 Second Prize. Talya Lieberman of New York and Eric Michael Parker of Los Angeles each won a Third Prize of \$7,500.

Foundation President and founder of the competition **Kim Kowalke** said of this year's competition, "The total amount and number of prizes awarded reflects the high level displayed at this year's contest. It is a testament to the competition's growth over nearly two decades."

Each of the 14 finalists performed four selections ranging from opera/opera to contemporary musical theater. Jim Schubin impressed the judges with his beautifully crafted program of "Try Me" from *She Loves Me*, "Serenade" from *The Student Prince*, "How Much I Love You" from *One Touch of Venus*, and "Taking Flight" from *Allison Under the Stars*. The judges stated that Schubin "embodied the competition's motto of 'Singing the Story.' He gave a riveting performance, showed engaging presence and effortless communication, and yet still seemed as if he was inventing it all on the spot." Schubin is currently in the national touring company of *The Sound of Music*. This was his third year in a row as a finalist.

Brian Vu impressed the judges with the thoughtful content and ordering of his program: "O Carlo, ascolta" from *Don Carlo*, "Bowler Hat" from *Pacific Overtures*, "West Wind" from *One Touch of Venus*, and "Where is the Life that Late I Led?" from *Kiss Me, Kate*. The judges remarked that he displayed "the ebullience of Petruccio and the inner stoicism of Kayama, while exhibiting refreshing flair and vocal prowess." Vu was a Grand Finalist in this year's Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and will appear as the Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Young Artist at the Glimmerglass Festival this summer.

The panel of judges included international opera star **Teresa Stratas**, Rodgers & Hammerstein President **Theodore S. Chapin**, and Broadway music director and conductor **Andy Einhorn**. Finalists were selected from an initial pool of 224 contestants later narrowed to 31 semi-finalists, who were adjudicated and coached in the semi-final round by Tony Award-winners **Jeanine Tesori** and **Victoria Clark**. Clark, who last judged the competition in 2012, noted “I can feel the leap in overall talent from the last time I judged.”

Four additional prizes of \$3,500 each were granted: Lindsay O’Neil of New York received a Lys Symonette Award for an Outstanding Performance of an Individual Number for “I Don’t Need a Roof” from *Big Fish*. Tom Schimon of Vienna, Austria and Reilly Nelson of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario each received a Carolyn Weber Award in recognition of outstanding creativity in the design of a diverse program and exceptional sensitivity to text/music relationships. Bradley Smoak of Cary, NC received the inaugural Marc Blitzstein Award, given for an outstanding performance from a “Golden Age” musical, for his performance of “Pass the Football” from *Wonderful Town*.

The remaining five finalists each received \$2,000: Curtis Bannister of Green Bay, WI, Erika Cockerham of St. Louis, MO, Tony Potts of Fargo, ND, Briana Silvie of New York, and Kayla Wilkens of Salem, OR.

Now in its 19th year, the Lotte Lenya Competition recognizes exceptionally talented singer/actors, ages 19-32, who are dramatically and musically convincing in a wide range of repertoire, with a focus on the works of Kurt Weill. Since 1998, the Kurt Weill Foundation has awarded more than \$750,000 in prize money and continues to support previous winners with professional development grants.

Previous Lenya Competition winners enjoy successful careers performing in major theaters and opera houses around the globe. Brian Mulligan, winner of the top prize at the first Lenya Competition in 1998, has been named the inaugural Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Artist at this year’s Glimmerglass Festival in Cooperstown, NY, where he will be seen as John Proctor in *The Crucible*.

Other past winners’ recent and upcoming credits range from Broadway (Annalisa Leaming, *The King and I*, Kyle Scatliff, *The Color Purple*, Jacob Keith Watson, *Violet*), National Tours (Katie Travis, *The Phantom of the Opera*, Doug Carpenter, *Dirty Dancing*), to major opera houses including the Metropolitan Opera (Brian Mulligan), Royal Opera House (Nicole Cabell), English National Opera (Zachary James), Welsh National Opera (David Arnsperger), San Francisco Opera (Brian Mulligan, Matthew Grills), Los Angeles Opera (Jonathan Michie, Lauren Worsham), Washington National Opera (Lauren Michelle), Glimmerglass Festival (Maren Weinberger, Brian Mulligan, Ben Edquist), Houston Grand Opera (Ben Edquist, Rodell Rosel), Opera Theater of St. Louis (Lauren Michelle), Fort Worth Opera (Megan Marino, Maren Weinberger, Lauren Worsham), Virginia Opera (Megan Marino), and many more throughout Europe and North America. Lauren Michelle, First Prize winner in the 2015 competition,

Kurt Weill

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appeared in the 2015 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition, where she placed in the top five.

ABOUT THE KURT WEILL FOUNDATION

The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc. (<http://www.kwf.org>) is dedicated to promoting understanding of the life and works of composer Kurt Weill (1900-1950) and preserving the legacies of Weill and his wife, actress-singer Lotte Lenya (1898-1981). The Foundation administers the Weill-Lenya Research Center, a Grant Program, the Kurt Weill Book Prize and the Lotte Lenya Competition, and publishes the Kurt Weill Edition and the Kurt Weill Newsletter.

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