2018 LOTTE LENYA COMPETITION FINALS

Evening Concert
Kilbourn Hall, Eastman School of Music
Saturday, 14 April 2018, 8:00 pm
Looking Back: 20 – and 120 – Years

The twentieth anniversary of the Lotte Lenya Competition coincides with the 120th birthday of its namesake. That isn't coincidental, as I conceived the competition as an Eastman event in 1998 to celebrate her 100th birthday. I thought that it might be a fitting one-off tribute, in that Lenya's career encompassed, in addition to her landmark performances and recordings of Weill's music, opera/operetta in Europe and musical theater on both sides of the Atlantic. The inaugural event also celebrated the arrival at Sibley Music Library of Weill's manuscripts of the scores published in Vienna by Universal Edition prior to his flight from the Nazis in 1933. And now, twenty years later, those documents remain on loan in the vault across the street, while the Competition has grown gradually but exponentially into one of the most prestigious and high-stakes international contests for singing actors. In retrospect, not in my most fanciful dreams could I have imagined such a trajectory.

That success required paradigm shifts and aesthetic reassessments that were but glimmers on the horizon twenty years ago. At the time, opera singers were routinely “elevating” Broadway musicals with their pearly tones and incomprehensible “singer-ese” (think of the recording of West Side Story with Kiri Te Kanawa as Maria and Jose Carreras as Tony), and television and movie stars were routinely faking their way vocally on Broadway. Not everything has changed, but now major orchestras routinely present concert versions of musicals and opera companies include the classics of the American musical theater in their seasons. And the “cross-over” phenomenon has morphed to the almost unimaginable in 1998, with Broadway baby Kelli O’Hara appearing this spring as Despina in Così fan tutte uptown at the Met while Renee Fleming takes on Nettie in Carousel at the Imperial on 45th Street. Even the training offered the next generation of singers is starting to catch up. From the perspective that informed my motivations in founding the Lenya Competition, that’s all for the better.

From the outset, the Competition has tried to nurture precisely the sort of performer who could “do it all” by performing idiomatically the full range of music theater. That goal has determined both the range of required repertoire and the composition of the jury for the finals – in an attempt to balance acting and singing, Broadway and opera. Sometimes Lenya-winners have gone on to exclusively operatic careers, sometimes to careers grounded in musical theater. But that has usually been by choice, not because of limitation in ability or experience. And more and more the boundaries between categories of both repertoire and performer have been blurred, if not erased in new works for the music theater. As the survey of the achievements of some previous winners elsewhere in this program amply demonstrates (“Where Are They Now?”), the alumni of the Competition collectively offer ongoing homage to both Lenya and Weill, as well as their shared values.

Kim H. Kowalke
President & CEO, Kurt Weill Foundation for Music

Each finalist will sing one selection determined by the judges after the Daytime Round. Selections will be announced by the contestants. Feel free to applaud after each performance.

Order of Performance

Laura Corina Sanders, 23, California, USA
John Brancy, 29, New Jersey, USA
Richard Glöckner, 23, Salzburg, Austria
Christine Amon, 31, Michigan, USA
Benjamin Pattison, 27, Virginia, USA
Reilly Nelson, 28, Ontario, Canada
Christof Messner, 31, Vienna, Austria
Philip Stoddard, 26, Arizona, USA
Gan-ya Ben-gur Akselrod, 30, Tel Aviv, Israel
Daniel Berryman, 27, New York, USA
Caroline Hewitt, 26, Texas, USA
John Tibbetts, 27, Georgia, USA
Andrea Lett, 27, Manitoba, Canada
Nkrumah Gatling, 32, Texas, USA
Christian Hoff, 25, Maryland, USA

Judges may choose to award, at their sole discretion, any combination of the following prizes: 1st ($20,000); 2nd ($15,000); 3rd ($10,000); Lys Symonette Awards ($3,500) for outstanding performance of a number or excellence in one area; Marc Blitzstein Award ($3,500) for outstanding performance of a Golden Age selection; Carolyn Weber Award ($3,500) for outstanding creativity in the design of a diverse program and exceptional sensitivity to text/music relationships; Kurt Weill Award ($5,000) for outstanding performances of two contrasting selections by Weill. All finalists receive travel stipends and an award of at least $1,000.

INTERMISSION-

Announcement of the Winners, Kim H. Kowalke
President and CEO of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music
Founder of the Lotte Lenya Competition, 1998
Hailed for her “sweet, powerful voice,” American mezzo-soprano CHRISTINE AMON recently made company and role debuts as Erika in Vanessa with Toledo Opera, and as Carrie in Carousel with Union Avenue Opera of St. Louis. Other recent engagements include Hansel in Hansel and Gretel with Opera Louisiane and Opera Memphis, Gretchen in The Student Prince with Opera Grand Rapids, and Edith in The Pirates of Penzance with Nashville Opera. In 2014, Christine created the role of Mich in Mich and the Moon in the premiere of The Ghosts of Crosstown with Opera Memphis. She was a finalist in the 2012 Lotte Lenya Competition and has been awarded 1st place in The Beethoven Club of Memphis Young Artist Competition, Opera Grand Rapids Collegiate Vocal Competition, and the Dr. Marjorie Conrad Art Song Competition.

Born in Tel-Aviv, GAN-YA BEN-GUR AKSELROD completed her Bachelor’s degree cum laude at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music and a Master’s in opera from Brooklyn College. After winning 1st prize at the Hilde Zadek Competition in Vienna, she was invited to join the Young Ensemble of Theater an der Wien where she performed numerous roles. Gan-ya also performed with Glyndebourne Opera on tour, Théâtre du Capitole, the Israeli Opera, the Neue Oper Wien, Aix-en-Provence Festival, Berlin Deutsche Oper, The Ravinia Music Festival, and at Carnegie Hall. Future engagements include a debut with Opera Stuttgart as Chiang Ch’ing in a new production of Nixon in China, and a European concert tour with Hans Zimmer. Other honors include 2nd prize, the Güzin Gürel Competition; a Special Award, 2017 Lotte Lenya Competition; and awards from Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, the Paul Ben-Haim Competition, the AICF Foundation, the Ronen Foundation, and the IVAI Institute.

Hailed by The New York Times as “a vibrant, resonant presence,” JOHN BRANCY is equally deft in opera productions, symphonic concerts, and intimate recitals. He is a fervent champion of new music as well as an actor for the stage and screen. In 2017, Brancy won 2nd Prize at the Wigmore Hall International Song Competition in London and the Media Prize in the Hans Gabor Belvedere Singing Competition in Moscow. This season he appeared as Albert in Stadttheater Klagenfurt’s new production of Werther, made his Alice Tully Hall debut with pianist Peter Dugan with the premiere of “Armistice: The Journey Home,” and will tour the program throughout 2018. This fall, he returns to Oper Frankfurt for a new production of Last Highway directed by Yuval Sharon. This is Brancy’s second time in the Lenya Competition finals, having previously won a Lys Symonette Award in 2008.

Born and raised in Dresden, Germany, tenor RICHARD GLÖCKNER started his musical education at the age of 5, gaining stage experience during his youth. He graduated from a specialized Art & Music high school and studied at the Hochschule für Musik Dresden with Prof. Claudia Schmidt-Krahmer. In 2014, he won 1st prize at the Jugend musiziert, a German youth competition. Richard currently studies opera at the Universität Mozarteum Salzburg with Prof. Elisabeth Wilke, and has participated in Masterclasses with Prof. Noelle Turner and Prof. Olaf Bär to expand his musical styles and techniques. Apart from his passion for singing and performing, he’s also very interested in organizing events and directing, and recently served as resident director of a production of Titanic, directed by Stefan Hübner, at the prestigious Bad Hersfelder Festspiele, in the Summer of 2017.

A California native, CAROLINE HEWITT trained at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. She graduated from Vanderbilt University where she studied Voice and English Literature. She is a recipient of the Hirsch Endowment Scholarship at University of Houston’s Moores Opera Center, and the Tony Cuevas Award at West Bay Opera’s 2018 Holt Competition. Recent roles include Beatrice in John Musto’s The Inspector, Mary Warren in Robert Ward’s The Crucible, Zerlina in Don Giovanni, Luisa Fernanda, Meg Page in Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor, and Thelma in Musto’s Later the Same Evening. Upcoming performances include the title role in Cenerentola and soloist in Sondheim on Sondheim. Caroline is a passionate personal trainer and the co-founder of Bespoke Fitness Ltd., serving opera singers and classical musicians across America.

CHRISTIAN HOFF is a graduate of the University of Maryland, where he earned Bachelor’s degree in vocal performance under Professor Gran Wilson. During his time at UMD, Hoff performed regularly at the Kennedy Center as a member of the UMD Chamber Singers. He performed works such as Handel’s Messiah, Britten’s War Requiem, and Brahms’ Ein deutsches Requiem in collaboration with the National Symphony Orchestra and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Recent credits include the lead role of Eddie Birdlace in Pasek and Paul’s Dogfight with the Red Branch Theatre Company; and Tobias in Sweeney Todd with Janiec Opera Company, at the Brevard Music Center. Since 2016, Christian has been a member of the U.S. Army Chorus, and has had the honor of performing solos at The White House, The U.S. Capitol, and the Pentagon.
Praised for her “clear voice soaring to stratospheric heights” (Opera Canada), soprano ANDREA LETT makes debuts in the 2018/19 season with the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra (Mozart Requiem), and Manitoba Opera (Zerlina in Don Giovanni), and returns to Saskatoon Opera for the role of Musetta in La bohème. Lett was recently engaged at San Francisco Opera as a principal cover (Ah Sing) for the world premiere of John Adams and Peter Sellars’ Girls of the Golden West. Other roles include Adele cover (Santa Fe Opera), Queen of the Night (Manitoba Underground Opera), Gretel (Saskatoon Opera School Tour), and Rose Maybud in Ruddigore (Winnipeg G&S Society). Lett is a graduate of the University of Toronto (M.Mus Opera) where she studied with soprano Mary Morrison and holds a B.Mus Perf from University of Manitoba.

LAURA CORINA SANDERS is from San Francisco, California. She received both her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from the Eastman School of Music, studying with Katherine Ciesinski. She won 1st prize in the 2017 Friends of Eastman Opera Competition, and the 2017 Voice Concerto Competition. Laura has been featured in major roles in several Eastman Opera Theatre productions, including Lucette in Cendrillon, Mabel in The Pirates of Penzance, Barbarina in Le nozze di Figaro, and most recently the title role of Monteverdi’s L’incoronazione di Poppea. Other roles include Susanna in Le nozze di Figaro with Oswego Opera and First Lady in Die Zauberflöte with Berlin Opera Academy. This spring she will appear in Eastman’s production of The Light in the Piazza as Signora Naccarelli, and this summer she will be working as a Studio Artist with Wolf Trap Opera.

PHILIP STODDARD is an actor, singer, and director based in New York City. He earned a Bachelor of Music from Juilliard’s Marcus Institute for Vocal Arts and will earn his MFA in Acting from Juilliard’s Drama Division this May. Favorite credits include the title role in Don Giovanni and Tommy Albright in Brigadoon at the Chautauqua Institution, the title role in Woyzeck, Colonel in Father Comes Home from the Wars, Dorian Belle in the world premiere of P.Y.G., Agis in The Triumph of Love, Cloten in Cymbeline, Ferryman in Curlew River, and Arlecchino in Le donne curiose. Stoddard is co-founder of OperaComp, the first interdivisional opera development laboratory at Juilliard, which culminates in the world premiere of six new operas at National Sawdust on April 22nd. This September, he directs the world premiere of Echo & Narcissus with Satellite Collective at BAM.

Canadian mezzo-soprano REILLY NELSON has been praised by the Boston Music Intelligencer for her “bright and glowing [voice], with a bit of edge when needed.” Reilly recently completed her graduate studies at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. In August 2018 Reilly will join The Barbara Halsey Sanford Studio Artist Program with Kentucky Opera. The 2017-2018 season includes two role debuts for Ms. Nelson: Flora Bervoix in La traviata and Vera Lynn in the United States premiere of Another Brick in the Wall with Cincinnati Opera. At home in both operatic and concert repertoire, 2017 saw Nelson’s debuts with both the Cincinnati Symphony and the Cincinnati Pops. She was the winner of the 2017 Middle/East Tennessee District MONC auditions and winner of the Carolyn Weber Award in the 2016 Lotte Lenya Competition.

Today’s Staff Accompanists

LYNDON MEYER is a Tulsa-based conductor, vocal coach, pianist, and organist. Since 2014 he has served as chorusmaster, assistant conductor, principal pianist, and vocal coach for Tulsa Opera. Previous positions include pianist and harpsichordist for the OK Mozart International Festival; faculty voice coach for SI Parla, Si Canta in Urbania, Italy; assistant conductor and young artist coach for the Florida Grand Opera; and staff accompanist and vocal coach at the Eastman School of Music. He is a recipient of 1st prize in the Jesse Kneisel Lieder Competition and has performed twice at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C.

SHANE SCHAG has performed in recital both as soloist and ensemble performer throughout the United States and Europe. He is a recipient of the Gwendolyn Koldofsky Memorial Award, given to “a musician who demonstrated outstanding professionalism in collaborative piano.” Currently, Schag is a faculty member of the Opera and Musical Theater Departments at the Manhattan School of Music. In 2017, he collaborated with Lisa Vroman and William Sharp in an original cabaret as part of Kurt Weill’s America, presented at the Brevard Music Festival and DePauw University.

Since 2012, BENJAMIN PATTISON has been a tenor with the U.S. Army Chorus, performing for all six living presidents and numerous heads of state. Prior to joining the Army Chorus, Pattison studied trumpet and voice at DePaul University and further vocal studies at the University of Maryland. He has appeared as the title role in Albert Herring with DePaul Opera Theatre, Bill Starbuck in 110 in the Shade, and Ralph Rackstraw in H.M.S. Pinafore with the Janiec Opera Company at the Brevard Music Center. Concert engagements: National Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and at the 10th World Symposium on Choral Music performed in South Korea. Print: The Cradle Will Rock and Vinkensport with Satellite Collective at BAM.

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Today's Judges

VICTORIA CLARK maintains a remarkable career as actor, director, and educator. Ms. Clark's twelve Broadway credits include the original production of Sunday in the Park with George, How To Succeed..., Guys and Dolls, Urinetown, Cabaret, and the original casts of A Grand Night for Singing, Titanic; Tony nominations for Rodgers & Hammerstein's Cinderella, Gigi, and Sister Act; and The Light in the Piazza, for which she won the Tony, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle Awards. Plays: When the Rain Stops Falling (Drama Desk nom), The Marriage of Bette and Boo, A Prayer for My Enemy, and The Snow Geese on Broadway. Film: Wonderland, The Happening, Cradle Will Rock, Tickling Leo, Harvest, Main Street, and Archaeology of a Woman. Television: Homeland, Mercy, Law and Order (and SVU), The Good Wife, and The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair mini-series for EPIX (forthcoming). Clark has directed for the New York Musical Theater Festival (Newton's Cradle, 2016 Best Musical, Best Director), Fredericia Theater in Denmark (2017, The Trouble with Doug), Philadelphia Opera Theater, Texas Opera Theater, Chautauqua Opera, and the 92nd Street Y, and has taught in numerous universities and conservatories world-wide including Yale University and Juilliard. Her solo debut CD Fifteen Seconds of Grace is available through PS Classics. Ms. Clark serves on the Board of Trustees for the Kurt Weill Foundation and New York City Center. This is Ms. Clark's fourth appearance as a judge of the Lenya Competition.

A former staff conductor for English National Opera and Head of Music for Opera North, JAMES HOLMES is now a freelance conductor, accompanist, and arranger. Alongside an operatic repertoire ranging from Mozart to contemporary world premières, he has maintained a lifelong interest in musical theatre, playing a significant part in its adoption and expansion. Over the course of his career, he has conducted a wide range of Weill’s music, including the major British stage premières of Zaubernacht (ROH), One Touch of Venus, and Der Kuhhandel (Opera North), as well as Street Scene for its first-ever staging in Berlin and an acclaimed DVD. He also recorded Street Scene for BBC TV, along with a documentary on Weill’s American years, I’m A Stranger Here Myself. His regular contributions to the Kurt Weill Festival in Dessau include One Touch of Venus and song suites he arranged from Der Kuhhandel and Huckleberry Finn. He serves as a Trustee of the Kurt Weill Foundation, and is both volume editor and Advisory Board member for the Kurt Weill Edition. This marks his sixth appearance as a Lenya Competition judge.

JACK VIERTEL is the Senior Vice President of Jujuacyn Theaters, which owns and operates five Broadway Theaters, currently presenting The Book of Mormon, Springsteen on Broadway, Kinky Boots, Mean Girls, and Frozen. He is also the Artistic Director of New York City Center’s Encores! series, which celebrates its 25th Anniversary this year with Hey, Look Me Over, Grand Hotel, and Me and My Girl. He spent two years as Dramaturg of the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, and from 1980 to 1985 was the drama critic and arts editor of the Los Angeles Herald Examiner. He was the original conceiver and co-producer of Smokey Joe’s Cafe, and the conceiver of After Midnight. Producer credits include six of August Wilson’s plays on Broadway; Tony Kushner’s Angels in America; Into the Woods; City of Angels; Jelly’s Last Jam; and Hairspay, among many others. His first book The Secret Life of the American Musical: How Broadway Shows are Built was published in 2016. He spent ten years as an adjunct professor at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts, teaching musical theater structure, and began his career playing National Steel-body guitar behind Bonnie Raitt, Son House, and the Pointer Sisters.

Lenya at Large

• Lenya has new life in Germany as a brand of wine! Stuttgart’s Collegium Wirtemberg has produced a “Lenya Lenya” vintage, available exclusively from the Württemberg Weinhaus in Berlin. She comes in red, white, and sparkling varieties.

• Last year, actress and singer Sona MacDonald wowed audiences with her portrayal of Lotte Lenya in Lenya Story: Ein Liebeslied, a new play featuring songs by Weill. The show ran for 30 performances at the Theater in der Josefstadt in Vienna. This October, MacDonald reprises her role when the show comes to the Renaissance-Theater in Berlin.

• “Lotte Lenya in Her Own Words”, a two-part radio documentary inspired by Lenya’s life and career, will premiere on 18 October 2018, Lenya’s 120th birthday. Produced for ConcertZender Radio Netherlands and hosted by Guy Livingston of the American Highways radio series, the program will feature commentary from Kim H. Kowalske, 2012 LLC Prize winner Justin Hopkins, and Sona MacDonald; segment on the Lenya Competition; as well as archival recordings of Lenya telling her own story.

Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Artist Sponsorships

The Kurt Weill Foundation continues its support of Lenya Competition alumni through its Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Artist Sponsorships. Two-time finalist Heather Phillips (2013 and 2014) has been named the Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Artist at the 2018 Glimmerglass Festival. Phillips performs the title role in Janáček’s The Cunning Little Vixen, opposite Eric Owens. Two 2018 semifinalists, Abigail Benke and Mark Hosseini (current ESM student), have been named Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Artists at the College Light Opera Company in Cape Cod, MA.

Awards Presented Before the Finals

Non-Advancing Semifinalists ($500)

Carly Augustenstein (28, Ohio)
* Curtis Bannister (32, Wisconsin)
Abigail Benke (24, Missouri)
Jason Berger (26, Delaware)
Maire Carmack (24, Colorado)
Caitlin Finnie (23, Texas)
* Anthony Heinemann (30, Missouri)
Gabrielle Hordorp (20, New York)
Mark Hosseini (23, Illinois)
Barrie Kreinik (32, New York)
Luke Sikora (29, California)
Rachel Zatcoff (30, New York)
Andrea Zidaric (29, Slovenia)

*Denotes a contestant who has previously reached the finals of the Lenya Competition.

Emerging Talents ($500)

Keenan Buckley (21, New York)
Emily Harkins (21, New York)
Marlene Jubelius (22, Germany)
Sarah Jane Juliano (19, New York)
Claire Leyden (23, New York)
Grace Roberts (22, United Kingdom)
Trevor Todd (21, Minnesota)

Grace Keagy Award for Outstanding Vocal Promise ($500)

Shannon Jennings (29, Pennsylvania)

2018 Semifinals Coach/Adjudicators were singing actor Lisa Vroman and Tony Award-winning composer Jeanine Tesori.
20 Years of Lenya Winners: Where Are They Now?

1998: Brian Mulligan (Top Prize) – Nelusko, *L'Africaine*, Oper Frankfurt, March—April 2018; in recital at the Kennedy Center, April 2018; Donner, *Das Rheingold* at San Francisco Opera, June 2018.

1999: Dirk Weiler (1st Prize) – Frank Sr., *Catch Me If You Can* at Staatstheater Nürnberg, October 2018.


2004: Richard Todd Adams (Top Prize) – soloist with the National Arts Centre Orchestra “Best of Broadway,” April 2018.


Misty Ann Sturm (Top Prize) – *All-Weill* recital at the Café Sabarsky, New York, Fall 2017.


Erik Liberman (2nd Prize) – TV’s *Modern Family* (as “Celebrity Storyteller”), 4 April, 2018.


2007: Analisa Leaming (2nd Prize) – Principal Rosalie Mullins, *School of Rock*, Broadway: *Hello, Dolly!* Broadway revival, original cast album (Grammy nomination).

Paul Corona (Lys Symonette Award) – Un carceriere, *Tosca*, Metropolitan Opera, Spring 2018.


2009: Lauren Worsham (2nd Prize) – Soloist, New York Festival of Song, April 2018; Lead singer of Sky-Pony; TV’s *Valor* (Netflix).


Jacob Keith Watson (2nd Prize) – Ensemble, Captain, Enoch Snow (cover), *Carousel*, Broadway, Spring 2018.


2016: Brian Vu (1st Prize) – Riff, *West Side Story*, Houston Grand Opera, Spring 2018, Glimmerglass Festival, Summer 2018; featured in April issue of *Opera News*.


In 1998, to honor the centenary of the birth of Lotte Lenya (1898-1981), an extraordinary singer/actress and one of the foremost interpreters of the music of her husband, Kurt Weill (1900-1950), the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music established the annual Lotte Lenya Competition. The competition recognizes talented young singer/actors who are dramatically and musically convincing in repertoire ranging from opera/operetta to contemporary Broadway scores, with a focus on the works of Kurt Weill. More than a vocal competition, the Lotte Lenya Competition emphasizes idiomatic performances of diverse repertoire and the acting of songs and arias within a dramatic context.

**Competition Administration for the Kurt Weill Foundation**

Kim H. Kowalke, President & CEO, Founder of the Competition
Brady Sansone, Director of Programs and Business Affairs
Elizabeth Blaufox, Associate Director of Programs and Promotion
Veronica Chaffin, Office Manager and Administrative Assistant
Natasha Nelson, Administrative Assistant

The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc., administers, promotes, and perpetuates the legacies of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya. It encourages broad dissemination and appreciation of Weill’s music through support of performances, productions, recordings, and scholarship, and it fosters understanding of Weill’s and Lenya’s lives and work within diverse cultural contexts. Building upon the legacies of both, it nurtures talent, particularly in the creation, performance, and study of musical theater in its various manifestations and media. To subscribe to the Kurt Weill Newsletter and our E-News, please visit our website, kwf.org.

**Acknowledgements**

The Kurt Weill Foundation is grateful to the University of Rochester’s Eastman School of Music for hosting today’s competition in Kilbourn Hall. In particular, thanks to Jamal Rossi, Dean of the Eastman School of Music; Michael Stefiuk, Director of Concert Activities; Julia Ng, Assistant Director of Concert Activities; Daniel Mason, Assistant Stage Operations Manager; the Concert Office staff; David Raymond, Director of Publications; Jessica Kaufman, Assistant Director of Content & Public Relations; and Nana Stotz, Operations Coordinator, Technology and Media Production.