

Kurt Weill

THE KURT WEILL FOUNDATION FOR MUSIC

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Exceptional Talents Win Top Prizes in 2015 Lotte Lenya Competition

*Lauren Michelle Wins \$15,000 First Prize
Awards Exceed \$85,000*

NEW YORK (April 21, 2015) — In a record-breaking year for the number of prizes and total cash awarded, **Lauren Michelle**, of Los Angeles, won the \$15,000 First Prize in the finals of the 2015 Lotte Lenya Competition, sponsored by the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music and held on April 18, 2015, in Kilbourn Hall of the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, N.Y. **Robin Bailey**, of London, U.K., and **Jordan Davidson**, of Philadelphia, N.Y., both won Second Prizes of \$10,000, and two Third Prizes of \$7,500 each were awarded to **Adam Fieldson**, of Lincoln, Neb., and **Michael Maliakel**, of New York.

“The judges found it difficult to choose only three top winners because of the consistently high level of talent, versatility, and preparation of all the finalists,” said **Kim H. Kowalke**, President of the Kurt Weill Foundation and founder of the Competition. “I’m so glad that the Foundation had the resources to enhance the amounts awarded. In addition to giving five top prizes and special awards, we decided on the spot to double the amount that the remaining finalists received to \$2,000 each.” The Kurt Weill Foundation distributed a total of \$85,500 in prizes this year.

The panel of judges included three-time Tony Award nominee **Rebecca Luker**, British opera and musical theater conductor **James Holmes**, and Rodgers & Hammerstein President and American Theatre Wing Vice-Chairman **Theodore S. Chapin**. Finalists were selected from an initial pool of 225 contestants later narrowed to 28 semi-finalists, who were adjudicated and coached in the semi-final round by **Judith Blazer** and **Andy Einhorn**.

Each of the 14 finalists presented four selections ranging from opera/operetta to contemporary musical theater. Michelle impressed the judges and audience with her powerful performance of a diverse program composed of “My Own Morning” from *Hallelujah, Baby*, “Denn wie mann sich bettet” from *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, “I’ll Be Here” from *Ordinary Days*, and “My Man’s Gone Now” from *Porgy and Bess*. The audience acknowledged her with a standing ovation when she received her award. Michelle will represent the United States in the 2015 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World contest.

Discretionary \$3,500 Lys Symonette Awards for Outstanding Performance of an Individual Number went to **Talya Lieberman**, of Queens, N.Y., for “Non, monsieur mon mari,” from *Les mamelles de Tirésias* and **Florian Peters** of Köln, Germany, for “Bilbao Song” from *Happy End*. **Briana Silvie Gantsweg**, of Brooklyn, N.Y., won a special \$3,500 Carolyn Weber Award for her creative programming and sensitivity

to text-music relationships. The remaining finalists, who each received an award of \$2,000, were: Anthony Heinemann, of St. Louis, Mo.; Carter Lynch, of New York; Katherine Riddle, of Annapolis, Md; Jim Schubin, of Colorado Springs, Colo.; Annie Sherman, of Los Angeles; and Christine Cornish Smith, of New York.

Now in its 18th year, the Lotte Lenya Competition is an international theater singing contest that 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 \$700,000 in prize money to outstanding young performers 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. Their recent and upcoming credits range from Broadway (Lauren Worsham [Tony nomination], Amy Justman, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*; Analisa Leaming, *On the Twentieth Century*; Kyle Scatliffe, *Les Misérables*), National Tours (Cooper Grodin, Katie Travis, Amy Justman, *The Phantom of the Opera*; Doug Carpenter, *Dirty Dancing*; Maria Failla, *Evita*; Jacob Keith Watson, *Chicago*), and regional theaters (Erik Liberman, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, La Jolla Playhouse and Paper Mill Playhouse; Ariela Morgenstern, *Next to Normal*, Baltimore Center Stage) to major opera houses including the Metropolitan Opera (Ginger Costa-Jackson), San Francisco Opera (Matthew Grills), Los Angeles Opera (Liam Bonner, Jonathan Michie, Lauren Worsham), Glimmerglass Festival (Ben Edquist, Maren Weinberger), Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and English National Opera (Noah Stewart), Deutsche Oper Berlin (Edward Mout), Oper Frankfurt (Elizabeth Reiter), Dutch National Opera (Rebecca Jo Loeb), and Théâtre Royal de La Monnaie (Justin Hopkins). Concert highlights include *Sweeney Todd* (Zachary James, Justin Lee Miller) and *Show Boat* (Lauren Worsham) with the New York Philharmonic and the upcoming U.S. premiere of *The Road of Promise*, a concert adaptation of Kurt Weill and Franz Werfel's *The Eternal Road* (Justin Hopkins, Megan Marino, Lauren Michelle) with The Collegiate Chorale and Orchestra of St. Luke's on May 6-7, 2015, at Carnegie Hall.

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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PHOTOS of the winners and judges may be downloaded here: <http://www.kwf.org/current-news/press-releases>