



## THE KURT WEILL FOUNDATION FOR MUSIC

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### **Announcing the Winners of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Lotte Lenya Competition**

*\$99,000 in prizes and awards granted to 15 finalists from Canada, Germany, Israel, Italy, and the United States; over \$1 million awarded during Competition's twenty-year history.*

**NEW YORK (April 17, 2018)** — The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music awarded a record \$99,000 at the 2018 Lotte Lenya Competition, which took place at Kilbourn Hall at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY on April 14, 2018. This year's competition brought the total distributed to young singers to more than \$1 million in awards, prizes, and grants in the twenty-year history of the contest.

The judges—Tony Award-winning actress Victoria Clark, *Encores!* Artistic director Jack Viertel, UK conductor James Holmes—found the field of fifteen finalists so evenly matched that, after long deliberation, they decided to name three \$15,000 winners and three \$10,000 winners rather than the usual first, second, and third prizes. An additional \$14,000 in discretionary awards was presented to four performers.

John Brancy (29, Mullica Hill, NJ), Caroline Hewitt (26, Houston, TX), and Laura Corina Sanders (23, San Francisco, CA) each were awarded \$15,000. Christian Hoff (25, Towson, MD), Reilly Nelson (28, Sault Ste. Marie, ON), and Philip Stoddard (26, Phoenix, AZ) took home \$10,000 each. The three \$15,000 winners impressed the judges with their vocal prowess, dramatic risk-taking, and canny choices of repertory. The \$10,000 winners were recognized for their credibility of characterization, fluency with multiple languages, and idiomatic renditions of diverse repertory.

Discretionary awards in the amount of \$3,500 were given to four singers for a notable aspect of their programs or performances. Christof Messner, 31 of Vienna, Austria, received the Carolyn Weber Award for outstanding creativity in the design of a diverse program and exceptional sensitivity to text/music relationships; Richard Glöckner, 23 of Salzburg, Austria, won a Lys Symonette Award (\$3,500) for his imaginative presentation of "Bilbao Song" from *Happy End*. Gan-ya Ben-gur Akselrod, 30 of Tel Aviv, Israel, received a Lys Symonette Award for her riveting performance of "Lied der Lulu." Nkrumah Gatling, 32 of Houston, TX, received the Marc Blitzstein Award for his moving rendition of "The Hills of Ixopo" from *Lost in the Stars*. All other finalists—Christine Amon (31, Grand Rapids, MI), Daniel Berryman (27, New York, NY), Andrea Lett (27, Winnipeg, MB), Benjamin Pattison (27, Arlington, VA), and John Tibbetts (27, Tifton, GA)—received \$2,000. Victoria Clark summarized the judges' quandary in picking winners: "All of these young artists are already well on their way to varied careers."

During the daytime round, each of the fifteen contestants performed a program of four selections from the operatic, “Golden Age,” and contemporary musical theater repertoires, including at least one number by Kurt Weill. All contestants returned in the evening to perform a single selection, chosen by the judges from their afternoon programs. The evening round was live-streamed and viewed remotely by more than 1,000 households.

The evening also honored conductor James Holmes with the Foundation’s Lifetime Distinguished Achievement Award in recognition of his career-spanning dedication to the music of Weill, as well as his commitment to idiomatic performance of both musical theater and opera. Foundation Board Chair Theodore S. Chapin presented the award to Holmes and noted that “he has conducted more repertory by Kurt Weill around the world than any conductor previously, even Weill’s own conductor of choice, Maurice Abravanel.” In accepting the award, Holmes acknowledged Weill as “the man whose work embodies everything that is great about music in the theater: his range, his style, and above all his humanity.” Holmes joins the distinguished roster of previous Lifetime Distinguished Achievement Award winners which includes Maurice Abravanel (1990), Teresa Stratas (1998), and Julius Rudel (2000).

Founded by Foundation president Kim H. Kowalke in 1998 to celebrate the centenary of Lotte Lenya’s birth, the Competition recognizes talented young singer/actors who are dramatically and musically convincing in wide-ranging theatrical repertoire, with a focus on the works of Kurt Weill. Since its inception, the LLC has grown into an internationally recognized leader in identifying and nurturing the next generation of “total-package performers” (*Opera News*) and rising stars in both the opera and musical theater worlds. The roster of prizewinners has likewise grown to over 100 laureates, many of whom have gone on to major performing careers.

The winners’ performances are available to view at [www.youtube.com/KurtWeillFoundation](http://www.youtube.com/KurtWeillFoundation).

#### **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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