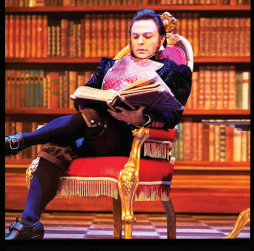


Lotte Lenya
THE LENYA COMPETITION
CELEBRATING 25 YEARS



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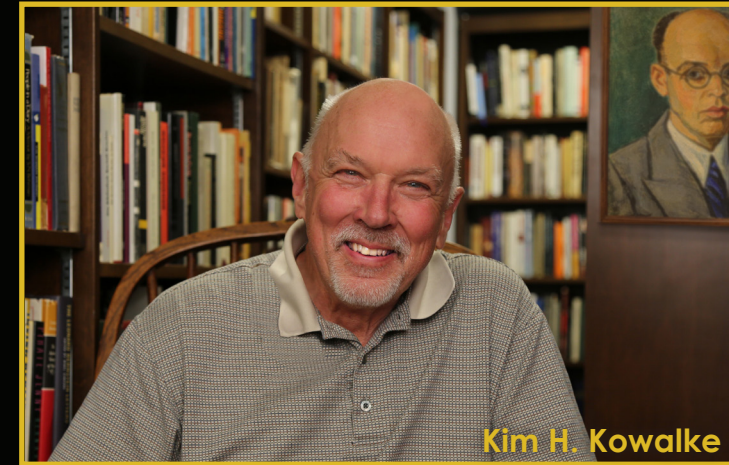
SPOTLIGHT

Lenya Competition winners together on stage, in productions around the world

ON THE COVER: Lenya Competition Alumni

Top Row: Natalie Ballenger ('14), Justin Hopkins ('12), Zachary James ('09), Lauren Michelle ('15), Jacob Keith Watson ('12) **Second Row:** Christian Douglas ('18), Lauren Worsham ('09), Andrew Polec ('21), Ginger Costa-Jackson ('13), John Brancy ('18) **Third Row:** Curtis Bannister ('17), **Fourth Row:** Erik Liberman ('05), Analisa Learning ('07), Alen Hodzovic ('09), Michael Maliakel ('15), Ruth Acheampong ('22) **Fifth Row:** Liam Bonner ('05), Cooper Grodin ('10), Briana Elyse Hunter ('14), Kyle Scatliffe ('10), Nicole Cabell ('02) **Sixth Row:** Tom Schimon ('16), Katrina Galka ('22), Lucas Meachem ('02), Amy Justman ('04), Matthew Grills ('12) **Seventh Row:** Rebecca Jo Loeb ('08), Kyle Barisich ('02), Gan-ya Ben-gur Akselrod ('21), Noah Stewart ('01), Brian Mulligan ('98)

REFLECTION: LOOKING BACK AT 25 YEARS



Kim H. Kowalke

Never in my most fanciful dreams did I imagine in 1998 that 25 years later the Lenya Competition would have evolved into one of the most prestigious international contests for singing actors. It has attracted applicants from every state and almost fifty foreign countries. More than 4,000 singers have competed. Total prizes awarded to more than 700 contestants will exceed \$1.5 million by the end of this year's final round.

Alumni are now singing in the world's leading opera houses and theaters, on Broadway, in the West End, and on national and inter-



Kim Kowalke talks with 2022 Prizewinner, Katrina Galka

national tours. They include Grammy and Drama Desk award winners, Tony and Olivier nominees, a Cardiff Singer of the World, and two West End "Newcomers of the Year."

As the flagship program of the Kurt Weill Foundation, the "LLC" epitomizes a key commitment in our mission statement: "Building upon the legacies of both Weill and Lenya, it nurtures talent, particularly in the creation, performance, and study of musical theater." I hope that Lenya and Weill would both be pleased. I certainly am.

- Kim H. Kowalke

Founder of The Lenya Competition
CEO, The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music



Lotte Lenya with Kim Kowalke (1980) in the gardens at "Brook House," the home she shared with Kurt Weill in Rockland County, NY. A year later she asked if he would succeed her as president of the Kurt Weill Foundation.

WHO IS LOTTE LENYA?



“There once was a girl named Jenny, whose talents were varied and many...”

Born in Vienna in 1898, Lotte Lenya began her theatrical career in Zurich as a teenager. She arrived in Berlin in 1921, hoping to make it as a dancer. She married Kurt Weill in 1926 and became his muse, making her debut in one of his stage works as Jessie in the *Mahagonny Songspiel* the next year. In 1928 she triumphed as Jenny in *The Threepenny Opera* and in 1931 as Jenny in the operatic version of *Mahagonny* in Berlin. She enjoyed a vibrant career until Hitler's ascent to power in 1933,

when Weill fled to Paris. Lenya joined him and created the role of Anna I in *The Seven Deadly Sins*. They arrived in New York in 1935 for rehearsals of Weill's Jewish pageant, *The Eternal Road*, in which Lenya played a small role. With her pronounced Viennese accent, she had limited success on the American stage until after Weill's sudden death in 1950.

Lenya devoted the rest of her life to performing, recording, and promoting Weill's music, becoming an international stage and film star in the process. In 1956, she won a special Tony Award for her performance as Jenny in the record-setting off-Broadway *Threepenny Opera*. A decade later her portrayal of Fräulein Schneider in *Cabaret* earned her another Tony nomination. On screen she appeared in *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (Academy Award nomination), *The Appointment*, *Semi-Tough*, and, most famously, as the stiletto-toed Rosa Klebb in *From Russia with Love*. She died in 1981 and is buried next to Weill near their home in Rockland County, New York.



Lenya and Weill at the piano in Brook House, 1942



Portrait of Lenya by the famous German photographer Lotte Jacobi, Berlin, ca. 1930.

"Lotte Lenya stepped to the front of the stage to sing ... At that moment the miniature confines of the theater stretched and were replaced by a broad and sweeping arena of genuine sentiment. For that's what art can do, and that's what an artist does."

-Jay Harrison
review of *The Threepenny Opera*
New York Herald Tribune, 1954



Lenya as Col. Rosa Klebb in *From Russia with Love* (1963)



Lotte Lenya and Louis Armstrong, 1955

“Look out, Miss Lotte LenYA!”

While recording “Mack The Knife” from Marc Blitzstein’s version of *Threepenny Opera* in 1955, Louis Armstrong gave an impromptu shout-out to Lotte Lenya when she walked into the studio. Four years later Bobby Darin’s smash hit rendition preserved Satchmo’s addition and sold over ten million copies.

“How far will you go with me?”

KURT WEILL



“When I began to branch out into other fields of the musical theatre I discovered the simple truth that the varying categories of musical shows were actually nothing but different ways of mixing the same ingredients - music, drama and movement.”

-Kurt Weill

Kurt Weill, born in Dessau in 1900, began his career in the early 1920s in Berlin. By the time he fled Nazi Germany for Paris in March 1933, he had established himself as the leading theatrical composer in Germany with a dozen stage works, including three early one-act operas. Although his collaborations with Bertolt Brecht, including *The Threepenny Opera* and the full-length opera *Mahagonny*, have become staples in the repertory, his final works before fleeing Germany, *Die Bürgschaft* and *Der Silbersee*, were so powerful that the Nazis wiped them from the stage. In Paris from 1933 to 1935, Weill created *The Seven Deadly Sins* for George Balanchine before sailing for New York in 1935 to supervise his score for Max Reinhardt's *The Eternal Road*. He and Lenya never left.

Thereafter Weill wrote primarily for Broadway, including *Johnny Johnson*, *Knickerbocker Holiday*, *Lady in the Dark*, *One Touch of Venus*, *Street Scene*, *Love Life*, and *Lost in the Stars*. While collaborating with the likes of Paul Green,

Maxwell Anderson, Moss Hart, Ira Gershwin, and Alan Jay Lerner, Weill became the foremost “collaborative dramatist” in the 1940s, with each of his works a new hybrid form of populist musical theater. He was working with Maxwell Anderson on a musical version of *Huckleberry Finn* when he died suddenly in April 1950, at the age of 50.

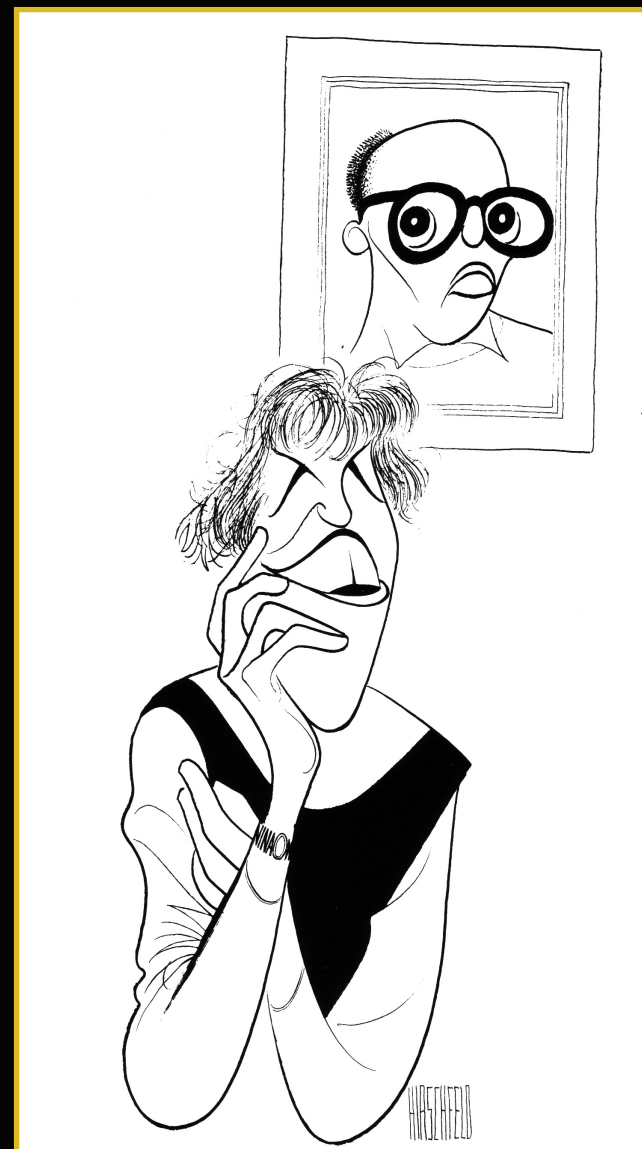


Lenya and Weill on their wedding day, 28 January 1926, carrying their wedding “feast” after the civil ceremony.

DUAL INSPIRATION

WEILL & LENYA

Two creative lives epitomize the spirit of the Lenya Competition



Caricature of Lotte Lenya and Kurt Weill by Al Hirschfeld
© The Al Hirschfeld Foundation. www.AlHirschfeldFoundation.org

The spirit and values of the Lenya Competition are inspired by the examples of both Lenya and Weill, two consummate artists of the musical theater. In a career that spanned stage, recording, and film, the inimitable Lenya brought an absolute standard of honesty and clarity to whatever she performed.

As a composer, Weill was just as effective on Broadway as in opera. Throughout his career, he challenged rigid notions of genre, seeing musical theater as a continuum. He believed deeply in the theatrical power of songs as mini-dramas, requiring singers to be compelling storytellers. Weill's theater songs have remained an integral part of the Lenya Competition since the very first contest in 1998.

Memories & MILESTONES

By Kim H. Kowalke

THE MAIDEN VOYAGE

The first Lotte Lenya Competition was held on November 12, 1998, with seventeen contestants, all of whom were Eastman voice majors. The event celebrated the centenary of Lenya's birth, as part of a week-long Kurt Weill Festival I had organized to mark the arrival and permanent deposit of Weill's pre-1933 autograph scores at Sibley Music Library.

The stellar jury for the first Competition included legendary soprano Teresa Stratas, renowned maestro Julius Rudel, and the recently arrived artistic director of GEVA Theatre, Mark Cuddy. The repertoire requirement of an aria, two contrasting Weill selections, and a song from the American musical theater proved daunting for most of the singers. But not for sophomore baritone Brian Mulligan. I remember Teresa whispering in my ear after he finished his program: "That young man is very special; he will have a big career." Brian won the top prize of \$1000. He would make his Metropolitan Opera debut in 2003.



Teresa Stratas's "Unknown Kurt Weill" concert at the Whitney Museum, 4 January 1980. Afterward Lenya told her, "Teresa, you're the one. You must carry on." The songs she had given Stratas to sing and record have become standard repertory in the Lenya Competition.



1998 TOP PRIZEWINNER INTERNATIONAL OPERA STAR BRIAN MULLIGAN

"When the Competition was announced, I wasn't very familiar with Weill's music. So I listened to everything I could. I couldn't find a recording of his four Whitman songs, but I found the score of "Come Up from the Fields, Father." I think my performance of that number won the contest for me. (I'm planning to sing it again for the LLC@25 gala concert.) I also learned a principle that has guided my entire career: it's my responsibility to find the music which best showcases my talent."

TAKING FLIGHT

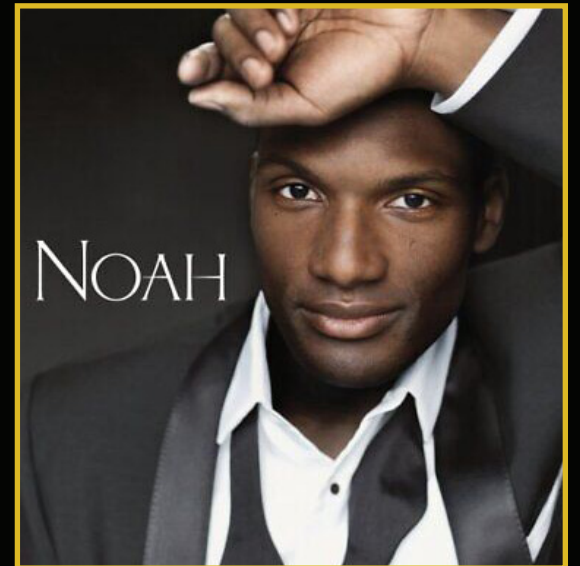
The commitment of Teresa Stratas assured the Lenya Competition instant credibility and prestige. She would serve on the three-person jury for the first six Competitions (and it would remain the only vocal competition she would ever adjudicate.) Eligibility for the second Competition in 1999 expanded to include any student in the tri-state area, with that year's winner, Amy Orsulak, representing the Manhattan School of Music

To celebrate the centenary of Weill's birth, the 1999 finalists were presented in a concert in February 2000 hosted by Stratas, at the 92nd Street Y, with Martin Bernheimer reviewing it for *The Financial Times*. That same month the 2000 edition of the Competition was held in Germany with eligibility restricted to German citizens. Young professionals competed in Berlin, students in Weill's home town of Dessau, with a winners' concert in the famed Bauhaus there. In 2001 the Competition returned to Rochester, with eligibility now expanded geographically to include students living anywhere in the United States and Canada.

Prizes also gradually increased, first prize to \$7500 in 2003. Already in 2001, the top three prizes had been supplemented with judges' discretionary awards, named in honor of Weill's assistant and Lenya's accompanist Lys Symonette, allowing juries to recognize outstanding vocal talent or a superlative performance of a single number. The first such award went to operatic tenor Noah Stewart, who would join the roster of the Met in 2008 and then become the first Black musician to top the UK Classical Album Chart.

The following year, Symonette Awards were claimed by Lucas Meachem and Nicole Cabell (who would subsequently win the BBC's Cardiff Singer of the World Competition and in 2020 would be appointed to Eastman's voice faculty). Many outstanding international opera singers subsequently followed in their footsteps as Symonette award winners.

This rapid expansion of the Competition was bolstered by Carolyn Weber, who had joined the KWF staff as Director of Programs just in time to witness the 1998 Competition. Until her retirement in 2014, she would bring her expe-



2001 Lys Symonette Award-winner Noah Stewart's debut album topped the UK Classical Album Chart in 2012.

rience as a professional opera singer and CAMI artist manager to the venture. Brady Sansone succeeded her as the Competition Administrator in 2015.

GOING GLOBAL

Starting in 2004, there would be no geographic, citizenship, or educational limitations, only an age range of 19 to 32. The Competition was truly going global, with German actor Alen Hodzovic taking home top prize in 2009, the first European to do so in the Competition's "open era."



Winners, 2009: Recent Grammy-recipient Zachary James; Tony nominee Lauren Worsham (*A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*); First Prizewinner Alen Hodzovic.

In 2010 we introduced Emerging Talent Awards for promising non-finalists still at an early stage of development. Winners of any of the top three prizes could not compete again, but all other award-winners were encouraged to re-enter. Many did so several times before claiming a top prize. In her last year of eligibility in 2021, Israeli-born Gan-ya Ben-gur Akselrod competed for the fourth time and won a top prize. Traveling to the finals from Vienna each time, she had been rewarded with a Lys Symonette Award in 2018 and a Trustee Award in 2020. Gan-ya described her learning experience: "Every time I participate, I feel like I win and grow as an artist as I go through this challenging and rewarding process. It's been a one-of-a-kind journey for me." In contrast, Andrew Polec, a "West End Newcomer of the Year," didn't enter the Competition until he was 32, his last year of eligibility as well. Yet he took home the \$20,000 first prize in 2021 on his first attempt. Obviously, there is no formula for winning the Competition, other than demonstrating that you can indeed "do it all."



Whether winning on a first try or a fourth attempt, Andrew Polec and Gan-ya Ben-Gur Akselrod both found the Competition to be a profound learning experience.

INCORPORATING COACHING

By 2011 the number of entrants each year had increased so rapidly, particularly internationally, that video auditions were required, preceding a live semifinal round in New York City. In previous years, judges sometimes had requested "callbacks" for certain finalists in order to coach or give notes, right before performing in the evening's concert. I recall that, in 2005, Hal Prince advised Erik Liberman that "less is more" for "Try Me," which Erik had hyper-staged in the afternoon round. The famed director reminded Erik that he'd



Broadway bound: Erik Liberman (right) in *LoveMusik* (2007) directed by Harold Prince. Michael Cerveris as Kurt Weill, and Donna Murphy as Lotte Lenya Photo: Carol Rosegg

staged the original production of *She Loves Me*, and that "Try Me" had been lit by only a pin-spot on the actor's face. "So all that crap you're doing won't be seen," Hal said with a wry smile. Erik's transformation was instantaneous and remarkable, prompting Prince to proclaim "That's it, he can do it." The panel awarded Liberman second prize, and two years later Hal cast him in the Broadway production of *LoveMusik*.

Such last-minute suggestions by judges were not always implemented or well-received, so in 2011 a coaching session for each semifinalist was formalized, following directly upon their auditions. Its success in raising the level of performances in the final round and its popularity with the contestants soon made one-on-one coaching with a seasoned professional one of the signatures of the Competition.

(See "Master Class," page 12)

RAISING THE BAR

The 2012 finals were indeed the most competitive to date. After the afternoon round, the jury's composite scores for lyric tenor Matt Grills, character tenor Jacob Keith Watson, and bass-baritone Justin Hopkins were almost identical, but each judge had ranked a different one as first place, and a different one in third place. So the evening concert, when each finalist sang just two numbers, was especially pivotal. Grills, having been a Grand Finals Winner of the Metropolitan Opera competition just weeks earlier, nailed ten high-C's in "Ah! Mes amis." Watson's "What is it about her?" proved dangerous in its near-crazed dramatic impact. And Hopkins' thrilling "O! Man River" brought down the house to a chorus of "bravos." After all finalists had performed, the jury – Rebecca Luker, Ted Chapin, and Rob

Berman – retired to continue deliberations. They were still unable to reach consensus on ordering the top prizes, while the audience grew restless waiting for the promised "white smoke" signaling them to return to their seats in Kilbourn Hall. Finally, a compromise emerged: first prize of \$15,000 for Grills, a tie for second between Hopkins and Watson, each taking home \$10,000. Subsequently all three have followed successful but quite different career trajectories. In another year, any of the three might have won the top prize. And, despite awarding two second prizes, the judges felt compelled to present a "third prize" to Megan Marino, who would go on to a major operatic career. There could be no clearer evidence that the bar for winning the Competition had been re-set, extremely high.



The photo finish winners of the 2012 Competition: Matt Grills, 1st prize; tied for second, Jacob Keith Watson and Justin Hopkins; taking home third, Megan Marino.

SINGING THE STORY: The Last Decade

In 2013, the fifteen-year milestone of the Competition was commemorated with a souvenir booklet and a documentary film, "Singing the Story," which aired on Rochester's PBS-affiliate, WXXI. The film highlighted that year's cycle of auditions, including semifinal coachings and the final round, with Broadway baritone Doug Carpenter emerging victorious. The film climaxed with excerpts from a concert with full orchestra (and full house) conducted by James Holmes at Symphony Space in New York City, with alumni prizewinners sharing the stage with Broadway stars.

Remarkably, during the first fifteen years of the Competition, repertoire requirements had changed only minimally, still encompassing four selections bridging opera and musical theater, including at least one work by Weill. Diversity of repertoire and an



"With a little touch of Venus" -- Judy Blazer, Analisa Learning (2007), and Maren Weinberger (2013) harmonizing at the Symphony Space concert in 2013. Photo: Rahav Segev

emphasis on excellence of both singing and acting continued to epitomize the values of the Competition, inspire the composition of the juries, and elevate finalists to top prizewinners. Travel stipends for both semifinals and finals, paid staff accompanists, and perpetuation of a "no-entry-fee policy" have assured equal access and encouraged diversity and inclusion.

Packed houses in Rochester soon prompted live streaming of the finals, thereby allowing a global audience to "attend" the Competition remotely. Prominent presence on social media platforms stimulated interest among potential contestants and augmented the Competition's reputation. Annual competitions attracted more and more foreign applicants, as the average age of both contestant pools and finalist profiles rose to the upper 20's, with young professionals at early stages of careers supplanting the student model as the new norm.

The 2018 chapter of the Competition illustrated fully the dilemma of that year's stary jury: Tony-winning actor Victoria Clark; noted Weill-conductor James Holmes; and the artistic director of "Encores!" Jack Viertel. Bringing very different expectations and criteria to their ratings, collectively the panel had unusual difficulty dealing with the high level of competition and the diversity of contestants' skills. After lengthy deliberations, they agreed to elide the usual First, Second, and Third Prize categories. Instead they awarded three "\$15,000 Prizes" to John Brancy, Caroline Hewitt, and Laura Sanders, as well as three "\$10,000 Prizes" to Christian Douglas, Reilly Nelson, and Philip Stoddard.

The judges then decided that four other contestants receive discretionary awards of \$3500 each. Needless to say, this compromise of "no one wins first prize/almost everyone wins a prize" dispensed the largest total prize purse in the history of the Competition, which allowed the cumulative threshold of prizes to exceed \$1M for the first time. One of the "\$15,000 Prizewinners," John Brancy, had the distinction of having won a Lys Symonette Award for "extraordinary promise" in 2008, only to return exactly ten years later to win a top prize, just as his career was skyrocketing.

Over its two decades, the Competition has increasingly attracted some of the very best performers who have been funneled into either "opera" or "musical theater" vocal/career tracks, and whose training has seldom prepared or encouraged them "to do it all." But prejudicial educational and institutional barriers are gradually being dismantled, as major orchestras routinely present concert versions of musicals, and opera companies frequently include the classics of the American musical theater in their seasons. Famous performers have been "crossing over," with Kelli O'Hara recently appearing in *Così fan tutte* at the Met during the same season as Renée Fleming garnered a Tony nomination as Nettie in *Carousel* on Broadway. More and more, Competition winners have been able to take advantage of the changing dynamic and showcase the full range of their talents.



Doing it all: Lenya contestants have to show a wide range of singing and acting skills in four different genres, exemplified by 2022 Prizewinner, Katrina Galka (above)

COPING WITH COVID

On Thursday, March 12, 2020, the second day of semifinals in New York, a flurry of text messages and emails alerted me that Broadway would be shutting down immediately and indefinitely, as would events at the Eastman School of Music. Nevertheless, we decided to finish the semifinals and name finalists. But when it became clear that a final round would be impossible, we had to improvise a recipe for making lemonade from the lemons at hand. Video footage of the semifinals allowed an imaginative film to be compiled: "Down to Twelve: The 2020 Finalists." Each of the dozen received a special \$5000 Trustee Award as consolation for the cancelled conclusion of the 2020 cycle.



Adapting to the global pandemic: In lieu of a live gathering, the 12 finalist's interviews and performance footage were made into a film, and the prize pool was divided equally.

The Foundation's board of trustees also approved creation of "The Lenya Competition Songbook," a new initiative to link emerging songwriters with Lenya alumni to record unpublished songs, with both receiving much needed financial support.

(See "Opening Doors," page 14)

With performance opportunities for potential applicants all but eliminated, a record 500 video auditions were submitted by the 2021 deadline. The field narrowed to just thirty-one semifinalists. That round had to be conducted remotely via Zoom, though we managed to preserve the coaching component. For the first time, two prizewinning alumni of the Competition, Analisa Leaming (2007) and Zachary James (2009) joined veteran Lisa Vroman to adjudicate and coach. They selected fifteen finalists.

Travel obstacles persuaded us to hold finals in NYC for the first time, with a limited invitation-only audience. Against all odds, the fifteen finalists all managed to participate in person, with a record amount of prize money being awarded. An edited film of the event played on demand for six months on the OperaVision platform, attracting a viewership of more than 10,000 worldwide. With the threat of new variants still lurking, the 2022 semis and finals were also held in NYC, this time with a ticketed audience at Merkin Hall. Eleven finalists ended up as the most diverse group in the history of the Competition.



2022 Prizewinners with Kowalke: Ruth Acheampong, Amanda Sheriff, Katrina Galka, Jeremy Weiss, Ronald Wilbur



Full speed ahead! This year's twelve finalists were selected from 271 contestants and include four previous finalists.

CELEBRATING 25

With COVID apparently on the wane, the decision whether to return to Rochester for the 25th Anniversary was not a difficult one. The occasion begged a bookend: Eastman had hosted the first Competition and all but three of the other final rounds. I remembered that when Teresa walked into Kilbourn Hall for the first time in 1998, she surveyed the wood-paneled walls and ornate vaulted ceiling -- and then exclaimed, "IT'S MAGIC!" As I look closely at the 31 photographs on the cover of this commemorative brochure, I think she was right. For 25 years, something almost magical has been happening for Lenya alumni, now singing stories on stages around the world.

- Kim H. Kowalke

Founder of The Lenya Competition
CEO, The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music



"IT'S MAGIC!" Kilbourn Hall, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester -- Home of the Lenya Competition 1998 - 2023

MASTER CLASS

THE LENYA COMPETITION'S A-LIST COACHES INSPIRE A NEW GENERATION

One of the signature features of the Lenya Competition is the one-on-one working session with the adjudicator/coach directly after each contestant's semifinal audition. Fortunately, the Competition has attracted some of the industry's cream of the crop, including the four below, but also the late, *great* Rebecca Luker (who judged/coached the Competition six times), conductor/director Ted Sperling, and Broadway veteran Judy Blazer, just to name a few more.



JEANINE TESORI

Jeanine Tesori is a composer of musical theater, opera, television and film. She won the Tony Award for Best Score and a Pulitzer nomination for the musical *Fun Home*. Her other musicals include *Kimberly Akimbo*; *Caroline, or Change*; *Shrek the Musical*; *Thoroughly Modern Millie*; *Violet*; and *Soft Power*. Her operas include *A Blizzard on Marblehead Neck*, *Blue* (MCANA Award for Best New Opera), and the upcoming *Grounded* at the Met. Tesori was the Founding Artistic Director of City Center's *Encores! Off-Center* series and also the supervising Vocal Producer of Steven Spielberg's *West Side Story*.

"When I'm coaching, I emphasize the text and ask semifinalists to speak the lyrics as a monologue in a play. This helps actors find nuances not in the notes and transitions between subtextual thoughts. Singers have to know what their characters want to accomplish, what the obstacles are, where they are coming from and where they are headed."

-Jeanine Tesori



LISA VROMAN

Lisa Vroman starred on Broadway, and in Los Angeles and San Francisco as Christine Daaé in *The Phantom of the Opera*. Her Broadway debut was *Aspects of Love*, and she was the first to play both Fantine and Cosette in *Les Misérables*. Other roles include Marían Paroo, Lili Vanessi/Kate, Birdie, Rosabella (NY City Opera), Johanna (PBS), Laurey, and María Callas in *Master Class*. She has often sung Anna I in *Seven Deadly Sins* and enjoys a busy career as a guest soloist with major orchestras.

"As a coach, I want them to inhabit and enact four stories, four songs. And although this is a competition, the goal is not to pit them against each other, but to help them be their best self. I want them all to win and to bolster their self-worth, honoring all the work that they did to get here."

-Lisa Vroman



ANDY EINHORN

Broadway music director and conductor **Andy Einhorn** served as the music supervisor and director for the Broadway productions of *Hello, Dolly!* starring Bette Midler (Grammy nom) and *Carousel* starring Renée Fleming (Grammy nom). Other Broadway credits include *Holiday Inn*, Woody Allen's *Bullets Over Broadway*, *Cinderella*, and *Sondheim on Sondheim*. Since 2011, Einhorn has conducted major orchestras here and abroad as music director (and pianist) for six-time Tony Award winner Audra McDonald.

"The so-called 'great divide' between opera and musical theater should NOT exist! These performers create full-bodied performances of music that exists in a theater: whether it's in an opera house or on a Broadway stage. It's all about communication through stylistic adjustments for the particular repertoire, while maintaining a dedication to storytelling and the lyric."

-Andy Einhorn



VICTORIA CLARK

Broadway credits for **Victoria Clark**, actress, director, and educator, include *The Light in the Piazza* (Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle awards), *Gigi* (Tony, Helen Hayes noms.), *Cinderella* (Tony, Outer Critics Circle noms.), *Sister Act* (Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle noms.), and, most recently *Kimberly Akimbo*. Film credits include *The Happening* and *Cradle Will Rock*; television "Law & Order/SVU," "The Good Wife," and "Homeland." She won NAMT's "Best Director Award" for *Newton's Cradle*. Upcoming: Weill's *Love Life* at Encores!

"I often remind contestants that music is subjective, and it's easy to be seduced by the lyric and lured into playing a mood, instead of objectives and actions. Rely on your text to progress through the arc of every song. That will save you from staying in one place emotionally."

-Vicki Clark

A "Lightbulb" Coaching Moment



Photo: Erin Baiando

2012 TOP PRIZEWINNER MEGAN MARINO

I had one of those "lightbulb" moments coaching with Vicki Clark in the 2012 semifinals on Kander & Ebb's "A Quiet Thing." She took no prisoners working with me. Somehow she sensed that I was creating distance between myself and the song. She just looked deep into my eyes and told me not to give it a hard sell, just "tell me your story." I started to sing the first phrase, and I was cool. Second phrase: just broke down in tears!

I thought for sure I'd bombed the audition right there. But when I gathered the courage to look her in the eye again, she was smiling: "We got you there," she said. It changed the way I did my thing forever. I can't thank her enough for challenging me to truly "go there."

-Megan Marino

OPENING DOORS

Director of Programs Brady Sansone talks about the Foundation's continuing support for alumni.



have underwritten the costs of Lenya alums at such institutions as the Glimmerglass Festival, Santa Fe Opera, The Old Globe, and Festival d'Aix; and most recently, the Lenya Competition Songbook, which showcases new theater songs by producing audio recordings performed by a prize-winner in collaboration with the writers.

The Songbook initiative was in part a response to the darkening of stages caused by COVID-19. Participants said that the honorarium they received from the KWF was secondary to the opportunity to collaborate and make music during such a difficult time. With all such ongoing initiatives, we want to assist Lenya Family members with opportunities to achieve all they can.

- Brady Sansone
Director of Programs
Kurt Weill Foundation for Music



Brady Sansone with Taylor-Alexis DuPont, the 2021 Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Apprentice Artist at Santa Fe Opera.

Winning a prize in the Lenya Competition doesn't mean the end of support from the Kurt Weill Foundation. For many alums, their experience in the Competition marks just the beginning of an ongoing professional relationship, as the KWF continues to advocate for members of what we affectionately refer to as the "Lenya Family."

Since the earliest days of the Competition, Foundation staff and Board members have recommended Lenya alumni for appropriate gigs, connected them with collaborators, and funded (through our grants program) projects that engage prizewinners. And we celebrate the moments when a serendipitous connection made through the Competition (typically between a judge and contestant) leads to a meaningful step in a singer's career.

The Foundation has also developed several formal means of creating opportunities for alumni. These include a Professional Development Grant program; the Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Artist and Young Artist programs, which

KWF GRANT PROGRAM



The KWF provided grant support to the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra to engage **Justin Hopkins** (2012) and **Lauren Michelle** (2015) as the two leads in its 2017 production of *Lost in the Stars*, directed by Anne Bogart. Jonathon Heyward, a Kurt Weill/Julius Rudel Conducting Fellow, assisted conductor Jeffrey Kahane. Heyward is now Music Director Designate of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

Photo: Reed Hutchinson

CONNECTIONS & REFERRALS



After winning a top prize in the Competition, **Analisa Leaming** (2007) was encouraged by finals judge Ted Chapin to audition for a Chinese tour of *The Sound of Music*. Analisa would go on as Maria in the production, which then led to her career on Broadway. Her roles include Anna in Lincoln Center's *The King and I*, Rosalie in *School of Rock*, and Irene Molloy in *Hello, Dolly!* with Bette Midler, conducted by Andy Einhorn."

Photo: Bob Compton

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM



The KWF provided funding to **Brian Vu** (2016) for an extensive dance training regimen, which was instrumental in his preparation for dancing the original Jerome Robbins choreography as Riff in Francesca Zambello's production of *West Side Story*, co-produced by the Glimmerglass Festival, Houston Grand Opera, and Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Photo: Lynn Lane

KURT WEILL/LOTTE LENYA ARTISTS



Marie Oppert (2017, 2020) has been named a Kurt Weill/Lotte Lenya Artist at the 2023 Festival d'Aix, where she will play the role of Polly in a new production of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, directed by Thomas Ostermeier and co-produced by *La Comédie Française*, which will present more than sixty performances in its 2023-24 season in Paris.

THE LENYA COMPETITION SONGBOOK



The KWF paired Competition prizewinners with emerging writers to produce and showcase recordings of 28 new musical theater songs. The process included in-depth coaching sessions like the one seen here for "The Love of Two Parents," with **Helen Zhibing Huang** (2021) (top left), writing team (bottom row) Elspeth Collard & Sam Rosenblatt, and accompanist Zachary Peterson.

CURTAIN UP!

SPOTLIGHT ON PAST WINNERS

SHARING THE STAGE: Lenya Competition winners enjoy successful stage, concert, and recording careers around the world. They are just as likely to be on Broadway as at the Metropolitan Opera or Komische Oper Berlin. Thus, it's not rare to find them together opposite one another on major stages. Here are a few examples.

Photo: Cory Weaver



Megan Marino (2013) and Rodell Rosel (2006) in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Lyric Opera of Chicago

Photo: Cory Weaver



Matt Grills (2012) and Brian Mulligan (1998) in *Sweeney Todd*, San Francisco Opera

Photo: Erin Baiano



Amy Justman (2004) and Lauren Worsham (2009) with Kelli O'Hara in *The Mikado*, Carnegie Hall

Photo: Steven Pisano



Briana Elyse Hunter (2014) and Jorell Williams (2011) in *As One*, New York City Opera

Photo: Andreas Burkhardt



Richard Todd Adams (2004), Jacob Keith Watson (2012), and Mike McKinsey (2003) in "New York, New York!" German Tour, Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz.

Photo: Cory Weaver



Nicole Cabell (2002) and John Brancy (2018) in *Così fan tutte*, San Francisco Opera

Photo: Karli Cadel



Helen Zhibing Huang (2021), Briana Elyse Hunter (2014), and Lisa Rogali (2017) in *Carmen*, Glimmerglass Festival

Photo: Cory Weaver



Jasmine Habersham (2017) and Brian Vu (2016) in *Edward Tulane*, Minnesota Opera

Photo: Birgit Hupfeld



David Arnsperger (2010) and Rebecca Jo Loeb (2008) in *Love Life*, Theater Freiburg, Germany

Photo: Philip Newton



Jonathan Michie (2005) and Matt Grills (2012) in Rossini's *Cinderella*, Seattle Opera

The Kurt Weill Foundation For Music - Mission Statement

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.



STAGE DOOR



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