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“No vocal contest better targets today’s total-package talents.” Opera News

**ANNOUNCING THE WINNERS OF THE 23rd ANNUAL
LOTTE LENYA COMPETITION;
FINALS AVAILABLE ON-DEMAND VIA OPERAVISION
BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 10**

More than \$160,000 awarded to this year’s contestants

*This year’s event featured the presentation of the newly established
“Rebecca Luker Award”
for Outstanding Performance of a “Golden Age” selection*

NEW YORK (August 31, 2021) — **The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music** announced the winners of the 23rd annual **Lotte Lenya Competition**, which took place before an invitation-only audience at the Riverside Theatre in New York City on August 28. The \$20,000 First Prize was awarded to **Andrew Polec** (USA, 32), who made each of his four selections a fully realized one-act drama. **Victoria Okafor** (USA, 26) won the \$15,000 Second Prize, and **Charles Eaton** (USA, 30) and **Gan-ya Ben-gur Akselrod** (Israel, 33) each received the \$10,000 Third Prize. Akselrod, a four-time finalist in the Competition, reminisced: “It’s not only singing, it’s not only acting, it’s everything! That’s why it’s one of my favorite competitions.” For the first time ever, an edited version of the Finals will be available free and on-demand to audiences worldwide beginning Friday, September 10 via [OperaVision](#).

The fifteen finalists were culled from a record applicant pool of 500 entrants, hailing from 29 countries and 39 US states. Some finalists have already appeared on Broadway and London’s West End, and in some of the world’s leading opera houses, including the Metropolitan Opera and Theater an der Wien. More than \$160,000 was awarded, the most ever in a single year, bringing the total amount in the Competition’s history to more than \$1.2 million.

The eminent jury for the Finals included director and Tony Award-winning actor **Victoria Clark**, Broadway music director and conductor **Andy Einhorn**, and Obie Award-winning, Tony- and Emmy-nominated actor, **Mary Beth Peil**, who launched her multifaceted career as the winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Peil, a first-time judge for the Lenya Competition, spoke to the finalists at the awards ceremony: “I had no idea that I would

need to bring a full box of Kleenex. You moved us, you made us laugh, you made us cry. Each of you in your own unique way is a winner.”

This year’s ceremony saw the first-ever presentation of the “**Rebecca Luker Prize**” for an outstanding performance of a “Golden Age” selection, following a celebratory [video tribute to Luker](#), a six-time judge for the Competition, who succumbed to ALS in December 2020. Her husband, **Danny Burstein**, presented the award to **Taylor-Alexis DuPont** (USA, 30) for her performance of Irving Berlin’s “Supper Time” from *As Thousands Cheer*.

Rebekah Howell (USA, 29) earned the Kurt Weill Award — never given before — for an outstanding performance of two contrasting selections by Weill: “Wie lange noch?” and “What Good Would the Moon Be?” from *Street Scene*. **Max Chernin** (USA, 31) received the Carolyn Weber Award for outstanding creativity in the design of a diverse program and exceptional sensitivity to text/music relationship. Lys Symonette Awards for outstanding performance of a single number went to **Katrina Galka** (USA, 31) for “Caro nome” from *Rigoletto* and **Kaileigh Shay Riess** (USA, 26) for “Je suis encor tout étourdie” from *Manon*.

Each of the remaining finalists received \$2,000: **Ty Chiko** (Bahamas, 32), **Monica Dewey** (USA, 31), **Nicole Fernandez-Coffaro** (USA, 28), **Kaden Forsberg** (Canada, 29), **Helen Zhibing Huang** (China, 31), and **Katherine Riddle** (USA, 30).

Each finalist performed a continuous fifteen-minute program of four contrasting numbers, including at least one by Kurt Weill. The event also featured seven former prizewinners singing selections from the [Lotte Lenya Competition Songbook](#), launched in 2020. The entire performance and awards ceremony was live-streamed globally.

Applications open for the 2022 Lenya Competition on September 1, 2021. For more information, visit <https://www.kwf.org/lotte-lenya-competition/>.

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About the Lotte Lenya Competition

More than a vocal competition, the [Lotte Lenya Competition](#) recognizes talented young singer/actors who are dramatically and musically convincing in repertoire ranging from opera/opera to contemporary Broadway scores, with a focus on the works of Kurt Weill. Since its inception in 1998, the Lotte Lenya Competition 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. In awarding more than \$1.2 million in prize money since the Competition’s inception, the Kurt Weill Foundation has celebrated the talent and supported the careers of hundreds of singing actors worldwide.

About the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music

Chartered in 1962 as a not-for-profit private foundation, the [Kurt Weill Foundation for Music](http://www.kwf.org) preserves and perpetuates the legacies of composer Kurt Weill (1900-1950) and his actress-singer wife Lotte Lenya (1898-1981). Based in New York City, it encourages an appreciation of Weill's music through support of performances, recordings, and scholarship, while nurturing talent more generally in the creation, performance, and study of musical theater. It maintains the Weill-Lenya Research Center; the annual Lotte Lenya Competition; Weill-Lenya Artist Sponsorships, the Julius Rudel / Kurt Weill Conducting Fellowship, and the Harold Prince / Kurt Weill Directing Fellowship. It has prepared and co-published twelve volumes of the Kurt Weill Edition, with more in preparation. It awards biennially the Kurt Weill Prize for scholarship about music theater. The Foundation's ongoing communications include its semi-annual Kurt Weill Newsletter, monthly E-News, and lively presence on multiple social media platforms. Since 2012, the Foundation has also administered the musical and literary estate of Marc Blitzstein.