



**THE DALLAS OPERA™
MEDIA RELEASE**

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**The Dallas Opera Guild Presents
The 19th Annual
“Dallas Opera Guild
Vocal Competition”**

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**HONORING SANDRA AND BILL SANDERSON**

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Saturday, March 3, 2007

**Gooch Auditorium (UT Southwestern Medical Center)
5323 Harry Hines Blvd. at Butler**

Finals Competition at 7:00 pm

Free Admission

~~ Complimentary Valet Parking ~~

DALLAS, FEBRUARY 27, 2007 –The Dallas Opera Guild will present the 19th annual “Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition,” a showcase for talented young opera singers who either come from Texas or got here “as fast as they could” on **Saturday, March 3, 2007 in Gooch Auditorium on the campus of UT Southwestern Medical Center**, located at 5323 Harry Hines Boulevard (at Butler).

There is no charge for admission and free covered parking is also available for the semi-final daytime round, from **11:30 am until 4:00 pm**. There will be complimentary valet parking for the finals round of the competition, beginning at **7:00 pm**.

Nineteen semi-finalists (aged 18 to 30) will compete for thousands of dollars in prize monies (\$16,000 was awarded in 2006) at this year's competition honoring **Sandra and Bill Sanderson**. The competition is open to singers genuinely desiring to pursue a career in the field of opera and **Dallas Opera Director of Artistic Administration Jonathan Pell** is pronouncing this year's field "may be the best ever!"

Judges for this year's event include: renowned soprano **Mary Jane Johnson**; **Roberto Mauro** from Michigan Opera Theater; **Lenore Rosenberg** from the Metropolitan Opera; **Christina Scheppelmann** from the Washington Opera; and from The Dallas Opera, Jonathan Pell.

Audience participation is part of the fun at each year's Vocal Competition and for the 11th consecutive year attendees will be given the chance to vote on their personal favorites for "**The People's Choice Award.**" Audience members will also enjoy mingling and getting to know these young singers during the traditional **dessert reception** which takes place just before the prizes are awarded.

This free, Spring musical event has become a favorite among opera aficionados and vocal music lovers across North Texas. For more information, contact **The Dallas Opera Guild at 214-443-1040**.

The 19th Annual Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition is chaired by dedicated Guild member **Greg McConeghy** who, with his wife Leria, has been a key hands-on volunteer for at least the past fifteen years.

This year's special honorees, longtime Guild members Sandra and Bill Sanderson, have always supported The Dallas Opera Guild's Vocal Competition, not only for the wonderful assistance it provides the young opera stars of tomorrow, but also for the outstanding opportunity for people from throughout the community to hear such exceptional up-and-coming talents. Among them:

2006 Winners

First place winner **Takesha Kizart** (soprano) has just signed with artistic manager **Tim Menah** of Askonas Holt, Ltd. in London. A former vocal performance honors student at UNT, she has won numerous competitions throughout the world, including national semi-finalist for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Marian Anderson Historical Society, Mario Lanza Institute Vocal Scholarship Competition, Opera Index,

and, recently, Grand Prize winner of the Voci Verdiane International Competition in Busseto, Italy, the first African-American to ever win the Grand Prize. She has sung with the Dallas Opera, the Fort Worth Opera, the Fort Worth Symphony, Concert Operetta Theater in Philadelphia, and the Haddonfield Symphony, among others. She will appear later this month in Samuel Barber's **Vanessa** at the Academy of Vocal arts in Philadelphia and will make her TDO debut in a leading role in next season's Schools Performances as Floria Tosca.

Cody Fosdick (tenor), our second place winner, is in his first year of residence at the Academy of Vocal Arts following graduate work at Indiana University's School of Music, where he performed extensively in operatic productions.

Third place winner **Steven LaBrie** (baritone) barely met the age requirement to enter our competition, then walked away with both the People's Choice Award and a special Mozart Aria award given by TDO's **General Director Karen Stone** in honor of the composer's 250th birthday. He is currently a first year artist at AVA, where he has performed roles in *Il barbiere de Siviglia* and *Eugene Onegin*, in addition to his role as Antonio in *Le Nozze de Figaro* with The Living Opera.

John Boer (baritone) is currently a resident artist with the Palm Beach Opera Company. He was a second place winner in the Southwest Regional Finals of the Metropolitan Opera's National Council audition, a previous fellow of the Tanglewood Music Festival, and was in the Santa Fe Opera Young Artist Program last summer. He will be part of the Santa Fe Opera's Spring Tour beginning in March 2007.

2005 Winners

Baritone **Weston Hurt**, winner of both our 2005 Vocal Competition and the People's Choice Award, has performed throughout the United States and Latin America. He debuted with the New York City Opera in Autumn 2006, and has also sung with the Opera Orchestra of New York, and the National Symphony at Wolf Trap. His 2007 engagements include the Arizona Opera, Opera Grand Rapids, and the role of Baldassare in *L'Arlesiana* with the Opera Orchestra of New York. A graduate of the Juillard Opera Center, he has won numerous awards, including Opera Index, Inc., Palm Beach Opera Competition, two career grants from the Santa Fe Opera, and was a finalist for the Sara Tucker Career Grant. He is also a gifted recitalist and concert singer.

Second place winner **Phandulwazi Maseti** (tenor) is a graduate student at Southern Methodist University and was selected to join the newly-formed Emerging Artists Program, a partnership between The Dallas Opera and SMU's Meadows School of the Arts. The group performed in The Dallas Opera's 2006 Spring Touring Program, performing for audiences throughout North Texas.

Christina Major (soprano), our third place winner, has performed widely throughout the United States, and made her international debut in Buenos Aires, Argentina and Montevideo, Uruguay as soloist with the Dallas Symphony in Brahms' *Requiem*. Critic

Scott Cantrell said she “soared on high, but she also brought rare depth of tone in lower-lying phrases.” She debuted with the Fort Worth Opera in 2006 as Mimi in *La bohème* opposite **Stephen Costello** (another AVA artist), whom we recently saw in *Maria Stuarda*. *The Fort Worth Weekly* said the pair “brought back memories of the earlier singers.” Called a “fascinating and hugely talented singer” by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Christina has sung with the National Philharmonic, was a soloist for the National Endowment for the Arts’ *Great American Voices* Series, has sung at Carnegie Hall, and was in the Young Artists Programs with both the Santa Fe Opera and Des Moines Metro Opera. She was also a finalist in the Sara Tucker Grant Awards.

Select Stars of Earlier Competitions

Winner of the **2003** People’s Choice Award, **Erik Nelson Werner** (baritone) has sung with the Dallas Opera, Fort Worth Opera, New York City Opera and Opera Orchestra of New York, and has sung extensively throughout the U.S. and Europe. He will sing at Carnegie Hall in February 2007, and has won numerous awards throughout the years, including the Brahms Competition in Graz, Austria, and the Geneva International Music Competition. A finalist in the International Songs Competition in London, critics wrote, “Erik is the possessor of one of the most beautiful male voices I have heard for a long time, and to this natural gift he adds intelligence, sensitivity, a maturity beyond his years...he has a rich, even bass-baritone voice and surely a distinguished operatic career ahead.”

Marjorie Owens, winner of the **2002** competition and the People’s Choice Award, was a winner of the 2006 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. She recently joined the Lyric Opera of Chicago’s Lyric Opera Center for Young Artists, after having spent three years with the Houston Grand Opera Studio. She has performed with the Fort Worth Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Wolf Trap Opera in Washington, D.C., and the Aspen Opera Theater. *The New York Times* included Marjorie in their compilation of “the upcoming Great Big American Voices.”

Angela Neiderloh (mezzo soprano), second place winner of the **2002** competition, spent three years in the Houston Grand Opera Studio, and has sung with the San Francisco Opera Center, Wolf Trap Opera, and the Houston Grand Opera. Her concert credits include solos with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, San Francisco Opera Orchestra, Aspen Festival Orchestra, and the Columbia Symphony, among others. *The New York Times* has praised her as “an engaging coloratura mezzo-soprano.”

Jennifer Black (soprano), winner of our **2001** Vocal Competition and the People’s Choice Award, has completed her first season of the Metropolitan Opera’s Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. In 2006 she had her debut with the New York City Opera, the Santa Fe Opera, and sang at Carnegie Hall. She was previously a National Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and was described by *The New York Times* as “a sensitive, rich-voiced soprano.”

Tenor **Scott Scully**, winner of the **2000 People's Choice Award**, has sung with Opera Ontario (Canada), San Francisco Opera, Fort Worth Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and Arizona Opera and recently made his Dallas Opera debut in *Lohengrin*. He was a member of the Houston Grand Opera Studio and the San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Program. Very active in concert, he has sung *Carmina Burana* with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and Atlanta Ballet, *Falstaff* and *Billy Budd* with the Cleveland Orchestra, and has collaborated with a list of illustrious conductors. In addition to the Dallas Opera Guild award, he received the Pavarotti award from the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, among others.

Jesus Garcia (tenor) competed in The Dallas Opera Guild's Vocal Competition in 1996, 1997, and 1999, winning second place that year. Long a favorite of Guild members, Jesus studied at the University of North Texas before attending the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia. Winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in 2001 who starred as Rodolfo in Baz Luhrman's *La bohème* on Broadway, Jesus has also sung the Berlioz *Requiem* at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., the role of Prince Ramiro in *La Cenerentola* with the Washington National Opera at Kennedy Center, as well as in School matinee performances for The Dallas Opera. Mr. Garcia has performed at the Spoleto Festival, Houston Grand Opera, and Bordeaux Opera (France), among other venues.

1998 first prize winner **Latonia Moore** (soprano), who also captured the inaugural People's Choice Award that year, brought the audience to their feet in her memorable 2004 Dallas Opera debut as Micaela in Bizet's *Carmen*, garnering her the Maria Callas Award for debut of the year. She "triumphed as a radiant-voiced Micaela" recreating that role for her debut with the New York City Opera. *The New York Times* wrote of "her radiant, warm sound and lovely phrasing," saying, "What she has already is special: a distinctive, poignant sound that makes an audience sit up." She recently made her Carnegie Hall debut in the title role of *L'Arlesiana* for Opera Orchestra of New York.

Clifton Forbis (tenor), winner of our second annual Vocal Competition in **1990**, has forged a dynamic international career. He recently sang the role of Siegmund in the Canadian Opera Company's 2006 production of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* to open their new Four Seasons Opera House. He also performed Act I of *Die Walküre* in January 2006 with the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center. Mr. Forbis has sung Otello at La Scala and in numerous productions at the Metropolitan Opera and other important theaters around the world.

Ticket Information for the 2007-2008 Dallas Opera Season

Presented by the Elsa von Seggern Foundation

Special Gratitude extended to Margot and Bill Winspear

Single tickets are on sale, starting at \$25, if purchased in advance. Tickets \$25 to \$199. For more information or to place your order, contact The Dallas Opera Ticket Services Office at (214) 443-1000 or visit TDO's web site at dallasopera.org.

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