



**THE DALLAS OPERA™
MEDIA RELEASE**

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**The Dallas Opera Guild Presents
The 20th Annual
“Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition”**

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**The Dallas Opera’s Jonathan Pell, Special Honoree**

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**Saturday, April 19, 2008
Gooch Auditorium (UT Southwestern Medical Center)
5323 Harry Hines Blvd. at Butler**

**Finals Competition at 7:00 pm
Free Admission
~~ Complimentary Valet Parking ~~**

DALLAS, MARCH 28, 2008 –The Dallas Opera Guild will present the 20th 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, April 19, 2008 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** that evening.

Twenty-one semi-finalists (aged 18 to 30) chosen from a field of more than 70

applicants will compete for thousands of dollars in prize monies (\$19,000 was awarded in 2007) at this year's competition honoring **The Dallas Opera's Director of Artistic Administration, Jonathan Pell.**

The competition is open to singers genuinely desiring to pursue a career in the field of opera. They must be current Texas residents or out-of-state residents attending a Texas college or university.

Judges for this year's event include **Jonathan Friend**, Artistic Administrator of the Metropolitan Opera; **Christopher Hahn**, Artistic Director for The Pittsburgh Opera; Christina **Scheppelmann**, Director of Artistic Operations for the Washington Opera; **Diane Zola**, Artistic Administrator for Houston Grand Opera; and from The Dallas Opera, **Jonathan Pell**, who also acts as artistic advisor to this eagerly anticipated annual competition.

Audience participation is part of the fun at each year's Vocal Competition and, for the tenth 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 **champagne reception**, a bubbly foretaste of the awards ceremony to come.

This free, Spring musical event has become a favorite among opera aficionados and vocal music lovers across North Texas. For additional information about the 20th annual Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition, please contact **The Dallas Opera Guild at 214-443-1040.**

This year's special honoree has been closely involved with this vocal competition since its inception: **The Dallas Opera's Director of Artistic Administration, Jonathan Pell.**

"In addition to taking the lead on the judge's panel each year," explains **2008 Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition Chairman Donald R. Jones**, "Jonathan has secured the most qualified and distinguished judges from opera companies and stages across the United States. His generosity and enthusiasm have been an inspiration to everyone involved.

"We thank Jonathan Pell for supporting the high quality of the Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition."

"An impressive number of former winners have gone on to have important careers in the opera world," says **Dallas Opera Guild President Marilyn Halla**. "In Santa Fe Opera's 2007 Season, three of our former winners sang leading and title roles: Jennifer

Black sang the role of Mimi in Puccini's *La bohème* and Erin Wall sang the title role in Richard Strauss's *Daphne*, in which tenor Garrett Sorenson also appeared.

“These three singers won 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places, respectively, in The Dallas Opera Guild's 2001 Vocal Competition.”

The Dallas Opera Guild's Vocal Competition, not only provides vital assistance to the young opera stars of tomorrow, but also creates an outstanding opportunity for people from throughout the community to hear exceptional up-and-coming talents, in free performances.

Select Stars of Earlier Competitions

First place winner **Takesha Meshe Kizart** (soprano, **2006**) signed with artistic manager **Tim Menah** of Askonas Holt, Ltd. in London and recently appeared in the title role of *Tosca* for The Dallas Opera's 2008 School Performances. 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 the Voci Verdiane International Competition in Busseto, Italy, where she became the first African-American to ever win the Grand Prize.

Cody Fosdick (tenor), our **2006** second place winner, is attending 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 **2006** competition, then walked away with both the People's Choice Award and a special Mozart Aria award given by TDO's former **General Director Karen Stone** in honor of the composer's 250th birthday. He is a second-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 and participated in the Santa Fe Opera's Spring Tour of 2007.

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 and will make his formal debut with The Dallas Opera in next season's production of *La bohème*. He debuted with the New York City Opera in 2006, and has also sung with the Opera Orchestra of New York, and the National Symphony at Wolf Trap. His 2007 engagements included 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, **2005**), a graduate student at Southern Methodist University, 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 formed the hub of The Dallas Opera's 2006 Spring Touring Program, performing for audiences throughout North Texas.

Christina Major (soprano), our **2005** 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 TDO's *Maria Stuarda*. *The Fort Worth Weekly* said the pair "brought back memories of the earlier singers."

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 participated in the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. In 2006, she made 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 Pittsburg 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*, earning the Maria Callas Award for The Dallas Opera 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 title role of Samson in *Samson et Dalila* at San Francisco Opera and 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 and will bring his interpretation of the role to the opening of the new **Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House at The Dallas Center for the Performing Arts** in October of 2009.

Ticket Information for the 2008-2009 Dallas Opera Season

Season subscribers are urged to renew today.

Single tickets \$15 to \$199, if purchased in advance.

Single tickets go on sale to the general public in September.

For more information or to renew your subscription, contact

The Dallas Opera Ticket Services Office at (214) 443-1000 or visit TDO’s web site at dallasopera.org.

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