



**THE DALLAS OPERA
MEDIA RELEASE**

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**THE DALLAS OPERA GUILD'S
21st ANNUAL VOCAL COMPETITION
AWARDS \$19,000 IN CASH PRIZES!**

**HISTORIC TIE FOR FIRST PLACE!
BARITONES STEVEN LABRIE & MICHAEL SUMUEL
EACH AWARDED \$6,500!**

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**SOPRANO ICY SIMPSON CAPTURES  
"PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD" AND \$1,000 PRIZE**

DALLAS, APRIL 5, 2009 — The Dallas Opera Guild's twenty-first annual competition for young opera singers, **The Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition**, awarded ten outstanding Texas-based singers **\$19,000** in prize monies in a ceremony conducted in Gooch Auditorium at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, where the exciting competition concluded late yesterday evening (Saturday, April 4, 2009).

Baritones **Steven LaBrie** and **Michael Sumuel** tied for First Place—a historic first in the history of this competition—and each will receive a \$6,500 cash prize. There was no award given for Second Place.

24-year-old mezzo-soprano **Catherine Martin** took Third Place, an honor which includes \$3,000 cash, while 23-year-old soprano **Icy Simpson** won the hearts of the audience and was voted this year's "**People's Choice Award**," carrying a one thousand dollar prize.

LaBrie, an 18-year-old barely old enough to compete at the time of the Guild's 2006 competition, went on that year to win Third Place, the "People's Choice Award" and the "Mozart Prize" provided by former General Director Karen Stone.

Three years later, this 21-year-old Richardson native returned to wow judges and audience members alike with finals round renditions of “E fra quest’ansie” from Leoncavallo’s *Pagliacci* and “Come Paride vezzoso” from Donizetti’s *L’elisir d’amore* (*The Elixir of Love*), accompanied by pianist **Sarah Click**.

Mr. LaBrie has just completed his third year at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia and plans to use a portion of his prize money to study in Italy over the summer. He has sung and covered a host of starring roles for Opera New Jersey, AVA Opera Theatre and, locally, for The Living Opera.

Since his 2006 accolades, LaBrie has gone on to named a semi-finalist in the Richard Tucker Competition, to place in both the Parkinson Competition and the Palm Beach Opera Competition, and to be awarded both a Nelson Eddy Scholarship and the 2008 Sergio Franchi Scholarship.

Twenty-three-year-old Michael Sumuel, currently working towards his Master of Music at Houston’s Rice University, covered the role of Bosun for Houston Grand Opera’s 2008 production of *Billy Budd* and has starred in numerous productions at both Rice University and Columbus State University (GA). He also recently covered the role of Guglielmo (Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*) in the 2009 Merola Program.

Earlier this year, Mr. Sumuel was named a semi-finalist in the Houston Grand Opera Eleanor McCollum Competition. In 2007, he was a national winner in the MTNA Young Artist Voice Competition.

Last night, he delighted Dallas opera lovers with performances of “Warm as the Autumn Light” from Moore’s *The Ballad of Baby Doe* and “Madamina, il catalogo è questo” from Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*.

Third Place winner Catherine Martin delivered strong performances of “Give Him This Orchid” from Britten’s *The Rape of Lucretia* and “Deh per questo istante” from Mozart’s *La clemenza di Tito*. Now studying at the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music after taking her Bachelor of Music at the University of North Texas (where she was named “Most Outstanding Undergraduate in Voice,” 2006), Ms. Martin has performed as a Wolf Trap Opera Studio Artist, a Chautauqua Studio Artist and as a soloist in the Ashville Symphony performance of Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9*.

Her numerous awards include a 2007 “Encouragement Award” from The Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition.

Twenty-three-year old soprano **Icy Simpson**, another previous Guild Competition

“Encouragement Award” winner and the first singer in the history of the University of Texas (Austin) to receive a Harrington Fellowship, won hearts at Gooch auditorium Saturday evening, before being awarded the **2009 People’s Choice Award** and a one thousand dollar cash prize.

She performed arias from Charpentier’s *Louise* and Lehár’s *Giuditta*.

Two \$500 “**Encouragement Awards**” were presented to 24-year-old tenor **Juan José De León** (a member of The Dallas Opera’s Emerging Artists Program now working towards a Master of Music in Vocal Performance at Southern Methodist University) who, during the finals round, sang selections from *The Tender Land* by Aaron Copland and Rossini’s Cinderella story: *La Cenerentola*, and to 23-year-old Canadian-born soprano **Mary-Jane Lee**, a prize-winning student at Rice University’s Shepherd School of Music where she, too, is a candidate for a Master of Music. Ms. Lee performed selections by Mozart and Puccini in the finals round of competition.

The remaining finalists were each presented with a check for \$200 by The Dallas Opera Guild.

“A tough decision? There’s no doubt about it.” admitted **Director of Artistic Administration Jonathan Pell** regarding the task of judging this year’s very strong field of candidates. “The level of difficulty shows in this historic decision to skip second place and allow two singers to share the top prize.”

The original field of 20 semifinalists, (three of whom withdrew by the day of competition) was selected from nearly a hundred applicants who submitted recordings, recommendations and proof of Texas ties.

Participants in the preliminary round were selected by **Mark Armstrong, Principal Pianist and Vocal Coach of The Dallas Opera and Tulsa Opera; Dale Dietert**, a member of the Voice Faculty of SMU since 2005; and **Stephen Dubberly**, Associate Professor in the College of Music at UNT, where he serves as music director of the opera program.

The singers were accompanied, throughout both rounds of the competition, by pianists **Sarah Click**, who holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Piano Performance from UNT and has served as rehearsal accompanist at The Dallas Opera since the 2000-2001 Season and **Janice Fehlauer**, who holds degrees in music from the University of British Columbia and UNT, where, in 2006, the Denton faculty voted her “Most

Outstanding Graduate Piano Student.”

The Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition, chaired by **Don Jones**, is designed to reward promising, young, mostly home-grown talents (all competitors must be Texans between the ages of 18 and 30), who aspire to professional singing careers.

The 2009 Competition honored longtime Dallas Opera Guild officers and former Dallas Opera Guild Presidents **Sylvia and Maurice Elton** for a dozen years of invaluable servicers to both the opera company and the Guild. Since joining The Dallas Opera Guild in 1997, the Eltons joined the Opera Guild in 1997. As Vice-President for Student Education, Sylvia visited area schools to prepare students for the opera experience and to promote opera as an exciting choice of career. The Eltons served as guild presidents for the 2004-2005 Season and, just last May, Sylvia co-chaired the “900 Nights at the Opera” event, which raised substantial funds for the Vocal Competition Endowment Fund.

Judges for this year’s event included **Roberto Mauro**, Senior Director of Artistic Operations for Arizona Opera; **Gayletha Nichols**, Director, Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions; **Brad Trexell**, Director of Artistic Planning, Opera Colorado; **Darren Keith Woods**, General Director of Ft. Worth Opera (who graciously stepped in as an eleventh-hour replacement for Brad Woolbright, Director of Artistic Administration for The Santa Fe Opera) and from The Dallas Opera, **Director of Artistic Administration Jonathan Pell**, who also acts as artistic advisor to this eagerly anticipated annual competition.

“Of all the things I do, over the course of the year, this vocal competition gives me the greatest level of personal satisfaction,” admits Mr. Pell.

“It is the direct expression of everything I feel about the opera business and how it works to nurture, foster and develop young talent,” he adds. “The Dallas Opera Guild should be very proud of the impressive ‘track record’ of past competition winners who have gone on to significant international careers.”

**Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition Chairman Don Jones** also considers this annual event an important part of The Dallas Opera calendar: “This competition gives young singers a wonderful opportunity to showcase their talents before a live audience.

“In fact,” Jones adds, “singers who did *not* walk away with a prize have, on occasion, been offered roles and positions, based upon their outstanding performances at

this competition.”

Nearly two dozen past winners perform regularly in prestigious U.S. and European venues and another dozen grant winners have sung featured roles in Dallas Opera productions.

The 2009 Vocal Competition Advisory Board is chaired by **Lynn Mock**.

**2009 Finalists, The Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition**

**Thomas Cannon, baritone, age 26**

**Juan José De León, tenor, age 24**

**Dee Donasco, soprano, age 26**

**Steven LaBrie, baritone, age 21**

**Mary-Jane Lee, soprano, age 23**

**Catherine Martin, mezzo-soprano, age 24**

**Evelyn Nelson, soprano, age 26**

**Icy Simpson, soprano, age 23**

**Julia Snyder, soprano, age 27**

**Michael Sumuel, baritone, age 23**

**Platinum Patrons (\$2,500 and above) were Anonymous.**

**Gold Patrons (\$1,000-\$2,499) include Patti and John T. Cody, Jr. (*The People's Choice Award*); Connie Klemow (*in memory of Nicola Rescignol*); Lynn and Presley Mock (*honoring Jonathan Pell*); Betty Secker (*in memory of Fred Secker*); James R. Seitz, Jr. and the Sheila Harms Memorial Fund.**

**Silver Patrons for this year's vocal competition (\$500-\$999) include Anne J. Bell (*in memory of Kenneth Jenkins and Paula Burns, and honoring Sylvia and Maurice Elton*); Susan Fleming; William J. Hendrix (*in memory of Hazel Wade Hendrix*); Don Jones (*in memory of Ken Jenkins, and honoring Sylvia and Maurice Elton*); The Honorable James W. Kerr, Jr.; Tom and Phyllis McCasland; Greg and Leria McConeghy (*honoring Sylvia and Maurice Elton*); Jane and David McGinnis (*in memory of Marion Greenham, mother of Jane McGinnis*); Angela Paulos; Richard H. Schulze; The Wagner Society (*honoring Don Jones*); and Jean and George Wagner (*in memory of Frank A. Iaconetti*).**

**Underwriters for this year's Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition include:**

**Patti and John T. Cody, Jr. (*People's Choice Award*)**

**Anne J. Bell (*Champagne*)**

**The Sheila Harms Fund (*Piano Rental and Accompanists*)**

**Susan Fleming (*Valet Parking*)**

**Roger S. Hodge (*Hodge Printing*)**

**Phillip H. Luna, Owner and Proprietor, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? Caterers  
(*Luncheon & Refreshment for Singers, Judges and Volunteers*)**

**Dr. and Mrs. Kern Wildenthal (*U.T. Southwestern*)**

**Special thanks to Harold and Nancy Boehning for their memorial gift in memory of  
Grace Towers to the Bessylee Penland Endowment Fund in June of 2008.**

**Our thanks to Joe Dyer and Consuelo Chavez for underwriting the Judges' dinners.**

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Select Stars of Earlier Competitions

Clifton Forbis (tenor), winner of our second annual Vocal Competition in **1990**, has forged a dynamic international career. He 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 open the new **Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House at The Dallas Center for the Performing Arts** in October of 2009.

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 made her Carnegie Hall debut in the title role of *L'Arlesiana* for Opera Orchestra of New York and recently made her debut at London's Covent Garden as Liu in *Turandot*.

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.

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.

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." This season at the Metropolitan Opera she sings leading roles in *Adriana Lecouvreur* and *La sonnambula*.

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."

Marjorie Owens, First Place winner of the **2002** competition and the People's Choice Award, was a winner of the 2006 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. She was a member of the Lyric Opera of Chicago's Lyric Opera Center for Young Artists, after spending 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."

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 performed 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. He has re-trained and has recently re-launched his career as a tenor.

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 made his debut with The Dallas Opera in this 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.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT "APRIL AT THE DALLAS OPERA"  
IS CONVENIENTLY AVAILABLE ONLINE  
VISIT [WWW.DALLASOPERA.ORG](http://WWW.DALLASOPERA.ORG) AND CHECK THE CALENDAR LISTINGS

*For high-resolution, digital photographs suitable for print*

*To arrange an interview*

*Or for additional information*

*Please contact Assoc. Dir. Of Marketing Suzanne Calvin*

*214.443.1014 or [suzannec@dallasopera.org](mailto:suzannec@dallasopera.org)*

### **Ticket Information for the 2009-2010 Dallas Opera Season**

**For information about subscription seats for the inaugural season in the Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House at the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts, contact The Dallas Opera Ticket Services Office at 214.443.1000 or visit TDO's web site at [dallasopera.org](http://dallasopera.org).**

**THE DALLAS OPERA 2009-2010 SEASON INFORMATION**

The Dallas Opera celebrates its Fifty-Third International Season with 30 performances of five productions in the Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House at the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts in downtown Dallas. Evening performances will begin at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday matinees will begin at 2:00 p.m. English translations will be projected above the stage at every performance. Assistance is available for the hearing impaired.

**OTELLO by Giuseppe Verdi**

**October 23, 25(m), 28 & 31, November 5 & 8(m), 2009**

**A new Dallas Opera production to inaugurate the Winspear Opera House!**

An opera in four acts first performed at Milan's Teatro alla Scala, February 5, 1887.

Text by Arrigo Boito after William Shakespeare's tragedy, *Otello*, or *The Moor of Venice*.

**Time:** the 15<sup>th</sup> century

**Place:** The island of Cyprus

**Conductor:** Graeme Jenkins

**Stage Director:** Tim Albery\*

**Production Design:** Anthony Baker\*

**Lighting Design:** Thomas C. Hase

**Wig & make-up Design:** David Zimmerman

**Chorus Master:** Alexander Rom

**Starring:** Clifton Forbis (*Otello*), Allan Glassman (*Otello*, Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>) Annette Dasch\*\* (*Desdemona*), Lado Ataneli\* (*Iago*), Sean Panikkar\* (*Cassio*), Elizabeth Turnbull (Emilia), Mark McCrory (*Montano*), and Raymond Aceto (*Lodovico*)

**COSÌ FAN TUTTE by W.A. Mozart**

**February 12, 14(m), 18, 20, 26 & 28(m), 2010**

**One of the world's greatest composers on the subject of love!**

An opera in two acts first performed in Vienna's Burgtheater, January 26, 1790.

Text by Lorenzo Da Ponte.

**Time:** 18<sup>th</sup> century

**Place:** Naples, Italy

**Conductor:** Graeme Jenkins

**Stage Director:** John Cox

**Production Design:** Robert Perdziola\*

**Lighting Designer:** Duane Schuler

**Wig & make-up Design:** David Zimmerman

**Chorus Master:** Alexander Rom

**Starring:** Elza van den Heever\* (*Fiordiligi*), Jennifer Holloway (*Dorabella*), Michael Todd Simpson (Guglielmo), Brian Anderson (*Ferrando*), Sir Thomas Allen\* (*Don Alfonso*) and Nuccia Focile (*Despina*).

**DON PASQUALE by Gaetano Donizetti**

**February 19, 21(m), 24, 27, March 5 & 7(m), 2010**

**Production from Los Angeles Opera**

A comic opera in three acts first performed in Paris' Théâtre Italien, January 3, 1843.

Text by Giovanni Ruffini and the composer after Angelo Anelli's libretto for Stefano Pavesi's *Ser Marcantonio*.

**Time:** mid-19<sup>th</sup> century

**Place:** Rome, Italy

**Conductor:** Stefano Ranzani\*

**Stage Director:** Candace Evans

**Production Design:** Jean-Pierre Ponnelle

**Lighting Design:** Duane Schuler

**Wig & make-up Design:** David Zimmerman

**Chorus Master:** Alexander Rom

**Starring:** Donato Di Stefano (*Don Pasquale*), Adriana Kucerova\*\* (*Norina*), Nathan Gunn (*Dr. Malatesta*) and Norman Shankle\* (*Ernesto*).

**MOBY-DICK by Jake Heggie (World Premiere!)**

**April 30, May 2(m), 5, 8, 13 & 16(m), 2010**

**A new Dallas Opera co-commission, co-production with San Francisco Opera, San Diego Opera, Calgary Opera and The State Opera of South Australia**

**World Premiere Performances**

An opera in two acts

Text by Gene Sheer after Herman Melville's novel, Moby-Dick

**Time:** the 19<sup>th</sup> century

**Place:** The South Seas

**Conductor:** Patrick Summers

**Stage Director:** Leonard Foglia\*

**Scenic Design:** Michael Yeargan

**Costume Design:** Jane Greenwood\*

**Lighting Design:** Donald Holder\*

**Wig & make-up Design:** David Zimmerman

**Chorus Master:** Alexander Rom

**Starring:** Ben Heppner\* (*Captain Ahab*), Morgan Smith\* (*Starbuck*) Stephen Costello (Ishmael), Jonathan Lemalu\* (*Queequeg*), Allan Glassman (*Flask*), Robert Orth\* (Stubb), Talise Trevigne\* (*Pip*) and Jonathan Beyer\* (*Captain Gardiner*).

**MADAME BUTTERFLY by Giacomo Puccini**

**May 7, 9(m), 12, 15, 20 & 23(m), 2010**

**A Francesca Zambello Production!**

An opera in two acts first performed at Milan's Teatro alla Scala, February 17, 1904.

Text by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica after David Belasco's play *Madame Butterfly*, based on a short story by John Luther Long.

**Time:** Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

**Place:** Nagasaki, Japan

**Conductor:** Graeme Jenkins

**Stage Director:** Garnett Bruce

**Production:** Francesca Zambello

**Scenic Design:** Michael Yeargan

**Costume Design:** Anita Yavich

**Lighting Design:** Alan Burrett

**Wig & make-up Design:** David Zimmerman

**Chorus Master:** Alexander Rom

**Starring:** Adina Nătescu (*Cio-Cio San*), Brandon Jovanovich (*B.F. Pinkerton*), James Westman (*Sharpless*), Maria Zifchak\* (*Suzuki*), David Cangelosi (*Goro*), Young-Bok Kim\* (*The Bonze*) and Yungbae Yang\* (*Prince Yamadori*).

\* Dallas Opera Debut

\*\* American Debut

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