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SOPRANO LEAH CROCETTO AND BARITONE ZACHARY NELSON OPEN THE GEORGE LONDON FOUNDATION FOR SINGERS 2017-18 SEASON ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2017, AT THE MORGAN

Crocetto, Fresh from *Aida* at Washington National Opera, and Nelson, Praised at Santa Fe Opera's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, To Sing Liszt, Rachmaninoff, Schubert, Vaughan Williams, *Il Trovatore* Duet, and "If I Loved You"



Leah Crocetto ([photo](#) by Rebecca Fay); *Zachary Nelson* ([photo](#) by Dario Acosta)

Two of opera's rising young American stars open the 2017-18 concert season of The George London Foundation for Singers with a duo recital on Sunday, October 29, 2017, at 4:00 pm. Soprano Leah Crocetto, fresh from an acclaimed September run in the title role of *Aida* at the Washington National Opera, and baritone Zachary Nelson, a 2012 George London Award winner who won praise for his performance as Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the summer's Santa Fe Opera season, will perform a program of songs and duets at Gilder Lehrman Hall at The Morgan Library & Museum with the pianist Mark Markham.

The George London Foundation for Singers, named for the great American bass-baritone, has been honoring, supporting, and presenting the finest young American and Canadian opera singers since 1971. The foundation's annual recital series, which celebrated its 20th anniversary with a star-studded gala in 2016, presents pairs of outstanding singers, many of whom were winners of a George London Award, the prize of the foundation's annual vocal competition.

Leah Crocetto will perform Liszt's *Three Petrarch Sonnets*, and the "Vocalise" and three selections from the 12 Romances by Rachmaninoff. Zachary Nelson will sing selections from Schubert's *Schwanengesang* and from Vaughan Williams's *Songs of Travel*. The two will join to perform the duet "Mira, d'acerbe lagrime" from Verdi's *Il Trovatore* and "If I Loved You" from *Carousel* by Rodgers and Hammerstein. (Complete program details follow below.)

Recent Praise for Crocetto and Nelson

In September, Leah Crocetto joined the Washington National Opera's production of *Aida*, singing the title role. The Washington Post praised the "bloom and freshness of her singing," and Washington Classical Review said, "Leah Crocetto proved the equal of her first-cast counterpart in the title role. She showed the dramatic potency that allowed her to soar over the large ensemble scenes." (Watch an excerpt of Crocetto's [performance](#) of "Ritorna vincitor" from the San Francisco Opera's 2016 production.)

Praising Zachary Nelson's performance as Enrico in this past summer's Santa Fe Opera production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, The Santa Fe New Mexican said, "He delivered especially fine swagger in 'La pietade in suo favore,' the cabaletta of his Act 1 aria, and he was downright fearsome in his confrontation duet with Lucia."

The George London Foundation's 2017-18 season continues with three more events:

- **Marjorie Owens**, soprano, and **Quinn Kelsey**, baritone, with Myra Huang, piano. Marjorie Owens won a 2009 George London Award – and when she appeared in a London Foundation recital later that year with James Morris, The New York Times described her as "a 28-year-old American soprano with a big, gleaming voice." Quinn Kelsey was the cover subject of the June 2017 Opera News, which said, "Quinn Kelsey waited to sing the great Verdi baritone roles until the time was right. This month he's San Francisco Opera's Rigoletto." – *Sunday, December 10, 2017, at 4:00 pm*
- The 47th annual **George London Foundation Awards Competition** begins with three days of preliminary auditions and culminates with the final round and award ceremony open to the public. The 2018 competition takes place February 12-16, and the public is invited to attend the competition finals and awards announcement on *Friday, February 16, 2018, at 4:00 PM.*
- **Heidi Melton**, soprano, and **Errin Duane Brooks**, tenor, with Craig Rutenberg, piano. Heidi Melton won the 2009 George London-Kirsten Flagstad Award for a potential Wagnerian singer; the following year, Montreal's La Presse was moved to say, "This could perhaps be the Wagnerian voice we have been waiting for since Flagstad and Nilsson." Errin Duane

Brooks won the same award in 2017; New York Classical Review said his “strength, projection, and sheer excitement earned him the George London-Kirsten Flagstad Award.” – *Sunday, March 4, 2017, at 4:00 pm*

The **2017 George London Award winners** were sopranos Michelle Bradley and Lara Secord-Haid; tenors Aaron Blake and Errin Duane Brooks; and baritone Will Liverman. At the awards’ announcement, London’s widow and the foundation’s president, Nora London, said, “Even after so many years of listening at our competitions, I am so deeply moved by all of your great performances. This year, I feel it is more important than ever for us to applaud beautiful art, and for you to take your talent and share it with the world.”

The George London Foundation Awards and Recital Series

The George London Foundation Awards competition is one of the oldest vocal competitions in the United States and Canada, and it offers among the most substantial awards.

Through the annual juried competition for outstanding young American and Canadian opera singers (under the age of 35 who must have performed at least one professional engagement), awards are given to the most promising performers: at the 2017 competition, a total of \$75,000 was given in the form of five George London Awards of \$10,000, three awards of \$5,000, and 10 awards of \$1,000.

The recital series began at the Morgan in 1995 as a way to give grantees exposure and experience, and, in many cases, a New York debut. Each season consists of three recitals featuring recent award winners sometimes paired with a well-known international artist – often a past George London Award winner – that have in recent years included Joyce DiDonato, Eric Owens, Stephen Costello, Ailyn Perez, Matthew Polenzani, Christine Brewer, Renée Fleming, Thomas Hampson, Ben Heppner, René Pape, Samuel Ramey, Frederica von Stade, Bryn Terfel, and Dawn Upshaw.

The Legacy of George London

The goal of the London Foundation, the support and nurturing of young singers, was an abiding interest of the great American bass-baritone George London, who devoted a great part of the time and energy of his later years to this purpose. “Remembering his difficult road to success, George wanted to devise a way to make the road a little easier for future generations of singers,” said George London Foundation President Nora London. Initially created under the auspices of the National Opera Institute, the George London Awards program has been administered since 1990 directly by the Foundation as a living legacy to George London’s own exceptional talent and generosity. As The New York Times noted recently, “this prestigious competition...can rightfully claim to act as a springboard for major careers in opera.”

Visit www.georgelondon.org.

Leah Crocetto, soprano, from Adrian, Michigan, who was described by The New York Times as “one of the standout winners at the 2010 Metropolitan Opera Council Auditions,” and who the San Francisco Chronicle’s Joshua Kosman has christened “a major star,” headlined the

summer's U.S. premiere of Donizetti's *Assedio di Calais* at the Glimmerglass Festival. This fall season she performs the title role of *Tosca* with Pittsburgh Opera and Liù in *Turandot* at the San Francisco Opera. She opened the 2016-17 season in her role debut as *Aida* with the San Francisco Opera, about which performance the San Francisco Chronicle said, "Leah Crocetto ... continues to amaze with the full-bodied presence and agility of her soprano." As a profile in the June 2017 issue of Opera News said, "in the six years since the American soprano emerged from San Francisco Opera's Adler Fellowship Program, she has built an international reputation by tackling some of the most challenging assignments in the Italian repertoire." www.leahcrocetto.com

Zachary Nelson, baritone (2012 George London Award), from Annapolis, Maryland, praised by Opera News for his "robust, thrilling sound," had a 2016-2017 season that brought debuts at the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Donner in *Das Rheingold* and Escamillo in *Carmen* with Den Norske Opera. Of his Lyric Opera of Chicago debut, Newcity Stage said, "Baritone Zachary Nelson (Donner) looks the part of Head God, moves with agile authority and sports a lightning-bolt voice enveloped in a silvery sheath. Is he the next generation's Wotan?" and GBOpera magazine said, "Zachary Nelson made the most of Donner's invocation, his sonorous vocalism recalling the American stage debut here of Bryn Terfel in this role 25 years ago." The coming season brings performances as Ping in *Turandot* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and the title role in *Le Nozze di Figaro* at Dresden Semperoper. When Zachary Nelson won a George London Award in 2012, The New York Times said of his competition performance, "Mr. Nelson captured the crucial element of verismo style: the emotion that is undoubtedly excessive but feels, in the moment, entirely right." www.zacharynelsonbaritone.com

[Sunday, October 29, 2017, at 4:00 pm](#)

*Gilder Lehrman Hall at The Morgan Library & Museum
225 Madison Avenue at 36th Street, New York City*

The George London Foundation Recital Series presents
LEAH CROCETTO, Soprano
ZACHARY NELSON, Baritone
Mark Markham, Piano

Program order to be announced

LISZT

Three Petrarch Sonnets:

“Pace non trovo” (“I find no peace”)

“Benedetto” (“Blessed be the day”)

“I vidi in terra angelici costumi” (“I saw on earth angelic forms”)

Leah Crocetto & Mark Markham

RACHMANINOFF

“Vocalise,” Op. 34, No. 14

“Zdes’ khorosho” (“How fair this spot”), Op. 21, No. 7

“Ne poy, krasavitsa, pri mnye” (“Do not sing to me, my beauty”), Op. 4, No. 4

“Atryvak iz A. Musset” (“Fragment from A. Musset”), Op. 21, No. 6

Leah Crocetto & Mark Markham

SCHUBERT

Selections from *Schwanengesang*:

“Die Fischermädchen” (“The fisher maiden”)

“Die Stadt” (“The city”)

“Am meer” (“At the sea”)

“Doppelgänger” (“Ghostly double”)

“Die Taubenpost” (“Pigeon messages”)

Zachary Nelson & Mark Markham

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Selections from *Songs of Travel*:

“The Vagabond”

“The Roadside Fire”

“Youth and Love”

“Bright is the Ring of Words”

Zachary Nelson & Mark Markham

VERDI

“Mira, d'acerbe lagrime” (“Look, at your feet I shed a river of bitter tears”),

Duet from *Il Trovatore*

RODGERS

“If I Loved You,” Duet from *Carousel*

Leah Crocetto, Zachary Nelson, and Mark Markham

Tickets: \$50

Call (646) 461-3578, e-mail info@georgelondon.org

www.georgelondon.org

www.themorgan.org

September 25, 2017