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## WINNERS OF THE 44TH ANNUAL GEORGE LONDON FOUNDATION AWARDS COMPETITION ARE ANNOUNCED

***Julie Adams, Michael Brandenburg, Julia Dawson, Adam Lau,  
Sarah Mesko, and Reginald Smith, Jr., Win Top Award***

New York, NY – February 27, 2015 – The winners of the 44th annual **George London Foundation Awards Competition** for young American and Canadian opera singers were announced at the conclusion of the competition’s final round this evening, which took place in a front of a capacity audience at Gilder Lehrman Hall at The Morgan Library & Museum in New York City.

A total of \$71,500 was given in awards. After three days of preliminary auditions during which 81 singers were heard, 21 were selected as finalists. Of these, six were selected as winners of **George London Awards** of \$10,000 each and eight were given **George London Foundation Encouragement Awards** of \$1,000 each. The remaining seven finalists received \$500 Honorable Mention awards.



*George London Foundation President Nora London, center, with 2015 George London Award winners (left to right) Michael Brandenburg; Sarah Mesko; Reginald Smith, Jr.; Julie Adams; Julia Dawson; and Adam Lau. Photo by Shawn Ehlers*

**GEORGE LONDON AWARDS (\$10,000 each):**

**Julie Adams, soprano (26, Burbank, CA)** - *George London-Kirsten Flagstad Award (sponsored by the New York Community Trust) for a potential Wagnerian singer*

**Michael Brandenburg, tenor (28, Austin, IN)** – *George London Award in memory of Lloyd Rigler*

**Julia Dawson, mezzo-soprano (26, Cobourg, Ontario, Canada)** - *George London Award sponsored by Liliane and Robert Brochu (for a Canadian singer)*

**Adam Lau, bass (30, San Francisco, CA)** - *George London Award sponsored by The Lissner Charitable Fund*

**Sarah Mesko, mezzo-soprano (30, Hot Springs, AR)** - *George London-Leonie Rysanek Award*

**Reginald Smith, Jr., baritone (26, Atlanta, GA)** – *George London Award*

**GEORGE LONDON FOUNDATION ENCOURAGEMENT AWARDS (\$1,000 each):**

**Nicole Haslett, soprano (26, Mount Laurel, NJ)** (*Sponsored by the Lloyd E. Rigler – Lawrence E. Deutsch Foundation*)

**Leah Hawkins, mezzo-soprano (24, Philadelphia, PA)** (*In memory of Robert Jacobson*)

**Mary-Hollis Hundley, soprano (26, Louisville, KY)** (*Sponsored by Henry and Diana Asher*)

**Megan Marino, mezzo-soprano (32, Paoli, PA)** (*In memory of Herbert J. Frank, sponsored by David Shustak*)

**Owen McCausland, tenor (24, St. John, New Brunswick, Canada)** (*Sponsored by Liliane and Robert Brochu, for a Canadian singer*)

**Amy Owens, soprano (27, Brookfield, WI)** (*In memory of Norma Newton*)

**Andrew Owens, tenor (31, Bucks County, PA)** (*In memory of Jaclyn Rendall Elyn, sponsored by Mark Elyn*)

**Sean Michael Plumb, baritone (23, Los Angeles, CA)** (*In memory of Theodore Uppman*)

This year's panel of judges included opera stage director Bruce Donnell, soprano and San Francisco Opera Center Director Sheri Greenawald, former Metropolitan Opera administrator Alfred F. Hubay, George London Foundation President Nora London, mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer, and tenor and voice professor George Shirley. The competition pianist was Linda Hall.

Since 1971, the annual competition of The George London Foundation for Singers has been giving its George London Awards, and a total of more than \$2 million, to an outstanding roster of young American and Canadian opera singers who have gone on to international stardom – the list of past winners includes Christine Brewer, Joyce DiDonato, Renée Fleming, Catherine Malfitano, James Morris, Matthew Polenzani, Sondra Radvanovsky, Neil Shicoff, and Dawn Upshaw. One of the oldest vocal competitions in the United States and Canada, the George London Foundation Awards Competition offers among the most substantial awards.

As is seldom the case in musical competitions, no fee is charged to the applicants or competitors, a pianist is provided for the competition rounds, and prizes are awarded immediately.

### ***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.

Visit [www.georgelondon.org](http://www.georgelondon.org)

### **2015 George London Award Winners**

**Julie Adams, soprano** (26, Burbank, CA), a winner of the 2014 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, is a first-year San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow and alumna of the 2014 Merola Opera Program, where she performed the role of Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. This past fall, she sang the role of Mimì in San Francisco Opera’s presentation of *La bohème* for families. During her studies with César Ulloa at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, from which she received bachelor’s and master’s degrees, she performed the roles of Blanche in *Les Dialogues des Carmélites*, Mimì in *La bohème*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* and Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi*. Other credits include Lia (Debussy’s *L’Enfant Prodigue*) at the International Vocal Arts Institute in Tel Aviv; Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara; and Magnolia Hawks (*Show Boat*) and Rose (*Street Scene*) with the Oakland East Bay Symphony. Adams is a former studio artist with Opera Santa Barbara.

**Michael Brandenburg, tenor** (28, Austin, IN), is in his first season of the Washington National Opera’s Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program. This season he appeared as the Steersman in WNO’s production of *The Flying Dutchman*. A 2013 national grand finals winner at the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, his recent performances include the title role in *Werther* and Le prince charmant in *Cendrillon* at Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music. In Summer 2014 he covered the role of Alfredo in *La traviata* at Des Moines Metro Opera. He is a recent winner of the Bel Canto Competition in Chicago. He began studying voice while pursuing a master’s degree in aquatic biology at Ball State University. [www.michael-brandenburg.com](http://www.michael-brandenburg.com)

**Julia Dawson, mezzo-soprano** (26, Cobourg, Ontario, Canada) has been called a singer who “can release roulades of coloratura with a shimmering sound” (Los Angeles Times), who has enjoyed increasing exposure both on the opera stage and in the concert hall. Recent performances include those with the Santa Fe Opera’s Apprentice Showcase, Opera Philadelphia’s Double Exposure, and multiple principle roles at the Academy of Vocal Arts. This season she will be featured in concert with the Symphony in C, in recital at The Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, and at the Glimmerglass Festival, where she will cover the roles of Emilia and Arbace in Vivaldi’s *Cato in Utica*. In 2014, she was recognized with an encouragement award from the George London Foundation as well as first place in the district division of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. She has received fellowships from the Aspen Music Festival and the Music Academy of the West, and sung in masterclass with James Levine at Carnegie Hall under the auspices of Marilyn Horne’s “The Song Continues” festival. Julia received her BM from Oberlin Conservatory and her MM from Rice University’s Shepherd School of Music. She is

currently a second year resident artist at the Academy of Vocal Arts. She lives in Philadelphia. [www.juliadawsonmezzo.com](http://www.juliadawsonmezzo.com)

**Adam Lau, bass** (30, San Francisco, CA) has been praised as a “bass of real quality, with sonorous low notes” (Palm Beach Arts Paper). Recent credits include Timur in *Turandot* at West Bay Opera; Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* at the Naples Opera in Florida, Makoto Kobayashi in Seattle Opera’s workshop of Jack Perla’s *An American Dream*, Figaro in *Le nozze di Figaro* at the Opera Academy of the Pacific; Antonio in *Le nozze di Figaro* at Santa Fe Opera; Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with the Merola Opera Center; Lane/Merriman in Gerald Barry’s world premiere of *The Importance of Being Earnest* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic; and Masetto in *Don Giovanni* at Rice University. Concluding his two year young artist residency at Florida Grand Opera, Mr Lau performed several mainstage roles which include Colline in *La bohème*, the Sprecher in *Die Zauberflöte*, Angelotti in *Tosca*, Palémon in *Thaïs*, and the High Priest of Baal in *Nabucco*. This 2014-15 season, Mr. Lau will make role debuts with the Dallas Opera, the Naples Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Seattle Opera, and Gotham Chamber Opera. Equally comfortable in concert, Mr. Lau has performed with several symphonic organizations including the LA Philharmonic, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, California Symphony Orchestra and the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra. In the summer of 2012 he made his San Francisco recital debut in the Schwabacher Debut Recital Series as a part of the San Francisco Opera Center. [www.adampaulau.com](http://www.adampaulau.com)

**Sarah Mesko, mezzo-soprano** (30, Hot Springs, AR), praised by The Washington Post for her “consistently beautiful sound,” is rapidly gaining attention for her “rich mezzo soprano” voice and musicality. She joins the roster of the Metropolitan Opera in the 2014-15 season covering the role of Malcolm in the new production of *La donna del lago*. She will also debut at the Glimmerglass Festival in Vivaldi’s *Catone in Utica* in the summer of 2015, as well as appear in baroque concerts with Ars Lyrica in Houston. In the 2013-14 season, Sarah Mesko made her debut at Houston Grand Opera as Mrs. Segstrom in *A Little Night Music*. Ms. Mesko made a striking role debut as Dorabella with Washington National Opera in their 2012 Emerging Artist performances of *Così fan tutte*. Recent seasons include Ms. Mesko’s European debut in Paris as La Sagesse and Sidonie in Lully’s *Armide* with Mercury Baroque and the Théâtre de Gennevilliers. In 2011 she made her debut with Washington National Opera in *Madama Butterfly*, first as Kate Pinkerton and then in a highly acclaimed role debut as Suzuki, conducted by Plácido Domingo in a Young Artist performance – a role for which The Washington Post remembered her as “the best part of the Young Artist Program performance of *Madama Butterfly* last year.” A graduate of Washington National Opera’s Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, Ms. Mesko was a national finalist of the 2009 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. She has won first prizes in various competitions, and is also among the few singers who have won the Richard F. Gold Career Grant more than once: in 2011 from Washington National Opera, and in 2009 from Central City Opera.

**Reginald Smith, Jr., baritone** (26, Atlanta, GA), is currently a Studio Artist with Houston Grand Opera. Reginald has been seen in operatic performances of *Falstaff* (Falstaff), *La Traviata* (Germont), *Porgy and Bess* (Jake/Lawyer Frazier), *Romeo et Juliette* (Capulet/Le Duke), *Carmen* (Le Dancaire), *Rigoletto* (Marullo), *Die Zauberflöte* (Sprecher), *Madame Butterfly* (Bonzo), *Die Fledermaus* (Dr. Falke), *Pirates of Penzance* (Pirate King), and *Le nozze di Figaro* (Figaro) among many others. He has performed with orchestras including the Houston Symphony Orchestra, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and the Cincinnati Pops. Mr. Smith has been a reward recipient in the George London Foundation Competition, the Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition, the district and regional auditions of the Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions, as well as first place in the Orpheus Vocal Competition and the National Opera Society Competition. Mr. Smith is also a National Semifinalist in the 2015 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. This season, Mr. Smith can be seen in performances of *Madame Butterfly*,

*Magic Flute*, Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Berlioz's *Romeo et Juliette*, and this summer, Mr. Smith can be seen in performances of *Le nozze di Figaro* (Conte Almaviva) with the Wolf Trap Opera Company as a Filene Young Artist. [www.reginaldsmithjr.com](http://www.reginaldsmithjr.com).

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