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Updated June 24, 2016: Final recital of the season is April 2, 2017 (not April 9)

THE GEORGE LONDON FOUNDATION FOR SINGERS ANNOUNCES ITS 2016-17 SEASON OF EVENTS:

- ***THE RECITAL SERIES:***
ISABEL LEONARD & JARED BYBEE
PAUL APPLEBY & SARAH MESKO
AMBER WAGNER & REGINALD SMITH, JR.
- ***THE 46TH ANNUAL GEORGE LONDON FOUNDATION AWARDS COMPETITION***

“This prestigious competition ... now in its 45th year, can rightfully claim to act as a springboard for major careers in opera.”

-The New York Times, February 18, 2016



Isabel Leonard, Jared Bybee, Paul Appleby, Sarah Mesko, Amber Wagner, Reginald Smith, Jr. (Download [photos](#).)

The George London Foundation for Singers has been honoring, supporting, and presenting the finest young opera singers in the U.S. and Canada since 1971. Upon the conclusion of the 20th year of its celebrated recital series, which was marked with a gala in April featuring some of opera’s most prominent American and Canadian stars, the Foundation announces its 2016-17 season of events:

The George London Foundation Recital Series, which presents pairs of outstanding opera singers, many of whom were winners of a George London Award (the prize of the foundation’s annual vocal competition):

- **Isabel Leonard**, mezzo-soprano, and **Jared Bybee**, baritone. Mr. Bybee won an Encouragement Award at the 2016 competition. *Sunday, October 9, 2016, at 4:00 pm*
- **Paul Appleby**, tenor, and **Sarah Mesko**, mezzo-soprano. Mr. Appleby won his George London Award in 2011, and Ms. Mesko won hers in 2015. *Sunday, March 5, 2017, at 4:00 pm*
- **Amber Wagner**, soprano, and **Reginald Smith, Jr.**, baritone. Ms. Wagner won her George London Award in 2010, and Mr. Smith won his in 2015. *Sunday, April 2, 2017, at 4:00 pm*

The 46th 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 2017 competition takes place February 13-17, and the public is invited to attend the competition finals and awards announcement on *Friday, February 17, 2017, at 4:00 PM.* The 2016 competition winners were sopranos Antonina Chehovska, Kirsten MacKinnon, and Claudia Rosenthal; tenor A. J. Glueckert; and baritones Steven LaBrie and David Pershall.

All events will take place in Gilder Lehrman Hall at The Morgan Library & Museum, 225 Madison Avenue at 36th Street.

Isabel Leonard, mezzo-soprano, began the 2015-16 season singing the lead role in the world premiere of Jennifer Higdon's *Cold Mountain* at the Santa Fe Opera, about which The Wall Street Journal said, "Isabel Leonard was a beautiful, believable Ada, the richness of her mezzo evoking Ada's reserve and desire." She won praise also for the opera's spring production at Opera Philadelphia; and of her performances as Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro* at the Metropolitan Opera early this year, The New York Times said, "Ms. Leonard's lustrous, full-bodied mezzo-soprano and her exquisite comic timing seized attention at every turn." In May, she participated in the 125th anniversary gala of Carnegie Hall, where she is a member of the board of trustees. <http://isabelleleonard.com>

Jared Bybee (2016 Encouragement Award), baritone, who is finishing his third year as a resident artist at Philadelphia's Academy of Vocal Arts, participated in its productions of *Don Giovanni*; *L'Amore dei Tre Re*, about which The Philadelphia Inquirer said, "Jared Bybee has a well-honed voice, and a natural way of projecting the opera's highly colored rhetoric with truth in every phrase"; and *Il Tabarro*, which also elicited praise from the Inquirer: "Jared Bybee carried the show with his smoldering characterization of the cuckolded husband, whose snapping point was effectively timed and sung with his formidable baritone." www.jaredbybee.com

Paul Appleby (2011 George London Award), tenor, had a 2015-16 season highlighted by his San Francisco Opera debut, singing Tamino in *The Magic Flute*, about which the San Francisco Examiner said, "Tenor Paul Appleby was impressive ... as the love-struck prince Tamino, warmly conveying his ardor for the princess Pamina with beautiful lyricism and a moving dramatic

performance.” He also performed solo recitals at London’s Wigmore Hall and at Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall, eliciting praise for the latter from The New York Times: “As Mr. Appleby showed throughout this impressive recital, ... he is that special singer who puts words first in performing songs.” <http://paulapplebytenor.com>

Sarah Mesko (2015 George London Award), mezzo-soprano, began the 2015-16 season in her title role debut in *Carmen* at Washington National Opera in the Domingo-Cafritz Emerging Artists Program. She also performed in the U.S. in the Metropolitan Opera’s “Rising Stars” concert tour, eliciting praise from the Washington Post: “Mesko also sports a lovely and flexible instrument, tossing off Rossini’s ‘Una voce poco fa’ ... without any strain and enlivening several ensembles with impish personality.” She also recent debuted at the Glimmerglass Festival in Vivaldi’s *Catone in Utica* to great acclaim. www.sarahmesko.com

Amber Wagner (2010 George London Award), soprano, in 2015-16 made her Minnesota Opera debut in the title role of *Ariadne auf Naxos*, about which the Star-Tribune said, “And thank Zeus, Minnesota Opera found in Amber Wagner a dramatic soprano of no small power who can actually play comedy,” continuing to praise her “sumptuous sound, gleaming high notes and impressive breath control, all delivered with such conviction.” The season also saw her company debut with Palm Beach Opera in the same role, and a performance of the Verdi Requiem with the Los Angeles Master Chorale about which the Los Angeles Times said, “Amber Wagner poured forth streams of opulent sound.” She will make her debut at as Senta in *The Flying Dutchman* at the Metropolitan Opera in April 2017. http://imgartists.com/artist/amber_wagner

Reginald Smith, Jr. (2015 George London Award), baritone, was also a Grand Finals winner of the 2015 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. A recent graduate of the Houston Grand Opera Studio, in 2015-16 season he made his company debut with Toledo Opera as Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*, about which the Toledo Blade said, “In his local debut, baritone Reginald Smith, Jr., revealed great vocal and dramatic range as Sharpless.... Smith’s control over his powerhouse of a voice allows for richness balanced with clarity and delicacy. His acting was equally subtle. This is a singer to track into the future.” www.reginaldsmithjr.com

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. As The New York Times noted earlier this year, “this prestigious competition, ... now in its 45th year, can rightfully claim to act as a springboard for major careers in opera.”

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 2016 competition, a total of \$73,000 was given in the form of six George London Awards of \$10,000, and nine Encouragement Awards of \$1,000, with Honorable Mention awards of \$500 going to the eight remaining finalists.

As is not always the case in musical competitions, no fee is charged to the applicants or competitors, a pianist is provided for the competition rounds, and the prizes are awarded immediately.

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.

Visit www.georgelondon.org

George London Award Winners 1971-2016 – A Selected List

Paul Appleby	Kyle Ketelsen	Diana Soviero
Dominic Armstrong	Dominique Labelle	Maria Spacagna
Kathleen Battle	Anthony Laciura	Richard Stilwell
Isabel Bayrakdarian	Catherine Malfitano	Dawn Upshaw
Rockwell Blake	Mary Ann McCormick	James Valenti
Russell Braun	Bejun Mehta	Carol Vaness
Christine Brewer	Susanne Mentzer	Willard White
Measha Brüggergosman	Erie Mills	Corinne Winters
Vinson Cole	Leona Mitchell	
Barbara Daniels	Latonia Moore	
Alexandra Deshorties	James Morris	
Michelle DeYoung	Eric Owens	
Joyce DiDonato	Sean Panikkar	
Maria Ewing	Susanna Phillips	
Ruth Falcon	Dimitri Pittas	
Renée Fleming	Deborah Polaski	
Christine Goerke	Matthew Polenzani	
Jill Grove	Florence Quivar	
Eric Halfvarson	Sondra Radvanovsky	
Alan Held	Gianna Rolandi	
Barbara Hendricks	Emalie Savoy	
Gwendolyn Jones	Neil Shicoff	
Isola Jones	Marietta Simpson	

GEORGE LONDON FOUNDATION FOR SINGERS 2016-17 SEASON

Sunday, October 9, 2016, at 4:00 pm
The Morgan Library & Museum
George London Foundation Recital
ISABEL LEONARD, Mezzo-soprano
JARED BYBEE, Baritone
Tickets: \$50

Friday, February 17, 2017, at 4:00 PM
The Morgan Library & Museum
46th ANNUAL GEORGE LONDON FOUNDATION AWARDS COMPETITION
Final Round and Awards Announcement
Tickets: \$25

Sunday, March 5, 2017, at 4:00 pm
The Morgan Library & Museum
George London Foundation Recital
PAUL APPLEBY, Tenor
SARAH MESKO, Mezzo-soprano
Tickets: \$50

Sunday, April 2, 2017, at 4:00 pm
The Morgan Library & Museum
George London Foundation Recital
AMBER WAGNER, Soprano
REGINALD SMITH, JR., Baritone
Tickets: \$50

Subscription to the three-recital series: \$160. Tickets and information: (646) 461-3578, info@georgelondon.org

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John Hauser, Artistic Director
Stephanie Lamprea, General Administrator

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