

THE 2025 GEORGE LONDON AWARD WINNERS ARE ANNOUNCED

Sopranos Shelén Hughes and Magdalena Kuźma, Tenor Alec Carlson, and Bass-Baritones Evan Lazdowski and Joseph Parrish Each Win \$12,000 Top Award at the 53rd George and Nora London Foundation Competition

New York, NY – February 21, 2025 – The winners of the 53rd **George and Nora London Foundation Competition** for young American and Canadian opera singers, one of the opera world's oldest and most prestigious competitions, were announced at the conclusion of the competition's final round this evening, which took place at Gilder Lehrman Hall at The Morgan Library & Museum in New York City for in-person and online audiences.

The event is now available to watch [on YouTube](#).

A total of \$74,000 was given in awards, announced by George and Nora London Foundation President John Hauser. Of the singers (selected from 175 applicants) heard over three days of semi-final rounds, 12 were selected as finalists to perform at the Morgan. Of these, five were named winners of **George London Awards** of \$12,000 each. The remaining seven singers were awarded George London Encouragement Awards of \$2,000 each.



George and Nora London Foundation President John Hauser, third from right, with 2025 George London Award winners (left to right) Evan Lazdowski, Magdalena Kuźma, Alec Carlson, Shelén Hughes, and Joseph Parrish. Photo by Beth Bergman ([click to download hi-res photo](#)).

Each finalist performed one selection, and the winners were announced to the audience immediately after the judges' deliberations. This year's judges were soprano Harolyn Blackwell, mezzo-soprano Susan Quittmeyer, tenor Dimitri Pittas, bass James Morris, and Gayletha Nichols, soprano and former Executive Director of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, who chaired the jury. Lachlan Glen was the competition's pianist.

GEORGE LONDON AWARDS (\$12,000 each):

Alec Carlson, tenor (33, Red Oak, IA), who sang "Grimes's Mad Scene" from Britten's *Peter Grimes* – *George London Award in memory of Lloyd E. Rigler, sponsored by The Lloyd E. Rigler and Lawrence E. Deutsch Foundation, James D. Rigler, President*

Shelén Hughes, soprano (28, Cochabamba, Bolivia), who sang the "Snow Maiden's Aria" from Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Snow Maiden* – *George London Award in memory of Leonie Rysanek, sponsored by an anonymous donor*

Magdalena Kuźma, soprano (28, New York, NY), who sang "Ha! Dzieciatko nam umiera" from Stanislaw Moniuszko's *Halka* – *George London Award in memory of Mary Palumbo, sponsored by Donald Palumbo*

Evan Lazdowski, bass-baritone (26, Moultonborough, NH), who sang "When my cue comes, call me" from Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – *George London Award sponsored by the New York Community Trust and the George and Nora London Foundation for Singers*

Joseph Parrish, bass-baritone (27, Baltimore, MD), who sang "A dream wasted" from William Grant Still's *Highway 1, USA* – *George London Award in memory of Norma Newton, sponsored by the George and Nora London Foundation for Singers*

GEORGE LONDON ENCOURAGEMENT AWARDS (\$2,000 each):

Emily Damasco, soprano (24, Glen Mills, PA) – *Award in memory of Dr. Herbert Appel, sponsored by Susan Appel*

Sam Dhobhany, bass-baritone (23, Brooklyn, NY) – *Award in memory of Herbert J. Frank – sponsored by David Shustak and the George and Nora London Foundation for Singers*

Ruby Dibble, mezzo-soprano (29, Kansas City, MO) – *Award in memory of Jaclyn Elyn, sponsored by the estate of Mark Elyn*

Rachel Kobernick, soprano (26, West Chester, PA) – *Award in memory of Lois Kirschenbaum, sponsored by the George and Nora London Foundation for Singers*

Dalia Medovnikov, soprano (23, Woodbridge, CT) – *Award in memory of J. Donald McNamara sponsored by Lynn Broward McNamara*

Korin Thomas-Smith, baritone (28, Toronto, Canada) – *Award in memory of Jaclyn Elyn, sponsored by the estate of Mark Elyn*

Alan Williams, bass (31, San Bernardino, CA) – *Award in memory of Lois Kirschenbaum, sponsored by the George and Nora London Foundation for Singers*

Since 1971, the foundation's annual competition has given more than 300 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 Joyce DiDonato, Renée Fleming, Christine Goerke, Ryan Speedo Green, Catherine Malfitano, James Morris, Eric Owens, Dimitri Pittas, Matthew Polenzani, Sondra Radvanovsky, Neil Shicoff, Dawn Upshaw, and Willard White, to name just a few. As The New York Times noted, "this prestigious competition ... can rightfully claim to act as a springboard for major careers in opera."

Megan Moore Performs the World Premiere of *Crossing Borders*, A Song Cycle Based on Nora London's WWII Diary, by Jake Heggie, on April 6

To mark the 30th anniversary of its annual recital series by George London Award winners, the London Foundation has made its first commission of a composition: a song cycle by Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer based upon the WWII diaries of Nora London, telling the dramatic story of her family's escape from France to America when she was 16 years old. *Crossing Borders* will have its world premiere performed by mezzo-soprano Megan Moore, a 2022 George London Award winner, at her recital at The Morgan on Sunday, April 6, at 4 pm. She will also perform music by Rossini, Strozzi, Mahler, Rachmaninoff, and Prokofiev with pianist Francesco Barfoed.

George London and the George and Nora London Foundation for Singers

George London (1920-1985) was one of the greatest opera stars of the 20th century, who blazed a trail for American singers on the international stage and created some of the most indelible interpretations of prominent bass-baritone roles. In his later years, he devoted much of his time and energy to the support and nurturing of young singers, in partnership with his wife, Nora. See the full list of George London Award winners: <https://www.georgeandnorahondon.org/competition.html>

In addition to the annual competition, the George and Nora London Foundation also presents a recital series to give grantees exposure and experience, and, in many cases, a New York recital debut. The foundation also awards scholarships to promising high school students attending the pre-college program of The Juilliard School, a program now in its 12th year.

www.georgeandnorahondon.org

2025 George London Award Winners

Alec Carlson, tenor (33, Red Oak, IA) American heldentenor Alec Carlson has been garnering attention and acclaim on the concert and operatic stages for his “powerful voice.” In September of 2023, Alec was the tenor soloist for Mahler’s Symphony No. 8 with The Estonian National Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Neeme Järvi and sang his first Verdi Requiem with the San Jose Symphonic Chorus. This season includes his debut with Teatro Municipal de Santiago in his role debut as Erik in *Der Fliegende Holländer*. Recent seasons have included his house and role debut as Max (*Der Freischütz*) with Opera Wrocławska and a concert of bel canto repertoire under the baton of Maestro Dmitry Korchak with the Winter Bashmet Festival in Sochi, Russia. Alec was the 2019 recipient of the Richard Tucker Fund Award from Santa Fe Opera. Other awards and distinctions held include a grant from the Wagner Society of New York, the Richard and Kerry Stillwell Award from the Opera Index Vocal Competition, the Tenor Viñas Competition, Brava! Opera Theater and James M. Collier Vocal Competition, the Palm Springs Opera Guild Competition, and the Gerda Lissner Foundation. Alec recently graduated as an Emerging Artist with Opera for Peace, and is an alumnus of the Ryan Opera Center with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Program, Wolf Trap Opera Studio, and the Houston Grand Opera Young Artist Vocal Academy. www.aleccarlson.com

Shelén Hughes, soprano (28, Cochabamba, Bolivia) Bolivian soprano Shelén Hughes is passionate about both music and social impact. She will soon make her European debut at Frankfurt Opera as Morgana in *Alcina* and perform with The Cleveland Orchestra. A graduate of the Manhattan School of Music and The Juilliard School, she received the 2024 Florence and Paul DeRosa Prize and won first place in the Zarzuela/Operetta division of the Gerda Lissner Competition. She is also a 2024 Opera Index winner, a semifinalist in the Concours de Genève, and a finalist in the Renata Tebaldi Competition. Hughes has performed leading roles at Teatro Municipal de Santiago, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, the Perelman Arts Center, and with the New York Festival of Song, making her Carnegie Hall debut in 2019. Beyond the stage, she is the founder of Voices for Bolivia, an international nonprofit dedicated to improving the lives of elderly Bolivians in extreme poverty through classical music. www.shelenhughes.com

Magdalena Kuźma, soprano (28, New York, NY) Polish-American soprano Magdalena Kuźma is rapidly gaining recognition for her vibrant voice and compelling stage presence. Critics have lauded her "star quality" and "shining, free, and lustrous" voice. This season, she returns to the Metropolitan Opera as Papagena in both productions of *The Magic Flute* and *Die Zauberflöte* and makes her role debut as Bublikopf in *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* with the New World Symphony. She will also perform in a recital with the Cincinnati Song Initiative and as the soprano soloist in Mahler’s Symphony No. 2 with the Santa Rosa Symphony. Next season, she makes her European debut as Pamina in the famous Barrie Kosky production of *Die Zauberflöte* at the Polish National Opera. A recent alumna of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, Kuźma made her mainstage debut at the Met in the 2023-24 season as Giannetta in *L’elisir d’amore* and later that season sang Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette* at The Glimmerglass Festival. At the Met, she has also sung Sister Catherine in the premiere of *Dead Man Walking* and Yvette in *La Rondine*. Other operatic roles include Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Frasquita in *Carmen*, and Adina in *L’elisir d’amore*. She is an active recitalist, having performed at Wigmore Hall and other prestigious venues. On the concert stage, she was the soprano soloist in Mahler’s Symphony No. 4 with the Richmond Symphony. Kuźma has won numerous competitions, including the Jensen Foundation and Butler International. She holds degrees from The Juilliard School, Oberlin College, and Yale University, where she was valedictorian. www.magdalenakuzma.com

Evan Lazdowski, bass-baritone (26, Moultonborough, NH) Cited as “impressive” in The Wall Street Journal, and praised in Opera News for his “warm, hearty bass-baritone,” Evan Lazdowski is a graduate of the Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist Program. Productions with the company have included *Le nozze di Figaro* (Figaro), *Ariodante* (Il Re), and *Proving Up* (Sodbuster). Engagements in the current season include his upcoming debut at the Santa Fe Opera, where he will sing in both *La bohème* (Sergeant) and *Rigoletto* (Usher). Past career highlights include *La bohème* (Colline) at the Berkshire Opera Festival, *Sweeney Todd* (Sweeney Todd, cover) at Chautauqua Opera, *Don Giovanni* (Il Commendatore) at the Aspen Music Festival, *The Magic Flute* (Speaker) with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and *The Rake's Progress* (Nick Shadow) with Juilliard Opera. At the Glimmerglass Festival, Mr. Lazdowski sang the title role in the world premiere of *Rumpelstiltskin and the Unlovable Children*, composed by Jens Ibsen. He has been seen in recital at Alice Tully Hall, has been a finalist in both Houston Grand Opera's Concert of Arias and Dallas Opera's National Vocal Competition, and is a multi-season award winner of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition. Mr. Lazdowski holds degrees from both The Juilliard School and Manhattan School of Music. www.evanlazdowski.com

Joseph Parrish, bass-baritone (27, Baltimore, MD) Joseph Parrish has quickly established himself in the classical music world, performing at renowned venues such as the Salzburger Festspiele, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and Carnegie Hall. This season, he makes debuts with the Oratorio Society of New York, MasterVoices, and Town Hall NYC. During the 2023-24 season, he appeared at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., the Usedomer Musikfestival, and Carnegie Hall. In June 2024, he debuted as Masetto in *Don Giovanni* with Cincinnati Opera and as Potapitsch in *The Gambler* with the Salzburger Festspiele. Joseph holds degrees from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and The Juilliard School, where he participated in the Gluck Community Service Fellowship Program and the Music Advancement Program. He is a frequent collaborator with the Denyce Graves Foundation and Voices for Bolivia. www.joseph-parrish.com
