WINNERS OF THE 2017 GEORGE LONDON AWARDS ARE ANNOUNCED

Aaron Blake, Michelle Bradley, Errin Duane Brooks, Will Liverman, and Lara Secord-Haid Win Top Award of the 46th Annual George London Foundation Awards Competition

New York, NY – February 17, 2017 – The winners of the 46th 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 an audience at Gilder Lehrman Hall at The Morgan Library & Museum in New York City.

A total of $75,000 was given in awards. After three days of preliminary auditions, 18 were selected as finalists. Of these, five were selected as winners of **George London Awards** of $10,000 each. In addition, new this year, three singers received $5,000 awards and the remaining 10 finalists were given awards of $1,000 each. (Up until this year, the award categories had been the $10,000 George London Awards, $1,000 Encouragement Awards, and $500 Honorable Mentions.)

George London Foundation President Nora London, center, with 2017 George London Award winners (left to right) Michelle Bradley, Aaron Blake, Lara Secord-Haid, Will Liverman, and Errin Duane Brooks. Photo by Shawn Ehlers (Download in hi-resolution)

The **George London Foundation** and **George London Awards** are named for the great American bass-baritone, who devoted much of his time and energy in his later years to the support and nurturing of young singers. The announcement was made by George London's widow, Nora London, the foundation's president, who said in her remarks, "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."

GEORGE LONDON AWARDS ($10,000 each):
Aaron Blake, tenor (33, Palos Verdes, CA) – *George London-Lissner Charitable Fund Award*
Michelle Bradley, soprano (34, Versailles, KY) – *George London-Leonie Rysanek Award*
Errin Duane Brooks, tenor (31, Detroit, MI) – *George London-Kirsten Flagstad Award (sponsored by the New York Community Trust) for a potential Wagnerian singer*
Will Liverman, baritone (28, Virginia Beach, VA) – *George London Award sponsored by Lloyd E. Rigler – Lawrence E. Deutsch Foundation*
Lara Secord-Haid, soprano (28, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada) – *George London Award for a Canadian singer*

$5,000 AWARDS FROM THE GEORGE LONDON FOUNDATION:
Megan Marino, mezzo-soprano (34, Paoli, PA) – *The Norma Newton Award from the George London Foundation*
Cody Quattlebaum, baritone (23, Ellicott City, MD) – *The Sarah Billinghurst Award from the George London Foundation sponsored by the Howard and Sarah D. Solomon Foundation*
Kyle van Schoonhoven, tenor (28, Lockport, NY) – *The Nicolai Gedda Memorial Award from the George London Foundation*

$1,000 AWARDS FROM THE GEORGE LONDON FOUNDATION:
Danielle Beckvermit, soprano (24, Kingston, NY) – *Jacklyn Elyn Award from the George London Foundation, sponsored by Mark Elyn*
Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen, countertenor (22, Brooklyn, NY) – *Irwin Scherzer Award from the George London Foundation, sponsored by Chien-Cho Liu*
Jonas Hacker, tenor (28, Lake Delton, WI) – *Robert Jacobson Award from the George London Foundation*
Evanna Lai, mezzo-soprano (25, Vancouver, BC, Canada) – *Nicoletta Valletti Award from the George London Foundation, sponsored by Thurmond Smithgall*
Lauren Margison, soprano (24, Toronto, Ontario, Canada) – *Nicoletta Valletti Award from the George London Foundation, sponsored by Odyssia Skouras Quadrani*
Daniel Moody, countertenor (27, Cincinnati, OH) – *Nicoletta Valletti Award from the George London Foundation, sponsored by Thurmond Smithgall*
Andrea Núñez, soprano (27, Markham, Ontario, Canada) – *Roberta Peters Award from the George London Foundation, sponsored by the Lloyd E. Rigler – Lawrence E. Deutsch Foundation*
Shea Owens, baritone (32, Scottsdale, AZ) – *Theodor Uppman Award from the George London Foundation*
Carolyn Sproule, mezzo-soprano (28, Montreal, Canada) – *Jacklyn Elyn Award from the George London Foundation, sponsored by Mark Elyn*
Brian Vu, baritone (27, Los Angeles, CA) – *Herbert J. Frank Award from the George London Foundation, sponsored by David Shustak*

This year's panel of judges included soprano Harolyn Blackwell, mezzo-soprano Rosalind Elias, former Metropolitan Opera administrator Alfred F. Hubay, George London Foundation President Nora London, mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer, tenor and voice professor George Shirley, and baritone Richard Stilwell (who won a George London Award at the first competition, in 1971). The competition pianist was renowned collaborative pianist Craig Rutenberg.

The 2016 George London Award winners were sopranos Antonina Chehovska, Kirsten MacKinnon, and Claudia Rosenthal; tenor A.J. Glueckert, and baritones Steven LaBrie and David Pershall.

A selection of award-winning performances from the 2016 and 2015 competitions is available to view on the foundation's website: http://www.georgelondon.org/videos.html.

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, Christine Goerke, 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 **George London Foundation's 2016-17 season** continues with two duo recitals:

- **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 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.

2017 George London Award Winners

Aaron Blake, tenor (34, Palos Verdes, CA) – Touted as "a vocal powerhouse" by the Los Angeles Times for his portrayal of Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, Mr. Blake is becoming known as a vibrant interpreter of the Mozart and Bel Canto repertoire. Most recently he created the role of Timothy Laughlin in the world premiere of *Fellow Travelers* by Gregory Spears at the Cincinnati Opera. These performances garnered the tenor international acclaim. Opera News wrote that his "… lyrical climaxes elicited a lucid, ringing tenor…," and the New York Times endorsed his instrument as an "appealingly vulnerable, clear-toned tenor... exquisitely calibrated." Following his Debut as Nadir with the Tulsa Opera, Mr. Blake, will make his Metropolitan Opera debut in Verdi's *La Traviata* under the baton of Nicola Luisotti. He will return to both the Utah Opera and Cincinnati Opera as Don Ottavio and Tamino, respectively and will make is New York City Opera debut as Louis in the New York premiere of *Angels in America*. Mr. Blake has appeared at Carnegie Hall with the Oratorio Society of New York in such repertoire as Haydn's *The Creation*, the Mozart arrangement of Handel's *Messiah*, and Mendelssohn's *Die Erste Walpurgisnacht*. He was the 2010 recipient of the prestigious Bagby Foundation Career Grant and has recently been nominated to represent the United States at Cardiff Singer of the World. His future seasons hold debuts with theaters throughout the United States and Europe. Mr. Blake is an alumnus of The Juilliard School and The Shepherd School of Music at Rice University. http://www.lombardoassociates.org/aaron-blake/

Michelle Bradley, soprano (34, Versailles, KY) is in her second year of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. She has performed such roles as Mozart's Fiordilligi and Donna Anna, Strauss' Marschallin, and Verdi's Alice from *Falstaff*. In the Metropolitan Opera's 2016-17 season, Ms. Bradley will make her debut in Mozart's *Idomeneo* and as the High Priestess in Verdi's *Aida*. Along with being the 2016 recipient of the Hildegard Behrens Foundation Award, the soprano is also a first place winner in the Gerda Lissner and the Sergi and Olga Koussivitzky vocal competitions. She is the 2014 grand prize winner of The Music Academy of the West's Marilyn Horne Song Competition and completed a nationwide recital tour in May 2015. She has participated in master classes with Stephanie Blythe, Anne Sofie von Otter, Marilyn Horne, Deborah Voigt, James Morris, and Renata Scotto. In January 2016, Ms. Bradley performed in Carnegie Hall's Neighborhood Recital Series in honor of Marilyn Horne. In May 2016, the soprano made her debut of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Santa Cruz Symphony Orchestra. She will return to Santa Cruz to perform the soprano role in Verdi's Requiem in May of 2017. Michelle recently performed a recital at the Théâtre du Châtelet in January 2017 and will be in recital again in February 2017 at New York's Park Avenue Amory.

Errin Duane Brooks, tenor (31, Detroit, MI), most recently appeared as the second Scottish Soldier in Kevin Puts's *Silent Night* and understudied Don Jose in Bizet's *Carmen*, both with Michigan Opera Theatre. Brooks has performed with other companies in the United States including South Shore Opera, Toledo Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, Utah Festival Opera, and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. While spending the summer of 2016 with Utah Festival Opera, Brooks placed first in the Michael Ballam Concorso Lirico in Logan, Utah. This sent him to the National Semi-Finals in Alessandria, Italy, where he was able to advance to the National Finals, place fourth, and win the Audience Favorite Award. Brooks has had success in several competitions, including winning the Grand Prize in The Bel Canto Competition and second place in the Luminarts Cultural Foundation Competition, and he was a Regional Finalist in the 2014-15 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Past roles include Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Chicago Opera Theater (role debut), covering Harlequin in Victor Ullmann's *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* and Messenger in William Grant Still's *Troubled Island*, a Chicago premiere! Errin Duane Brooks was an Emerging Artist with Chicago Opera Theater from 2013-15 after receiving his Master of Music

degree from Bowling Green State University and his Bachelor of Music degree from Madonna University in Livonia, Michigan. Errin currently resides in Detroit, Michigan.

Will Liverman, baritone (28,Virginia Beach, VA) – Praised by The New York Times as "mellow-voiced and charismatic" and Opera News for his "noble sound and bearing," baritone Will Liverman is quickly gaining a reputation for his compelling performances, while making significant debuts at opera houses across the country. Upcoming performances include a reprisal of his performance as Dizzy Gillespie in Charlie Parker's *Yardbird* with English National Opera at the Hackney Empire, with the Lyric Opera of Chicago for its Lyric Unlimited initiative, and with Madison Opera, in addition to debuts with Seattle Opera in *Le Comte Ory* (Raimbaud), Virginia Opera in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Figaro), the Las Vegas Philharmonic, and Dallas Opera. Past performance highlights include the world premiere of Charlie Parker's *Yardbird* at both Opera Philadelphia and on tour to the Apollo Theater, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Figaro) at Madison Opera and Utah Opera, *The Rape of Lucretia* (Tarquinius) and *The Ghosts of Versailles* (Beaumarchais) at Wolf Trap Opera, the world premiere of Kevin Puts's *The Manchurian Candidate* (Andrew Hanley) at Minnesota Opera, and soloist engagements with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, the University of Chicago, and with the New York Festival of Song. Mr. Liverman is a recent recipient of the Stella Maris International Vocal Competition and a Gerda Lissner Charitable Fund Award, and was a grand finalist in the 2012 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Previously, he was a member of the Ryan Opera Center at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and a young artist at the Glimmerglass Festival. He holds his Master of Music degree from The Juilliard School, and a Bachelor of Music degree from Wheaton College. www.willliverman.com

Lara Secord-Haid, soprano (28, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada) has been described as "possessing a rich and expressive overall quality" (Attencion San Miguel), "charismatic" (Opera Today) and was praised for her "flinty acuity" (The New York Times). She is enjoying a diverse and dynamic international career. Recent performances include a 15-city opera concert tour throughout China, Cendrillon in *Cendrillon* (New York Lyric Opera), a solo concert with Opera San Miguel (San Miguel, Mexico), Marsinah in *Kismet* (Little Opera Winnipeg), Miss Jessel in *The Turn of the Screw* (Opera on the Avalon) Marzelline in *Fidelio* (Manitoba Opera), *Three Settings of Celan* by Harrison Birtwistle with the AXIOM Ensemble (Lincoln Center), Miss Silverpeal in *The Impresario* (North Shore Music Festival) and Tytania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Opera on the Avalon). On the concert stage Ms. Secord-Haid performed *Ritual* by Alessandro Iglesias Rossi and works of John Cage with The New Juilliard Ensemble and at the Banff Centre with the resident new music ensemble conducted by Joel Sachs. She recently took a top prize in the Orvieto International Singing Competition, was a finalist in the Benjamin Matthews Vocal Competition and has received awards from the Giulio Gari Foundation, the George London Foundation, the Manitoba Arts Council and the Winnipeg Arts Council. She was additionally a two-time finalist in the Canadian Opera Company's Center Stage competition. Ms. Secord-Haid also looks forward to singing Sophie in Werther with Manitoba Opera and a concert in the Jeonju International Sori Festival in Korea(2017). Ms. Secord-Haid holds a Master of Music from The Juilliard School and a Bachelor of Music from The New England Conservatory of Music. She was a fellow at the Internationale Meistersinger Akademie, attended Highlands Opera Studio, the Banff Center, the Conservatoire de Nice summer academy and the Spoleto Vocal Arts Symposium. www.larasecordhaid.com

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The George London Foundation for Singers
Nora E. London, President
John Hauser, Artistic Director
Stephanie Lamprea, General Administrator
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