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WINNERS OF THE 2019 GEORGE LONDON AWARDS ARE ANNOUNCED

Soprano Rebecca Pedersen, Mezzo-sopranos Samantha Gossard and Carolyn Sproule, and Tenors Charles Sy and Kyle van Schoonhoven Each Win \$10,000 Top Award at the 48th Annual George London Foundation Awards Competition

New York, NY – February 22, 2019 – The winners of the 48th 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 before an enthusiastic audience at Gilder Lehrman Hall at The Morgan Library & Museum in New York City.

A total of \$61,000 was given in awards. Of all the singers heard over three days of auditions, 16 were selected as finalists to perform at the Morgan. Of these, five were selected as winners of **George London Awards** of \$10,000 each. The remaining 11 singers were awarded George London Encouragement Awards of \$1,000 each.



George London Foundation President Nora London, third from right, with 2019 George London Award winners (left to right) Carolyn Sproule, Samantha Gossard, Charles Sy, Rebecca Pedersen, and Kyle van Schoonhoven. Photo by Jennifer Taylor ([Click here](#) to download hi-res version.)

The **George London Foundation** and **George London Awards** are named for the great American bass-baritone (1920-1985), 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, "I know that George would have been so happy to hear you all. I know I need not worry about the future of opera."

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

Samantha Gossard, mezzo-soprano (30, Sidney, OH), who sang "Connais-tu le pays" from Massenet's *Mignon* – *George London Award sponsored by Sarah Billinghurst Solomon, The Miriam and Arthur Diamond Charitable Trust and Barbara Brookes*

Rebecca Pedersen, soprano (27, Salem, UT), who sang "Dich teure Halle" from Wagner's *Tannhäuser* – *George London Award in memory of Leonie Rysanek sponsored by an anonymous donor*

Carolyn Sproule, mezzo-soprano (30, Montréal, Canada), who sang "Deh! Proteggimi o Dio" from Bellini's *Norma* – *George London Award for a Canadian singer, sponsored by Mrs. Walter J. Laughery*

Charles Sy, tenor (27, Toronto, Canada), who sang "Ich baue ganz" from Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* – *George London Award in memory of Lloyd E. Rigler and Lawrence E. Deutsch, sponsored by The Lloyd E. Rigler – Lawrence E. Deutsch Foundation, James D. Rigler, President*

Kyle van Schoonhoven, tenor (30, Lockport, NY), who sang "Mein Lieber Schwan" from Wagner's *Lohengrin* – *George London Award in memory of Kirsten Flagstad, sponsored in part by the New York Community Trust*

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

Amanda Lynn Bottoms, mezzo-soprano (27, Cheektowaga, NY), who sang "Charlotte's Letter Scene" from Massenet's *Werther* – *Award sponsored by Meche Kroop*

Sarah Joyce Cooper, soprano (27, Lincoln, MA), who sang "E strano...Sempre libera" from Verdi's *La Traviata* – *Award sponsored by Donald Palumbo*

Ron Dukes, bass (24, Indianapolis, IN), who sang "Vous qui faites l'endormie" from Gounod's *Faust* – *Award in memory of Louis D'Angelo, sponsored by Robert Lombardo*

Vartan Gabrielian, bass-baritone (25, Toronto, Canada), who sang "Quand la flamme de l'amour" from Bizet's *La jolie fille de Perth* – *Award in memory of Jaclyn Rendall Elyn, sponsored by Mark Elyn*

Shannon Jennings, soprano (30, Orlando, FL), who sang "Stridono lassù" from Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* – *Award sponsored by the George London Foundation*

Elizabeth Reiter, soprano (33, Chicago, IL), who sang "No word from Tom" from Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* – *Award sponsored by The Henry and Dianna Asher Family Charitable Fund*

Olivia Smith, soprano (20, Kelowna, BC, Canada), who sang "Deh vieni non tardar" from Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* – *Award in memory of Jaclyn Rendall Elyn, sponsored by Mark Elyn*

Matthew Swensen, tenor (26, Rochester, NY), who sang "Ecco ridente in cielo" from Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* – *Award in memory of Irwin Scherzer, sponsored by The Irwin S. Scherzer Foundation*

Joseph Tancredi, tenor (21, Bayville, NY), who sang "Dein ist mein ganzes Herz" from Lehár's *Das Land des Lächelns* – *Award in memory of Alfred Hubay, sponsored by the George London Foundation*

Polixeni Tsiouvaras, mezzo-soprano (23, Santa Barbara, CA), who sang "Se Romeo t'uccise un figlio" from Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* – *Award in memory of Alan M. Ades, sponsored by Joan Taub Ades*

Matthew White, tenor (27, New Market, VA), who sang "O paradis" from Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* – *Award in memory of Herbert J. Frank, sponsored by David Shustak*

This year's panel of judges included soprano Harolyn Blackwell, George London Foundation Executive Director John Hauser, George London Foundation President Nora London, and tenor and voice professor George Shirley. The competition pianist was David Holkeboer.

The 2018 George London Award winners were soprano Lauren Margison, mezzo-sopranos Raehann Bryce-Davis, Rihab Chaieb, and Emily D’Angelo, baritone Benjamin Taylor, and bass-baritone Lawson Anderson.

Since 1971, the annual competition of The George London Foundation for Singers 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 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.

To round out the foundation’s 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, continues its 23rd year:

- **Anthony Dean Griffey**, tenor, and **Amy Owens**, soprano, with Warren Jones, piano. Griffey, arguably the world’s reigning interpreter of the title role of Britten’s *Peter Grimes*, appears in the 2018-19 Metropolitan Opera U.S. premiere production of Nico Muhly’s *Marnie*. Amy Owens, who received critical acclaim when she stepped into the U.S. premiere of Milhaud’s *La mère coupable* with On Site Opera in New York City last summer, won a \$5,000 prize at the 2018 George London competition, and was praised by New York Classical Review for the “steely, pinpoint-accurate rendition of ‘I am the wife of Mao Tse Tung,’” from Adams’s *Nixon in China*. **Sunday, March 24, 2019, at 4:00 pm**
- **Julie Adams**, soprano, and **Emily D’Angelo**, mezzo-soprano, with Ken Noda, piano. Adams, a 2015 George London Award winner, starred in the West Coast premiere of Kevin Puts’s *Silent Night* with Opera San Jose last year, prompting Opera Today to say, “Her rich, creamy, agile soprano was of the highest quality, the kind that prompts excited ‘who-is-she?’ intermission chatter (and beyond).” D’Angelo won her George London Award earlier this year, and was praised thus by New York Classical Review: “D’Angelo [was] among the most impressive, with a sublime rendition of Rosina’s ‘Una voce poco fa’ from *Barbiere di Siviglia*, fitting her smoky mezzo-soprano over the contours of the aria like an impeccably tailored glove.” **Sunday, May 5, 2019, 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 Canadian-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 recently noted, “this prestigious competition ... can rightfully claim to act as a springboard for major careers in opera.” Visit www.georgelondon.org.

2019 George London Award Winners

Samantha Gossard, mezzo-soprano (30, Sidney, Ohio) Praised as a “spectacularly convincing Cherubino” by The Independent for her recent performances of *Le Nozze di Figaro* with the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Samantha Gossard returns in the 2018-19 season to the role with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. She also joins the Metropolitan Opera roster for their production of Nico Muhly’s *Marnie*. Last season, she made her Paris Opera debut as 3rd Blumenmädchen in *Parsifal*, joined Austin Opera as Mercedes in *Carmen*, and made her Santa Fe Opera debut as Dryad in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. She is a 2018 award winner from the George London Foundation, as well as recipient of the William Matheus Sullivan Musical Foundation Award. www.samanthagossard.com

Rebecca Pedersen, soprano (27, Salem, Utah) has performed as a soloist with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony, and the Utah Symphony. Ms. Pedersen has also won various competitions, including the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, 1st prize at the Licia Albanese Puccini Competition, winner of the Utah Symphony Salute to Youth Competition, 3rd prize at the Gerda Lissner Competition, and grant winner of George London Foundation Competition. Ms. Pedersen made her profession opera debut in Utah Opera’s 2016 production of *Aida* and is currently completing a Master’s of Music at The Juilliard School.

Carolyn Sproule, mezzo-soprano (30, Montréal, Canada) In the 2018-19 season, Canadian mezzo-soprano Carolyn Sproule returns to Opéra de Montréal as Maddalena in *Rigoletto* and Flosshilde in *Das Rheingold*, makes her Michigan Opera Theatre debut as Olga in *Eugene Onegin*, returns to the Canadian Opera Company as Emilia in *Otello*, and returns to the Metropolitan Opera for her fifth consecutive season for their productions of *Otello* and *Falstaff*. Highlights of future seasons include returns in leading roles to The Metropolitan Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and Opéra de Montréal, and debuts at San Diego Opera and Pacific Opera Victoria. Ms. Sproule is a graduate of The Juilliard School (BM 2010), and Rice University (MM 2012). She also furthered her training with residencies at The Banff Centre, Aspen Opera Theatre, Merola Opera Program, Wolf Trap Opera (Filene Young Artist), and the Houston Grand Opera Studio. www.carolynsproule.com

Charles Sy, tenor (27, Toronto, Ontario, Canada), completed his BMus and MMus degrees at the University of Toronto and is an alumnus of several prestigious opera training programs including Music Academy of the West, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, the Britten-Pears Young Artist Program, and the Opera as Theatre program at the Banff Centre. He is a graduate of the Canadian Opera Company’s Ensemble Studio and received First Prize and Audience Choice in the COC’s 2014 Centre Stage Competition. He is currently completing an Artist Diploma in Opera Studies at The Juilliard School. This season, he makes his Juilliard Opera debut as Belfiore/*La Finta Giardiniera* and also makes his Carnegie Hall debut as the Evangelist and tenor soloist in Bach’s *Weihnachtsoratorium* under the baton of Maestro Mark Shapiro. In Canada, he sings Grimoaldo/*Rodelinda* with Voice Box: Opera In Concert and wraps up the season with Haydn’s *Die Schöpfung* with Pax Christi and Mozart’s *Requiem* and *Davide Penitente* with the Ottawa Choral Society and the St. Lawrence Choir. He will be making his Vancouver Opera debut as Prince Ramiro in Rossini’s *La Cenerentola* in 2019. www.charles-sy.com

Kyle van Schoonhoven, tenor (30, Lockport, New York), is a recent graduate of the world-renowned Adler Fellowship, at the San Francisco Opera. He made his debut on the San Francisco Opera stage as Young Servant in Strauss’ *Elektra*, and covered the leading roles of Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, George and Uncle Billy Bailey in Jake Heggie’s *It’s a Wonderful Life*, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, Aegisth in *Elektra*, Froh in *Das Rheingold*, and Siegmund in *Die Walküre*. In 2017, van Schoonhoven was named a winner of

the prestigious Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Additionally, he was the recipient of a 2018 Sara Tucker Study Grant, received the Nicolai Gedda Memorial Award from the prestigious George London Foundation, the top prize in the Brava! Opera Theater and James M. Collier Young Artist Program Vocal Competition, and was a finalist in the 2016 Jensen Foundation Voice Competition. In 2019, Kyle will join the Cincinnati Opera as Bacchus in their production of *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and will return to the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestras for his role debut as Rodolfo in Puccini's *La Bohème*. Additionally, he will sing the role of Don José in *Carmen* with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus. www.kylevanschoonhoven.com

The George London Foundation for Singers

Nora E. London, President

John Hauser, Executive Director

www.georgelondon.org