



Contact: Jennifer Wada Communications  
718-855-7101  
[jennifer@wadacommunications.com](mailto:jennifer@wadacommunications.com)  
[www.wadacommunications.com](http://www.wadacommunications.com)

## THE 2023 GEORGE LONDON AWARD WINNERS ARE ANNOUNCED

***Sopranos Erika Baikoff, Amber R. Monroe, and Karoline Podolak; countertenor Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen; and tenor Ricardo Garcia Each Win \$12,000 Top Award at the 51<sup>st</sup> George and Nora London Foundation Competition***

New York, NY – February 17, 2023 – The winners of the 51<sup>st</sup> **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. The event took place before an in-person audience for the first time since 2020, and was also livestreamed.

The event is now available to watch on the [George and Nora London Foundation YouTube channel](#).

A total of \$74,000 was given in awards, announced by George and Nora London Foundation President John Hauser. Of the singers heard over three days of semi-final rounds, 12 were selected as finalists to perform at the Morgan. Of these, five were selected as winners of **George London Awards** of \$12,000 each (increased from \$10,000 in 2022). The remaining seven singers were awarded George London Encouragement Awards of \$2,000 each.



*George and Nora London President John Hauser, third from right, with 2023 George London Award winners (left to right) Karoline Podolak, Erika Baikoff, Amber R. Monroe, Ricardo Garcia, and Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen. Photo by Beth Bergman ([click to download hi-res version](#))*

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 Susanne Mentzer, mezzo-soprano Susan Quittmeyer, bass James Morris, and former Metropolitan Opera administrator Lenore Rosenberg. Michael Fennelly was the competition's pianist.

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

**Erika Baikoff, soprano** (29, Brooklyn, NY), who sang "A vos jeux, mes amis" from Thomas's *Hamlet* – *George London Award in memory of Mary Palumbo, sponsored by Donald Palumbo*

**Amber R. Monroe, soprano** (32, Youngstown, OH), who sang "Addio mio dolce amor" from Puccini's *Edgar* – *George London Award in memory of Kirsten Flagstad, sponsored by the New York Community Trust and the George and Nora London Foundation for Singers*

**Karoline Podolak, soprano** (30, Toronto, Canada), who sang "Je suis Titania" from Thomas's *Mignon* – *George London Award in memory of Leonie Rysanek, sponsored by an anonymous donor*

**Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen, countertenor** (29, Brooklyn, NY), who sang "Inumano fratel...Stille amare" from Handel's *Tolomeo* – *George London Award in memory of Norma Newton, sponsored by the George and Nora London Foundation for Singers*

**Ricardo Garcia, tenor** (30, Hayward, CA), who sang "Kuda, Kuda" ("Lensky's Aria") from Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* – *George London Award in memory of Lloyd E. Rigler, sponsored by The Lloyd E. Rigler and Lawrence E. Deutsch Foundation, James D. Rigler, President*

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

**Elena Villalón, soprano** (25, Austin, TX) – *Award in memory of Dr. Herbert Appel, sponsored by Susan Appel*

**Olivia Johnson, mezzo-soprano** (31, Jacksonville, NC) – *Award sponsored by Mr. Mark L. Villamar, Ms. Esther Milstead and the Argos Fund of the Community Foundation of New Jersey*

**Matthew Cairns, tenor** (27, Toronto, Canada) – *Award sponsored by Barbara Brookes and the Miriam and Arthur Diamond Charitable Trust*

**Jordan Loyd, tenor** (29, Springfield, OH) – *Award sponsored by Barbara Brookes and the Miriam and Arthur Diamond Charitable Trust*

**Alexander McKissick, tenor** (31, Madison, CT) – *Award in memory of Herbert J. Frank, sponsored by David Shustak and the George and Nora London Foundation for Singers*

**Joseph Sacchi, tenor** (31, Salem, OR) – *Award in memory of Howard Solomon, sponsored by the Howard and Sarah Solomon Foundation*

**William Socolof, bass-baritone** (26, White Plains, NY) – *Award in memory of Louis D’Angelo, sponsored by Robert Lombardo and the George and Nora London Foundation for Singers*

The **George and Nora London Foundation for Singers** and the **George London Awards** are named for the legendary Canadian-American bass-baritone (1920-1985), one of the great opera singers of 20th century, who devoted much of his time and energy in his later years to the support and nurturing of young singers. This is the first year that the foundation held the competition under its new name – the organization became the George and Nora London Foundation for Singers in September 2022 to honor Nora London, the longtime president of the foundation, who passed away earlier in the year. Nora London was married to George London from 1954 to 1985, the year of his death, and had since been President of the George London Foundation for Singers, which her husband established in 1971.

Since that year, 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 Christine Brewer, Joyce DiDonato, Renée Fleming, Christine Goerke, Catherine Malfitano, James Morris, Matthew Polenzani, Sondra Radvanovsky, Neil Shicoff, Willard White, and Dawn Upshaw. As The New York Times recently noted, “this prestigious competition ... can rightfully claim to act as a springboard for major careers in opera.”

See the full list of George London Award winners:

<https://www.georgeandnoralondon.org/competition.html>

The **2022-23 season of the George and Nora London Foundation** at The Morgan concludes with a recital by 2018 George London Award winner **Benjamin Taylor, baritone**, with pianist Katelan Terrell on Sunday, April 16, 2023, at 4:00 pm.

### **The Legacy of George London**

George London was one of the most renowned opera stars of the 20th century, who blazed a trail for American singers in the international opera world. Following his acclaimed singing career, London held positions as Artistic Director of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and Director of the National Opera Institute, as well as the head of the Washington Opera, and he devoted a great part of the time and energy of his later years to the nurturing of rising young artists. 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.

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.georgeandnoralondon.org](http://www.georgeandnoralondon.org).

---

### **2023 George London Award Winners**

#### **Erika Baikoff, soprano** (29, Brooklyn, NY)

Russian-American soprano Erika Baikoff is a recent graduate of the Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. Last season, she made her Met debut singing Xenia in Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*. She also appeared as Woglinde in Wagner's *Das Rheingold* with Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducting the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, and sang the soprano solo in Mahler's 4th Symphony with Maestro Daniele Rustioni and the Ulster Symphony Orchestra. This season she returned to the Met as Tebaldo in Verdi's *Don Carlo*. Other 2022-23 season highlights include the soprano solo in Bach's B Minor Mass with Orchestre Métropolitain, conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin, and opening the Schubertiada festival in Villebertran, Spain. Erika is the first prize winner of the Concours International de Chant-Piano Nadia et Lili Boulanger, Helmet Deutsch Liedwettbewerb and Mondavi Young Artist Competition. Erika Baikoff is a 2022 George London Encouragement Award winner.

<https://www.erikabaikoff.com/>

#### **Amber R. Monroe, soprano** (32, Youngstown, OH)

Amber R. Monroe has been recognized as “a crystalline lyric soprano and a superb singing actress” (Seen and Heard-International). She returns to Washington National Opera as a Cafritz Young Artist for a second season; while there, she made her Kennedy Center debut as Ines in *Il trovatore*, was seen as Isabelle in Carlos Simon's *The Passion of Mary Cardwell Dawson*, and is scheduled to perform Mimi in the young artist performances of *La bohème*. During the 2021-22 season, Ms. Monroe was featured at the U.S. Naval Academy and University of Maryland as the soprano soloist for Mahler's Symphony No. 2. Other professional credits include Clarissa in the world premiere of Gregory Spears's *Castor and Patience* (Cincinnati Opera), Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* (Opera Columbus), Nedda in *I Pagliacci* (El Paso Opera), and Contessa Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro* (Kentucky Opera). She has also workshopped several profound contemporary operas including *Blue* by Jeanine Tesori, and *The Hours* by Kevin Puts. A recipient of the Richard F. Gold Career Grant from The Shoshana Foundation, Ms. Monroe has also been awarded and placed in several competitions including the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, the Mary Jacobs Smith Singer of the Year Competition, the Mildred Miller International Voice Competition, and the Classical Singer Competition.

Ms. Monroe completed her studies at Oberlin Conservatory and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. In addition, she has participated as a young artist at The Glimmerglass Festival and the Merola Opera Program. This summer, she will be joining the Apprentice Artists at Santa Fe Opera, covering the Second Wood Sprite in *Rusalka*. <https://www.ambermonroe.com/>

#### **Karoline Podolak, soprano** (30, Toronto, Canada)

Karoline Podolak holds a Master's degree from the K. Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice, Poland. In 2019, Karoline had her operatic debut at Silesian Opera House, as Zuzia in Moniuszko's *Verbum Nobile*; in 2020, she debuted the role of Adele in Johann Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus*. Karoline won First Place and Audience Choice Prize at the 2022 Canadian Opera Company Centre Stage Competition, First Place at 2021 Romuald Tesarowicz Vocal Competition, Audience Award/First Prize at the XVII Great Tenor Gala Festival in Ciechocinek, Poland, among other wins. Karoline was a 2022 winner of the Toronto-Buffalo District at the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, and received an Encouragement Award at the Great Lakes Region Round. She was a semifinalist at the 2021 Concorso Lirico Internazionale di Portofino in Italy. Karoline is currently a young artist at the Atelier Lyrique of Opéra de Montréal. She is also coached by Kinga Mitrowska in Toronto. Her latest role highlights include Violetta in *La traviata* at the National Opera and Ballet of Bulgaria; Fire, Princess and Nightingale in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* at Opéra de Montréal; Norina in *Don Pasquale* at Sequenda Opera

Studio in Luxembourg. She has won several international engagements through the Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques of Théâtre Lyrichorégra 20 and is a Jacqueline Desmarais Foundation grant recipient. Her upcoming season includes performances at Daegu Opera, Southern Ontario Lyric Opera, Staatstheater Augsburg, and Staatstheater Meiningen. <https://www.karolinepodolak.com/>

**Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen, countertenor** (29, Brooklyn, NY)

Acclaimed as a “young star” and “complete artist” by The New York Times and “extravagantly gifted... poised to redefine what’s possible for singers of this distinctive voice type” by the San Francisco Chronicle, countertenor Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen has been recognized as Grand Finals Winner of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition (2017), Third Prize Winner in Plácido Domingo’s Operalia (2019), Sara Tucker Study Grant (2017) and Career Grant (2022) from the Richard Tucker Music Foundation, Sullivan Foundation Award (2019), and numerous others. Aryeh trained in the Houston Grand Opera Studio (as the first countertenor in the program’s history) and at San Francisco Opera (Merola and Adler Fellowship Programs). His broad repertoire spans Bach, Cavalli, Handel, Gluck, Monteverdi, and Vivaldi, through to Britten, Dove, Dean, and Glass. This season, he debuts in leading roles at Komische Oper Berlin, Bayerische Staatsoper, and The Glyndebourne Festival, and his concert calendar includes performances with Music of the Baroque, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony, Ann Arbor Symphony, Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, and many others. Highlights of past seasons include debuts at The Metropolitan Opera, Opernhaus Zürich, Adelaide Festival (Australia), San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Dutch Radio Filharmonisch Orkest, Moscow Chamber Orchestra, San Francisco Ballet, and Theater an der Wien. His first commercial recording - Kenneth Fuchs’ Poems of Life with the London Symphony Orchestra - won a 2019 GRAMMY® Award in the Best Classical Compendium category, which honors albums with multiple soloists and multiple works. Aryeh earned a Bachelor’s degree in History from Princeton University and received academic certificates in Vocal Performance and Judaic Studies.

[www.aryehnussbaumcohen.com](http://www.aryehnussbaumcohen.com)

**Ricardo Garcia, tenor** (30, Hayward, CA)

A third-year Houston Grand Opera Studio artist from Hayward, California, Ricardo Garcia completed his Master of Music in Voice at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and holds a Bachelor of Music in Voice from the University of the Pacific. For HGO’s 2021-22 season, Garcia’s roles included El Remendado in *Carmen*, Papi/Jasper in alternate cast performances of *The Snowy Day*, First Commissioner in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, and Romeo in alternate cast and outdoor performances of *Romeo and Juliet*. HGO roles for 2022-23 include Alfredo Germont in alternate cast performances of *La traviata*, Schmidt in *Werther*, and Third Jew in *Salome*. During the 2020-21 HGO Digital season he appeared in *Vinkensport* as Hans Sach’s Trainer; *The Making of The Snowy Day, an Opera for All*; and *Suite Española: Explorando Iberia*. In summer 2021, he returned to Wolf Trap Opera as Valcour in *The Anonymous Lover* and sang the role of Grimoaldo in *Rodelinda* at the Aspen Music Festival. In summer 2022, he performed the role of Fabrizio Naccarelli in *The Light in the Piazza* with Central City Opera and joined Boston Lyric Opera in his company debut as Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*. This 2023 summer, Ricardo Returns to Central City Opera to sing Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*. <http://ricardo-garcia-tenor.com/>

---

**The George and Nora London Foundation for Singers**

**John Hauser, President**

[www.georgeandnoralondon.org](http://www.georgeandnoralondon.org)