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THE 2024 GEORGE LONDON AWARD WINNERS ARE ANNOUNCED

Soprano Katerina Burton, Mezzo-sopranos Emily Treigle and Erin Wagner, Tenor Samuel White, and Baritones Benjamin Dickerson and Darren Drone Each Win \$12,000 Top Award at the 52nd George and Nora London Foundation Competition

New York, NY – February 16, 2024 – The winners of the 52nd **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 \$84,000 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, six were selected as winners of **George London Awards** of \$12,000 each. The remaining six singers were awarded George London Encouragement Awards of \$2,000 each.



George and Nora London President John Hauser, fourth from right, with 2024 George London Award winners (left to right) Darren Drone, Samuel White, Benjamin Dickerson, Erin Wagner, Katerina Burton, and Emily Treigle, 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, George and Nora London Foundation President John Hauser, tenor Dimitri Pittas, and mezzo-soprano Susan Quittmeyer. Michael Fennelly was the competition's pianist.

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

Katerina Burton, soprano (29, Ocean City, MD), who sang "Tu che le vanità" from Verdi's *Don Carlo* – *George London Award in memory of Leonie Rysanek, sponsored by an anonymous donor*

Emily Treigle, mezzo-soprano (25, New Orleans, LA), who sang "Iris, hence away" from Handel's *Semele* – *George London Award in memory of Norma Newton, sponsored by the George and Nora London Foundation for Singers*

Erin Wagner, mezzo-soprano (26, El Paso, TX), who sang "Sein wir wieder gut" from Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* – *George London Award in memory of Mary Palumbo, sponsored by Donald Palumbo*

Samuel White, tenor (31, Columbia, SC), who sang "Amfortas! Die Wunde" from Wagner's *Parsifal* – *George London Award in memory of Lloyd E. Rigler, sponsored by The Lloyd E. Rigler and Lawrence E. Deutsch Foundation, James D. Rigler, President*

Benjamin Dickerson, baritone (30 Burlington, VT), who sang "Nemico della patria" from Giordano's *Andrea Chénier* – *George London Award in memory of Lois Kirschenbaum, sponsored by the George and Nora London Foundation for Singers*

Darren Drone, baritone (34, Sherwood, AR), who sang "Schicchi's Aria" from Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* – *George London Award in memory of Kirsten Flagstad – sponsored by the New York Community Trust and the George and Nora London Foundation for Singers*

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

Adia Evans, soprano (30 Baltimore, MD) – *Award in memory of Jaclyn Elyn, sponsored by the estate of Mark Elyn*

Renée Richardson, soprano (31, Philadelphia, PA) – *Award in memory of Nora London, sponsored by Ene Riisna*

Emily Rocha, soprano (24, Courtice, Canada) – *Award in memory of Nora London, sponsored by Ene Riisna*

Cierra Byrd, mezzo-soprano (31, Akron, OH) – *Award in memory of Herbert J. Frank – sponsored by David Shustak and the George and Nora London Foundation for Singers*

Bergsvein Toverud, tenor (26, Lenoir, NC) – *Award in memory of Dr. Herbert Appel, sponsored by Susan Appel*

Ben Strong, bass-baritone (26, Indiana, PA) – *Award in memory of Louis D’Angelo, sponsored by Robert Lombardo*

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. 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 that 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, Eric Owens, Matthew Polenzani, Sondra Radvanovsky, Neil Shicoff, Willard White, and Dawn Upshaw. As The New York Times has 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.georgeandnorahondon.org/competition.html>

The **2023-24 season of the George and Nora London Foundation** at The Morgan concludes with a recital by baritone **Blake Denson**, a 2020 George London Award winner, with pianist Kevin Miller on Sunday, April 28, 2024, a program of music by Francesco Santoliquido, Shawn E. Okpebholo, Franz Schubert, and Johannes Brahms.

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.georgeandnorahondon.org.

2024 George London Award Winners

Katerina Burton, soprano (29, Ocean City, MD), acclaimed for her “rich and warm” singing (Opera Wire) is a recent graduate of the Cafritz Young Artist program at Washington National Opera where she made a role debut as Micaëla in Francesca Zambello’s acclaimed production of *Carmen*. The 2023-24 season features many role and company debuts, including her debut as Mimì in Puccini’s *La bohème* with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. This season Ms. Burton was the featured soprano in the premiere of Adolphus Hailstork’s co-commissioned work *JFK: The Last Speech* with the National Symphony Orchestra with narration by Tony Award®-winning actress and singer Phylicia Rashad, and looks forward to her upcoming engagement as soprano soloist in Britten’s *War Requiem* with the U.S. Naval Academy Band and the U.S. Air Force Academy Band. Ms. Burton was also recently seen as Alice Ford in Verdi’s *Falstaff* at Aspen Music Festival, starring opposite acclaimed bass-baritone Sir Bryn Terfel. She is a proud recipient of multiple awards including the 2022 Sara Tucker Study Grant from the Richard Tucker Foundation, the 2021 William Matheus Sullivan Foundation Award, and the Gaddes Career Award presented by Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. www.katerinaburtonsoprano.com

Emily Treigle, mezzo-soprano (25, New Orleans, LA), is a Grand Finals Winner of the 2021 Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, and has been praised for her “supercharged,” “bewitching and impassioned” performances. She returns to Wolf Trap Opera this summer, singing Despina (*Così fan tutte*). In the 2023-24 season, she sang Meg Page (*Falstaff*), Suzuki (*Madama Butterfly*), and covered Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*) all with Houston Grand Opera. She spent summer 2023 as a Filene Artist with Wolf Trap Opera, where she displayed her “warm voice” and an “acting range [as] impressive as her vocal one” as Juno/Ino (*Semele*). In her previous seasons at HGO, following her third place win in HGO’s 33rd annual Eleanor McCollum Competition Concert of Arias, Ms. Treigle has been seen as Flora (*La traviata*), Miss Violet (*Another City*- world premiere), Mère Jeanne (*Dialogues of the Carmelites*), and Gertrude (*Romeo and Juliette*). She has also covered the roles of Herodias (*Salome*) and Marcellina (*Le nozze di Figaro*). She appeared at the Aspen Music Festival as a Fleming Artist in 2022, as well as Wolf Trap Opera in 2021, where she covered the title role in Holst’s *Savitri*. Ms. Treigle pursued her Master of Music degree at Rice University’s Shepherd School of Music, where she received her Bachelor of Music degree in 2020. Her grandfather was world-renowned bass-baritone Norman Treigle. www.emilytreiglemezzo.com

Erin Wagner, mezzo-soprano (26, El Paso, TX), a Naumburg Foundation Vocal Award Winner and Houston Grand Opera Butler Studio Artist, is passionate about sharing music which represents diverse and modern perspectives. A student of Dr. Stephen King, she is a winner of the Young Concert Artists Auditions and will join Wolf Trap Opera as a 2024 Filene Artist to perform the role of Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*. She is a graduate of The Juilliard School where she studied with Darrell Babidge and won the Juilliard Vocal Arts Honors Recital. Erin is an alumna of the Aspen Music Festival, where as a 2023 Renée Fleming Artist she performed the role of Idamante (*Idomeneo*). She sang the role of Zweite Dame (*Die Zauberflöte*) at the Merola Opera Program in 2022 where she also won the Schwabacher Recital Debut Auditions; she returned to San Francisco Opera to give her debut in a program entitled Everything Must Change. Her engagements with Houston Grand Opera include roles in *Parsifal*, *Madama Butterfly*, *The Sound of Music*, *Salome*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, and *The Wreckers*. Erin received her Bachelor’s degree at the Manhattan School of Music under the tutelage of Joan Patenaude-Yarnell. <https://yca.org/artist/wagner-erin/>

Samuel White, tenor (31, Columbia, SC), who has been praised by Opera News for his "gleaming heroic tenor and a hint of physical danger," has covered the roles of Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* with Tulsa Opera and Count Loris Ipanov in *Fedora* with Teatro Grattacielo. His other performance credits include

Matthew Gurney in Tobias Picker's *Emmeline*, Aeneas in *Dido and Aeneas*, and Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus*. He has completed training at such institutions as the Aspen Opera Center, the Glimmerglass Festival, Opera in the Ozarks, Lyric Opera Studio Weimar, Florida State University, and Manhattan School of Music. This past summer Samuel covered The Prince in *Rusalka* at the Santa Fe Opera Center and just recently covered the role of Licinio in Teatro Grattacielo's production of *La Vestale* celebrating 100 years of Maria Callas. Samuel is an apprentice artist with the Merola Opera Program in San Francisco this summer, and he will be singing the role of Canio in Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* at Wexford Festival Opera in the Fall of 2024.

Benjamin Dickerson, baritone (30, Burlington, VT), has been hailed for his “tonal focus and beauty, and smooth and varied dynamics” (Opera News). He has recently been seen in recital on the stages of Carnegie's Weill Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, the Caramoor Center for the Performing Arts, the Jerome L. Greene Space (WNYC), and the Music Academy of the West. As a current Resident Artist at the Academy of Vocal Arts, Mr. Dickerson has recently performed the roles of Don Giovanni, Giorgio Germont, and Eugene Onegin. In the 2023-24 season at AVA, Dickerson will be performing the roles of Tarquinius (*The Rape of Lucretia*) and Figaro (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*). During his time in the Florida Grand Opera Studio, he performed the roles of Schaunard (*La bohème*), Albert (*Werther*), and Mr. Kahlo/Mr. Rockefeller in the autobiographical drama *Frida*. Mr. Dickerson is an alumni of the Music Academy of the West where he won the prestigious Marilyn Horne Song Competition and made his role debut as Count Almaviva under the baton of James Conlon. He has received awards from the Giargiari Bel Canto Competition, the Jensen Foundation, Opera Index, the Gerda Lissner Foundation, and the Loren L. Zachary Foundation. He is an alumni of the Gerdine Young Artist at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and the Manhattan School of Music. Mr. Dickerson will graduate from the Academy of Vocal Arts in 2024.

Darren Drone, baritone (34, Sherwood, AR), described as having “a gorgeously warm tone and deep resonance” (Opera News), is quickly making a name for himself in the opera world. In the summer of 2023, Mr. Drone debuted at The Glimmerglass Festival as Marcello in *La bohème* and Grégorio in *Roméo et Juliette*, and participated in a workshop of Nmon Ford's *House of Orfeus* with Cincinnati Opera. In the 2023-24 season, Mr. Drone will be seen as Belcore in *L'elisir d'amore* in a debut with Florentine Opera, and returns to the Metropolitan Opera covering Moralès in *Carmen* and singing Foreman/Adult James and covering Chester in *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*. He also will appear with the Dayton Philharmonic as a soloist in Brahms' Requiem. www.darrenlekeithdrone.com
