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## WINNERS OF THE 45TH ANNUAL GEORGE LONDON FOUNDATION AWARDS COMPETITION ARE ANNOUNCED

***Antonina Chehovska, A.J. Glueckert, Steven LaBrie, Kirsten MacKinnon,  
David Pershall, and Claudia Rosenthal Win Top Award***

New York, NY – February 19, 2016 – The winners of the 45th 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 \$73,000 was given in awards. After three days of preliminary auditions during which 85 singers were heard, 23 were selected as finalists. Of these, six were selected as winners of **George London Awards** of \$10,000 each and nine were given **George London Foundation Encouragement Awards** of \$1,000 each. The remaining eight finalists received \$500 Honorable Mention awards.



*George London Foundation President Nora London, center, with 2016 George London Award winners (left to right) A.J. Glueckert, Claudia Rosenthal, David Pershall, Kirsten MacKinnon, Antonina Chehovska, and Steven LaBrie. Photo by Shawn Ehlers ([Download](#) this photo in high-resolution.)*

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

**Antonina Chehovska, soprano (29, Ukrainian-born)** – *George London-Leonie Rysanek Award*  
**A.J. Glueckert, tenor (29, Portland, OR)** – *George London-Kirsten Flagstad Award (sponsored by the New York Community Trust) for a potential Wagnerian singer*

**Steven LaBrie, baritone (27, Dallas, TX)** – *George London Award in memory of Lloyd Rigler*  
**Kirsten MacKinnon, soprano (25, Squamish, BC, Canada)** - *George London Award sponsored by Liliane and Robert Brochu (for a Canadian singer)*

**David Pershall, baritone (30, Temple, TX)** – *George London Award sponsored by Lloyd E. Rigler – Lawrence E. Deutsch Foundation*

**Claudia Rosenthal, soprano (29, Scarsdale, NY)** - *George London Award sponsored by The Lissner Charitable Fund*

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

**Justin Austin, baritone (25, German-born)** (*In memory of Robert Jacobson*)

**Jared Bybee, baritone (29, Modesto, CA)** (*In memory of Herbert J. Frank, sponsored by David Shustak*)

**Emily D’Angelo, mezzo-soprano (21, Toronto, Canada)** (*Sponsored by Liliane and Robert Brochu, for a Canadian singer*)

**Cecelia Hall, mezzo-soprano (31, Durham, NC)** (*In memory of Norma Newton*)

**John Matthew Myers, tenor (27, Lake Forest, CA)** (*Sponsored by the Lloyd E. Rigler – Lawrence E. Deutsch Foundation*)

**Jacqueline Piccolino, soprano (24, Chicago, IL)** (*Sponsored by Henry and Diana Asher*)

**Colin Ramsey, bass (26, Greenwich, CT)** (*Sponsored by Sarah Billingham Solomon*)

**Michael Sumuel, bass-baritone (30, Odessa, TX)** (*In memory of Jaclyn Rendall Elyn, sponsored by Mark Elyn*)

**John Viscardi, baritone (32, New York, NY)** (*In memory of Theodore Uppman*)

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

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 2015-16 season** continues with the celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the recital series, as well as the final duo recital of the season:

- **George London Foundation Celebration Concert: Twenty Years of Recitals In Collaboration with the Morgan** on Wednesday, April 6, 2016, at 7:00 PM. Renowned Canadian tenor **Ben Heppner** is master of ceremonies for the starry event that features eight George London Award winners who are among opera's biggest stars, and one recent winner: **Ailyn Pérez**, soprano; **Sondra Radvanovsky**, soprano; **Christine Brewer**, soprano; **Susanne Mentzer**, mezzo-soprano; **Matthew Polenzani**, tenor; **James Morris**, bass-baritone; **Eric Owens**, bass-baritone; and **Brandon Cedel**, bass-baritone. Joining the singers on the recital stage will be two of the opera world's finest pianists, **Ken Noda** and **Craig Rutenberg**. The event also includes a festive post-concert reception.
- **Dimitri Pittas**, tenor, and **Jennifer Johnson Cano**, mezzo-soprano, with Christopher Cano, piano. Dimitri Pittas is a 2004 George London Award winner; Jennifer Johnson Cano won her award in 2014. Sunday, May 15, 2016, 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.

*"I have never forgotten how George accepted my performance of Donna Anna with himself as [Don Giovanni] in Vancouver in 1958. His belief in my ability gave a huge boost to my confidence, something he did for so many young singers during his spectacular career."*

-Dame Joan Sutherland

### **2016 George London Award Winners**

**Antonina Chehovska, soprano** (29, Ukrainian-born) was recently named the winner of several prestigious awards: Grand Prize of the Cooper-Bing Competition, the Schuyler Foundation Career Bridges Grant, Bel Canto Vocal Scholarship, Grand Prize of the Czech and Slovak International Voice Competition, the Michigan District Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions win (twice), and a win at the University of Michigan Friends of Opera and Concerto Competition. This season, Ms. Chehovska made her New York City recital debut at Opera America's National Opera Center as part of the Emerging Artist Recital Series. In concert she performs Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* and Ravel's *Shéhérazade* with the Dexter Symphony Orchestra, and Mahler's Symphony No. 2 ("Resurrection") with the Modesto Symphony Orchestra. Recent orchestral concert solo performances include Handel's *Messiah*, Verdi's Requiem, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, Mozart's Requiem, Dvorák's Stabat Mater and Strauss's *Vier letzte lieder*. Ms. Chehovska has given several recitals, including at the Toledo Museum of

Art, Detroit Symphony Orchestra Hall, and the U.S. Embassy in Bratislava. She holds master's degrees in performance and conducting from the University of Michigan, where she appeared as Sister Rose in Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*, title role of Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, and as the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. <http://antoninanc.com/>

**A.J. Glueckert, tenor** (29, Portland, OR), has been praised by the San Francisco Chronicle for his "superb," "soaring" voice with "polished high notes." During the 2016-17 season, A.J. will join the ensemble at Oper Frankfurt singing Erik in *Der Fliegende Holländer*, Don Jose in *Carmen*, and Tamino in *The Magic Flute*, among others. Future seasons will see him debut at the Glyndebourne Festival as Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and at Opera de Lille. A.J. Glueckert returned to the San Francisco Opera in the 2015-16 season as Beadle Bamford in Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*. He was also seen as Normanno in *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Vogelsang in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. This summer he makes his Opera Theatre of Saint Louis debut as Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. In the 2014-15 season, Mr. Glueckert made his European debut at Oper Frankfurt as the Prince in *Rusalka*. He also made his role debut as Don José in *Carmen* at Pittsburgh Opera. Mr. Glueckert made his San Francisco Opera debut as an Adler Fellow in the world premiere production of Mark Adamo's *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* in the summer of 2013 and appeared as Steuermann in *Der Fliegende Holländer* to great acclaim. He created the role of the Crown Prince in the world premiere of Kevin Puts' *Silent Night* at Minnesota Opera and Opera Philadelphia. Mr. Glueckert is an alumnus of the 2012 Merola Opera Program, and was a resident artist with Minnesota Opera. He is also a graduate of the young artists programs at Santa Fe Opera and Utah Opera. A two-time winner of the regional Metropolitan Opera National Auditions, he holds a master's degree from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music under the tutelage of Cesar Ulloa. <http://www.ajglueckert.com/>

**Steven LaBrie, baritone** (27, Dallas, TX), is a recent graduate of the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia. In the 2015-16 season, Mr. LaBrie makes his debut at Lyric Opera Baltimore heading the cast, as Figaro, in its production of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. Last season, in addition to his performances of Schubert's *Die Schöne Müllerin* with Jessica Lang Dance, Mr. LaBrie reprised the role of Schaunard in *La Bohème* for both his return to the Dallas Opera and his debut with the Washington National Opera. He also returned to The Kennedy Center to sing the baritone solos in *Carmina Burana* with the Catholic University of America (CUA) Symphony Orchestra and Choruses in a concert celebrating the Benjamin T. Rome School of Music's 50th anniversary. Recent projects for Mr. LaBrie include Dancaïro in *Carmen* at the Dallas Opera, the Secret Police Agent in Menotti's *The Consul* with Seattle Opera, Schaunard in *La Bohème* with New Orleans Opera and Raimbaud in *Le Comte Ory* with Des Moines Metro Opera. Mr. LaBrie has received numerous awards and honors including a 2013 Encouragement Award from the George London Foundation, second places in both the Gerda Lissner International Vocal Competition and the Gerda Lissner Lieder/Song Competition as well as the Judges Award with the Opera Index Competition. In 2010, he was an encouragement award winner in Washington, DC, for the Metropolitan Opera National Council. [www.stevenlabrie.com](http://www.stevenlabrie.com)

**Kirsten MacKinnon, soprano** (25, Squamish, BC, Canada) – Hailed by Opera UK as a "heroine whose poise, expressive singing, excellent vocalism, and dark and full tone auger well for a healthy career ahead," the young Canadian soprano has captured the attention of audiences across North America and Europe. In her final year of study under the mentorship of Prof. Edith Wiens, Kirsten currently holds the Alfred Greenberg Memorial Fellowship at Curtis Institute of Music. Her credits include Mimi in *La Bohème*, Echo in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, title role of *Iolanta*, La Ciesca in *Gianni Schicchi*, Elettra in *Idomeneo*, Fox in *Cunning Little Vixen*, Micaela in *Carmen*, Lisa in *La Sonnambula* and Mrs. Gobineau in

*The Medium* for the Curtis Opera Theatre, Annina in *La Traviata* for Opera Philadelphia and Nella in *Gianni Schicchi* at the Chautauqua Music Festival. Kirsten covered Micaela in Glyndebourne Festival Opera's production of *Carmen* in 2015, and Glyndebourne have invited her back to sing a lead role for their 2017 tour. This upcoming season she will sing Die Gräfin in Opera Philadelphia's *Capriccio* and Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with Curtis Opera Theatre. Further ahead she will sing concert performances in consecutive seasons at Dallas Opera, make her role debut as Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, and make her house debut in a leading role at Canadian Opera.

**David Pershall, baritone** (30, Temple, TX) – Hailed as one of opera's 25 Rising Stars in Opera News, American baritone has been seen at the world's foremost theaters including the Metropolitan Opera, Vienna State Opera, Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, Washington National Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Minnesota Opera, and the Norwegian National Opera. His performances have spanned a vast repertoire ranging from Rodrigo in *Don Carlo* to Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. He most recently appeared at the Metropolitan Opera as Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Schaunard in *La Bohème*, and Lord Cecil in *Maria Stuarda*. He also appeared this season at the Vienna State Opera as Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Belcore in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*, and Sebastian in *The Tempest*. Mr. Pershall is proud of his partnership with the Beethoven Easter Festival, with which he has performed and recorded Don Pedro in *Maria Padilla*, Manfredo in *L'Amore dei Tre Re*, and Orestes in *Iphigénie en Tauride*. David will return to the Vienna State Opera and the Beethoven Easter festival this season, and will make his debut at San Francisco Opera in September. [www.davidpershall.com](http://www.davidpershall.com)

**Claudia Rosenthal, soprano** (29, Scarsdale, NY) – Praised for her "bright vocalism" and "a voice that was dramatic, beautifully enunciated and had strength in every register," Claudia Rosenthal is a first year Resident Artist at Pittsburgh Opera. This season, she sings the roles of Amy (*Little Women*), Berta (*The Barber of Seville*), and will cover the role of Anne Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*) with Pittsburgh Opera. She also made her debut with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Next season, she will return to the company, singing Annina and covering Violetta (*La Traviata*) and performing Pulcheria (Handel's *Richard the Lionheart*). In the summer of 2015, as a Young Artist with Opera on the Avalon, she appeared as the Governess (*The Turn of The Screw*), and has performed in previous summers with Wolf Trap Opera and the Tanglewood Music Center. Other favorite roles include Giulietta (*I Capuleti e i Montecchi*), Musetta (*La Bohème*), both with Yale Opera, and Norina (*Don Pasquale*) with The Mannes Opera. Claudia made her Carnegie Hall debut performing Hindemith's cantata *Die Serenaden* with "Yale in New York," and made her professional debut as soprano soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra. An Eastern regional finalist and recipient of the Rohatyn Great Promise Award at the 2015 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, she also recently received First Prize in the Young Patronesses of the Opera Competition. Claudia holds degrees from Mannes College (The New School for Music) and Yale Opera (The Yale School of Music). [claudiarosenthal.com](http://claudiarosenthal.com)

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**The George London Foundation for Singers**

**Nora E. London, President**

**John Hauser, Artistic Director**

**Stephanie Lamprea, General Administrator**

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