



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sarasota Opera to Host 3rd Annual National Finals of Schmidt Vocal Competition June 1-2

Sarasota, FL – Sarasota Opera is pleased to host the finals for [Schmidt Vocal Arts](#) (SVA) third annual national Schmidt Vocal Competition at Sarasota Opera House June 1-2, 2024. The top three winners from each of 15 regional competitions will compete for a \$10,000 first prize. Five Floridians have qualified after competing in three different regional locations. Distinguished judges for this competition are Dallas Opera General Director Ian Derrer, soprano Ana María Martínez, and baritone Reginald Smith, Jr.

Tickets are available to various events of the Schmidt Vocal Competition on June 1 for \$15 (Students: \$10) and on June 2 for \$25 (Students: \$10) at SarasotaOpera.org or (941) 328-1300. Visit SarasotaOpera.org for more information.

Sarasota Opera General Director Richard Russell says, “Introducing young people to the art of singing opera has been an important part of Sarasota Opera’s mission for almost 40 years. William E. Schmidt was a generous supporter of Sarasota Youth Opera which is why we are especially delighted to once again partner with Schmidt Vocal Arts on this event.”

Linda McAlister, SVA’s Executive Director explains, “We are excited to be back at Sarasota Opera this June with a stellar group of high school singers. There’s nothing like having our Schmidt Vocal Arts competitors singing on the stage of the William E. Schmidt Opera Theatre!”

Funded by the William E. Schmidt Foundation, the Schmidt Vocal Competition is an annual event for U.S. high school students that sees 400+ singers compete each year – this season for

more than \$650K in cash awards and scholarships – just at the critical point in their early careers when they begin to look toward training on a professional level. Listen to 2022 National Adjudicator soprano Tamara Wilson speak about the importance of competitions:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNVTBU3Wn7Q>

SVA's support and resources continue long after the competition. The prize-winners are eligible for need-based scholarships to support their continued study at the university level, and SVA continues to have relationships with many alumni throughout their careers, providing educational, mentoring, and networking opportunities as well as grants for summer study.

View a of alumni describing their experiences with the Schmidt Vocal Competition:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_vjFuFCZuo

SCHMIDT VOCAL COMPETITION – Sarasota Opera House

Tickets: SarasotaOpera.org or (941) 328-1300

June 1, 2024, 10 a.m.

Semi-Final Competition

Tickets: \$15 (Students: \$10)

Singers from across the country will compete for a spot in Sunday's Final Found. Semi-Final Adjudicators include soprano Nicole Cabell, pianist/coach Myra Huang, soprano Marilyn Mims, countertenor William Sauerland, and mezzo-soprano Jamie Van Eyck. Finalists for the Schmidt Vocal Competition will be announced after the judges' deliberation.

June 2, 2024, 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Master Class / Final Round / Awards Ceremony

Tickets for all events that day: \$25 (Students: \$10)

Schmidt Vocal Arts Master Class (10:30 a.m.) – Three singers from the Semi-Final round will be chosen to sing in a master class with soprano Nicole Cabell, pianist/coach Myra Huang, and soprano Marilyn Mims.

Final Round of Schmidt Vocal Competition (1 p.m.) – Up to 16 Finalists will perform on the Sarasota Opera stage and compete for cash awards, including \$10,000 for First Place, \$7,500 for Second Place, and \$5,000 for Third Place. The Final Round will be adjudicated by celebrated judges, Dallas Opera General Director Ian Derrer, soprano Ana María Martínez, and baritone Reginald Smith, Jr. An Awards Ceremony will follow after the judges deliberate.

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About Sarasota Opera

Sarasota Opera recently completed its 65th Season of bringing world-class opera to Florida's Gulf Coast. The company was launched in 1960 in the historic 320-seat Asolo Theater on the grounds of Sarasota's Ringling Museum of Art. In 1984 the company moved into the former A.B. Edwards Theater—now the Sarasota Opera House. Since then, the company has gained an international reputation as one of the leading regional opera companies in the U.S. through initiatives such as the Masterworks Revival Series and the Verdi Cycle. The company's Sarasota Youth Opera is the most comprehensive Youth Program in the U.S. The Sarasota Opera House, called "one of America's finest venues for opera" by Musical America, underwent a \$20 million renovation in 2007, when the auditorium was named the William E. Schmidt Opera Theatre, in recognition of his leadership gift. Since 1983, the company has been under the artistic leadership of Victor DeRenzi and administrative leadership of General Director Richard Russell since 2012. Sarasota Opera is sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture and the National Endowment for the Arts. Programs are paid for in part by Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax revenues.

About Schmidt Vocal Arts

Funded by the William E. Schmidt Foundation, Schmidt Vocal Arts is committed to fostering a passion for classical singing and to creating opportunities for young singers. Led by Executive Director Linda McAlister, Schmidt Vocal Arts boasts many accomplished alumni who have gone on to pursue music degrees and enjoy successful careers in the arts. The Schmidt Vocal Competitions – the oldest of the Foundation's programs – have touched the lives of more than 5,000 developing high school and undergraduate singers, awarding a total of over \$2 million in cash awards and scholarships since its debut in 1997. Other Schmidt Vocal Arts programs include:

- Schmidt Vocal Institute, a two-week intensive summer residential program where singers learn from world-renowned artists, participate in workshops and master classes, and perform with other talented musicians;
- Schmidt Vocal Education, offering regional and online programs for singers and teachers to learn, challenge themselves, and participate in performance experiences; and
- Schmidt Vocal Scholarships, a program that provides need-based support for talented singers continuing their professional vocal education.

About William E. Schmidt

William E. Schmidt was a decorated military pilot, successful businessman, and lifelong, generous supporter of the arts and charitable organizations in the communities where he lived. Born in Irvine, Kentucky in 1933, he came from a family that loved music and believed in the power of education. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from DePauw University, and his master's degree in business administration from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. After the death of his mother, and with close counsel of his sister, Anna Lee Schmidt Hamilton – a versatile singer who did postgraduate study at Indiana University and Germany's Heidelberg Conservatory of Music before teaching, conducting, and performing variously at Butler University, the Indianapolis Opera Company, and the Indiana Opera Theatre – he founded the Schmidt Vocal Competition, first held at the University of Indianapolis in 1997. With these contests, as well as with his meaningful support of other scholarship programs at numerous universities, schools, and community organizations, he provided a remarkable legacy of dedication to the arts and youth that his Foundation continues to build upon today. In his later life, Schmidt moved to Sarasota, Florida, where he became a substantial behind-the-scenes supporter of several key community projects, including the Sarasota Opera. He died in 2014 after

a lengthy battle with Parkinson's Disease, but his love for and commitment to the arts and the community live on in his family, friends, and colleagues. The William E. Schmidt Foundation captures his entrepreneurial and hard-working spirit in the initiatives and projects it selects to fund – always grounded in innovation and led by those committed to a worthy mission.