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Irene Dalis Vocal Competition Awards \$50,000 Among Ten Outstanding Singers

SAN JOSE, CA—Opera San José General Director **Irene Dalis** is pleased to announce the results of the Fourth-Annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition, held May 22, 2010, at the California Theatre in San José. The competition is the culmination of the annual three-day West Coast Auditions for Singers, sponsored by Arts Management Services. After many years in San Francisco, the Auditions moved to San José in 2007. The 10 finalists for the Dalis Competition were selected from 86 of the Auditions' 126 participants.

"Four of the ten finalists this year were mezzo-sopranos," said Irene Dalis, who herself enjoyed a successful international opera career as a mezzo-soprano before retiring to her hometown of San José in 1977. "Amazingly, we had just one soprano among the finalists—but she was, indeed, amazing. Danielle Talamantes demonstrated such magnificent vocal agility and mastery that she simply took everyone's breath away! And for the third consecutive year, our audience members showed just how knowledgeable they are by picking as their favorite the same singer who won over our distinguished panel of judges."

Judges for the competition were **James Caraher**, artistic director of Indianapolis Opera; **Lotfi Mansouri**, former general director of San Francisco Opera and the Canadian Opera Company; and **Christina Scheppelmann**, director of artistic operations at Washington National Opera and former artistic administrator at San Francisco Opera. Their deliberations produced the following competition winners:

First Prize (\$15,000) went to **Danielle Talamantes**, soprano, of Fairfax, Virginia. Her winning arias were “Ombre légère” from Meyerbeer’s *Dinorah* and “Ach, ich fühls” from *The Magic Flute* by Mozart.

Second Prize (\$10,000) was awarded to baritone **Jonathan Beyer** from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, who sang “News has a kind of mystery” from John Adams’ *Nixon in China* and “Bella siccome un angelo” from *Don Pasquale* by Donizetti. And Third Prize (\$5,000) went to baritone **Jerett Gieseler** of Hastings, Michigan, for his performance of “È sogno o realtà?” from Verdi’s *Falstaff* and “O du mein holder Abendstern” from *Tannhäuser* by Wagner.

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The other seven finalists each received a prize of \$2,000:

- λ **Betany Coffland**, mezzo-soprano; Great Bend, Kansas
- λ **Michele Detwiler**, mezzo-soprano; Boise, Idaho
- λ **Silas Elash**, bass; San José, California
- λ **Kathryn Leemhuis**, mezzo-soprano; Columbia, Ohio
- λ **Nova Safo**, tenor; Glendale, California
- λ **Lisa van der Ploeg**, mezzo-soprano; Orinda, California
- λ **Kyungmook Yum**, baritone; Fairview, New Jersey

While the judges deliberated, audience members cast votes for their favorite contestant. Their choice, as noted earlier, was soprano **Danielle Talamantes**, who received the Audience Favorite Award and a prize of \$5,000 (in addition to her First Prize).

Again this year, a \$1,000 award was pledged by The Wagner Society of Northern California to the most promising Wagnerian singer in the competition. The judges awarded this year’s prize to bass **Silas Elash** for his performance of “Leb’ wohl, du kühnes herrliches Kind” from Wagner’s *Die Walküre*.

Accomplished pianist **Daniel Lockert** returned this year as accompanist for both the vocal competition finals and the three-day auditions.

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The annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition is made possible by a generous anonymous donor who created the Irene Dalis Fund for Singers.