
Press Contact:
Joseph Duong, 408.437.2229 duong@operasj.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May 12, 2014

Eighth Annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition Awards \$50,000 Among Emerging Opera Stars

San José, CA ---- **Opera San José General Director Irene Dalis** is pleased to announce the results of the **Eighth-Annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition** held May 10, 2014 at the **California Theatre** in downtown San José.

Ten finalists selected from the annual three-day West Coast Auditions for Singers performed some of the most beloved opera arias vying for \$50,000 in cash prizes. At the end of the evening Opera San José resident soprano **Cecilia Violetta Lopez** from was awarded First Prize and \$15,000 for her stirring performance of “Dis-moi que je suis belle” from Massenet’s *Thais* and “sempre libera” from Verdi’s *la Traviata*. Ms. Lopez was also awarded the title of Audience Favorite, selected by popular vote during the final intermission, and received an additional \$5,000 for a grand total of \$20,000 in cash prizes.

“**Cecilia** was simply sensational and demonstrated such high vocal standards that she not only won over the judges, but the audience members as well” said **Irene Dalis**. “I must say that this was the best talent we have seen in the eight years of this competition and I am grateful that I did not have to judge. It would have been very difficult to select a winner from these fine operatic artists.”

Second Prize (\$10,000) was awarded to tenor **Robert Watson**, who sang, “I know that you all hate me” from Menotti’s *The Saint of Bleeker Street* and “Ah, la paterna mano” from Verdi’s *Macbeth*. Third Prize (\$5,000) went to mezzo-soprano **Nicole Birkland** who performed “Condotta ell’era in ceppi” from Verdi’s *Il trovatore* and “Einsam wachend in der Nacht” from Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*.

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

Sara Duchovnay, soprano

David Gustafson, tenor

Isaiah Musik–Ayala, bass-baritone

Kindra Scharich, mezzo-soprano

Christine Suits, soprano

Victoria Vargas, mezzo-soprano

Anthony Webb, tenor

Judges for the competition were **Elaina Lappalainen**, Artistic Administrator, Director of Vocal Division at Mid-America Productions; **Dan Montez**, General Director of Taconic Opera, New York; and **Douglas Nagel**, Assistant Professor of Voice and Choral Studies at Montana State University.

Sal Pizarro from the *San José Mercury News* presented the Audience Favorite Award and accomplished pianist **Catherine Miller** returned this year as accompanist for both the vocal competition finals and the preceding auditions.

The Eighth Annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition is sponsored by the Irene Dalis Fund for Singers, with additional funding provided by Marjorie Holloway Cook.

Photos: Photo Credit: Robert Shomler
<http://www.shomler.com/temp/14510idvac2p/>
Caption: The ten finalists from the Eighth Annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition

Press Room: <http://www.operasj.org/pressroom.html>

###