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THE KURT WEILL FOUNDATION RESPONDS TO THE PANDEMIC BY SUPPORTING MUSICAL THEATER ARTISTS WITH THE LOTTE LENYA COMPETITION SONGBOOK

New York, NY (October xx, 2020) — The hardships COVID-19 have caused for songwriters and performers has prompted The Kurt Weill Foundation to provide financial support to participants chosen for the **Lotte Lenya Competition Songbook**, a new collection of sixteen contemporary theater songs by nineteen emerging writers. Broadway luminaries **Kelli O’Hara**, **Andrew Lippa**, and **Andy Einhorn** selected the songs from a diverse pool of sixty-six submissions. Tony Award-winner Kelli O’Hara exclaimed, “Never have I needed music so much, and the opportunity I was given to stop, sit and listen to these brand new musical voices was a pure gift.”

The Songbook is accompanied by audio recordings performed by sixteen Lenya Competition prize winners to showcase their talents as stages remain dark. The Foundation funded all honoraria, recording, and administrative costs for the composers, lyricists, and singers. Recordings, sheet music, and the Preface to the Songbook can be found at KWF.org.

New creative relationships between songwriters and performers have evolved in the process. Writer **Ben Wexler** welcomed the experience of working closely with 2012 Competition prize winner **Jacob Keith Watson**, “collaborating with a fellow artist on making a song come to life has been a welcome breath of oxygen.” 2007 prize winner **Analisa Leaming**, who recently appeared as Anna in Lincoln Center’s *The King and I* and Irene in *Hello, Dolly!* on Broadway and national tour, expressed how the experience has been “creatively fulfilling,” and how she relished the chance to “continue to hone my craft and make music again.”

The Songbook represents a wide range of ages, perspectives, and character and vocal types for today’s versatile singing actors, particularly Competition contestants seeking fresh and challenging material for one of the required repertory categories. Songwriting team **Isabella Dawis** and **Tidtaya Sinutoke** noted that the project is “a welcome gesture of inclusion, inviting BIPOC stories into the musical theater repertoire.” Seven songs present male characters, seven female, with one each for transgender and gender-neutral characters. Five songs are intended for characters of color. As an architect of the Songbook project, Tony Award-winning composer **Jeanine Tesori** said, “This is a tremendous opportunity to amplify voices of all kinds. I’m thrilled by the reach of the project and the persistence of the Kurt Weill Foundation to promote collaboration and partnership during these isolating times.”

Nominated by professionals with experience developing new works, the participating songwriters are **Julianne Wick Davis**, **Anna Jacobs**, **Daniel Rudin**, **Mark Sonnenblick**, **Katya Stanislavskaya**, **Ben Wexler**, and **Daniel Zaitchik**. The songwriting teams include **Derrick Byars-Tia DeShazor**, **Melissa Li-Kit Yan**, **Douglas Lyons-Ethan Pakchar**, **Will Reynolds-Eric Price**, **Josh Schmidt-Royce Vavrek**, and **Tidtaya Sinutoke-Isabella Dawis**.

Participating prize winners of the Lotte Lenya Competition are **Alison Arnopp** (2013), **Natalie Ballenger** (2014), **Felipe Bombonato** (2017), **Christian Douglas** (2018), **Nkrumah Gatling** (2018), **Amy Justman** (2004), **Analisa Leaming** (2007), **Erik Liberman** (2005), **Michael Maliakel** (2015), **Gemma Nha** (2020), **Jim Schubin** (2016), **Brian Vu** (2016), **Jacob Keith Watson** (2012), **Nyla Watson** (2019), **Jeremy Weiss** (2020), and **Lauren Worsham** (2009).

Since the launch of the Lotte Lenya Competition in 1998:

- Over \$1.1 million in prizes has been distributed globally.
- Prize winners are regulars on Broadway, national and international tours, and opera houses around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera.
- Three finalists have earned distinction in the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition and two finalists are Metropolitan Opera National Council winners.
- Previous judges include Harold Prince, Teresa Stratas, Julius Rudel, Ted Chapin, Anne Bogart, Victoria Clark, Patricia Racette, Jeanine Tesori, Judy Kaye, Shuler Hensley, James Holmes, Angelina Réaux, Rebecca Luker, Ted Sperling, Lisa Vroman, and many more.

For more information about the Lotte Lenya Competition Songbook and to listen to audio recordings of the repertoire, please visit <https://www.kwf.org/pages/lc-songbook-contents.html>.

ABOUT THE KURT WEILL FOUNDATION

The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc. was founded by Tony-winning singer-actress Lotte Lenya in 1962. As the heir to the literary and musical copyrights of Kurt Weill (1900-1950) and his wife Lotte Lenya (1898-1981), the Foundation promotes and perpetuates their legacies. It funds and administers the Weill-Lenya Research Center, a Grants and Collaborative Initiatives Program, the Lotte Lenya Competition, fellowships for conductors and directors, sponsorships for Young Artists and Mentors, and the Kurt Weill Prize for scholarship in music theater. The Foundation also publishes the Kurt Weill Edition, the Kurt Weill Newsletter, and a monthly E-News. Since 2012, the Kurt Weill Foundation has also administered the musical and literary legacy of Marc Blitzstein. Visit KWF.org to learn about Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya, along with the Foundation's extensive programming and grant opportunities.

For up-to-date news and information, please follow the Kurt Weill Foundation on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).

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