



THE KURT WEILL FOUNDATION FOR MUSIC

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Announcing the 2021 Lotte Lenya Competition Finalists

Fifteen performers emerge from record applicant pool of 500; finals to be streamed online to audiences worldwide.

NEW YORK (April 20, 2021) — Kim H. Kowalke, President of the Kurt Weill Foundation, is pleased to announce the finalists for the **2021 Lotte Lenya Competition**. Fifteen performers will compete for top prizes of \$20,000, \$15,000, and \$10,000.

Gan-ya Ben-gur Akselrod (Israel, 33)
Max Chernin (USA, 31)
Ty Chiko (Bahamas, 32)
Monica Dewey (USA, 31)
Taylor-Alexis DuPont (USA, 30)
Charles Eaton (USA, 30)
Nicole Fernandez-Coffaro (USA, 28)
Kaden Forsberg (Canada, 29)

Katrina Galka (USA, 31)
Rebekah Howell (USA, 29)
Helen Zhibing Huang (China, 31)
Victoria Okafor (USA, 25)
Andrew Polec (USA, 32)
Katherine Riddle (USA, 30)
Kaileigh Riess (USA, 26)

Julie Benko (USA, 32) and Sacha Smith (Canada, 26) were named as alternate finalists. In recognition of the exceptional level of talent displayed by this year's contestants, and the ongoing professional and financial challenges posed by the global pandemic, each participating finalist will receive a minimum award of \$2,000, while non-advancing semifinalists were awarded \$1,000 each.

The 2021 competition drew a record-breaking 500 applicants from 29 countries and 39 US states, each performing a program of four selections—one each from opera/opera, Golden Age musical theater, contemporary musical theater, and the stage works of Kurt Weill. In the semifinal round, thirty-one contestants auditioned via video submission and were coached remotely with Broadway and opera star **Lisa Vroman**, Broadway mainstay **Analisa Leaming**, and opera and musical theater globetrotter **Zachary James**. Leaming and James took home top prizes themselves in 2007 and 2009, respectively, and are the first prizewinners who have returned to judge. “There’s no other competition like it,” said Leaming, “One that celebrates authentic storytelling, a high level of artistry and an ability to excel at a wide range of styles.” Reflecting on the pool of semifinalists, James said “I was inspired by their passion and command of their craft. This competition is a global search for the game changers of the musical theatre and opera stages, and we are in good hands.”

Finals will take place in-person on **28 August 2021** in either New York City or Rochester, NY, and will be livestreamed worldwide at www.kwf.org/LLC. The finals presentation will also be broadcast on OperaVision (www.operavision.eu/en) beginning in September. The three-person jury for the finals includes Tony Award-winning actress, singer, and director **Victoria Clark**, renowned Broadway music director and conductor **Andy Einhorn**, and Obie Award-winning actress and singer, **Mary Beth Peil**, who launched her career as the winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. In addition to top prizes, the judges may bestow discretionary awards of \$3,500, including the **Rebecca Luker Award** inaugurated this year for an outstanding performance of a selection from the Golden Age of American musical theater.

The fourteen contestants who did not advance to the Finals are: Adelaide Boedecker (USA, 32), Avery Boettcher (USA, 28), Angela Bonello (USA, 21) Benjamin Camenzuli (Canada, 29), Joshua Conyers (USA, 32), Blake Denson (USA, 25), Daniella Friesen (Canada, 32), Dylan Glenn (USA, 27), Richard Glöckner (Germany, 26), Sarah Goodman (USA, 27), Matthew Hill (USA, 30), Lauren Joyanne Morris (United Kingdom, 30), Luke Sikora (USA, 32), and Ryan Wolfe (USA, 24).

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About the Lotte Lenya Competition

More than a vocal competition, the Lotte Lenya Competition recognizes talented young singer/actors who are dramatically and musically convincing in repertoire ranging from opera/opera to contemporary Broadway scores, with a focus on the works of Kurt Weill. Since its inception in 1998, the Lotte Lenya Competition has grown into an internationally recognized leader in identifying and nurturing the next generation of “total-package performers” (*Opera News*) and rising stars in both the opera and musical theater worlds. The roster of prizewinners has likewise grown to over 100, many of whom have gone on to major performing careers.

About the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music

The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc. (<http://www.kwf.org>) is dedicated to promoting understanding of the life and works of composer Kurt Weill (1900-1950) and preserving the legacies of Weill and his wife, actress-singer Lotte Lenya (1898-1981). The Foundation administers the Weill-Lenya Research Center, a Grant Program, the Kurt Weill Book Prize and the Lotte Lenya Competition, and publishes the Kurt Weill Edition and the Kurt Weill Newsletter.