



INSPIRING FUTURE  
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## **Elizabeth Hanje Wins Tennessee Schmidt Vocal Competition**

*Modified “virtual” competition model gives high school singers the opportunity to still win cash awards and potential scholarships*

**(Nashville, TN) May 23, 2020** – On May 23, 2020 the Schmidt Vocal Competition, in conjunction with its Tennessee cohort host, Vanderbilt University announced winners of its modified virtual singing competition for sophomore, junior, and senior high school singers. This year’s first prize winner was Elizabeth Hanje, from Birmingham, AL who was awarded \$2,500 for her performance of "Zueignung" by Richard Strauss.

Additional winners were: Reilly Ray, Second Place; Sydney Forrester Wilson, Third Place; Yasmin Gerardi, Isabella Recktenwald, Darien Roby, Finalist; Drew Davison, Risha Hussain, Heidi Thiessen, Encouragement Award; Isabella Recktenwald, Most Promising Sophomore.

Due to the closing of college and university campuses and the stay-at-home orders in place across the country, Schmidt Vocal Arts quickly pivoted in March to create a modified “virtual submission” model for its Spring 2020 Schmidt Vocal Competitions. Several signature elements traditionally associated with the Schmidt Vocal Competition were not possible in the virtual model – such as in-person, on-stage live performances, master classes led by renown members of the Schmidt Vocal Artist Network between the two rounds of competition, and connecting with fellow competitors throughout the day. However, competitors in the virtual cohort were able to showcase their talent as well as come together to hear from judges and celebrate the winners in a Facebook LIVE awards ceremony.

“We are so proud of Elizabeth Hanje and the many other talented singers who participated in this year’s virtual Schmidt Vocal Competition,” said Linda McAlister, Executive Director of Schmidt Vocal Arts. “Many of our competitors work hard all year to compete in this prestigious competition. We wanted to ensure they still had the chance to compete, earn cash awards, and become eligible for scholarship opportunities. In times of uncertainty, experiences like this are more important than ever.”

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“When I found out I won the Tennessee cohort of the Schmidt Vocal Competition I was filled with joy,” remarks Elizabeth Hanje. “Schmidt Vocal Arts is such a supporting organization that opens many doors which I am so thankful for as I head toward pursuing my dreams of becoming a professional singer.”

Schmidt Vocal Competition plans to return to its live, in-person competition model on the campus of Vanderbilt University next Spring. For more information, visit [www.schmidtvocalarts.org](http://www.schmidtvocalarts.org).

### **About Schmidt Vocal Competition**

The Schmidt Vocal Competition has impacted the lives of thousands of young students over the past two decades, offering awards, scholarships, and educational experiences for more than 150 students annually. The Schmidt Vocal Competition is held annually in 17 locations throughout the U.S. in partnership with regional colleges and universities and is open to sophomore, junior, and senior high school singers. Competitors perform in front of a live audience in two rounds and participate in educational master classes with some of today’s most renowned professionals between the preliminary and finalist rounds.

Schmidt Competition participants have gone on to gain entrance into the world’s finest music schools and include winners of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, the George London Competition, the National Association of Teachers of Singing Artist Competition, Classical Singer, and the National Opera Association Award. The Schmidt Vocal Competition is funded by the William E. Schmidt Foundation, which encourages aspiring young singers to pursue their passion in vocal arts and provides support and inspiration to future generations of singers.

### **About Elizabeth Hanje**

Elizabeth Hanje is a classical singer from Vestavia Hills, Alabama. She is the oldest in a first U.S. generational family from Tanzania. She began singing classical music about three years ago and she absolutely loves it. She recently graduated from the Interlochen Art Academy in Michigan and now will be heading to Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio where she will be majoring in Vocal Performance.

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