

For immediate release

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## Schmidt Vocal Arts Announces First National Prize, Crowning 25th Anniversary Competition Season



**Schmidt Vocal Arts** (SVA) is pleased to announce the **first national prize** in the history of the **Schmidt Vocal Competition**, in celebration of its **25th anniversary season**. This annual event for U.S. high school students, funded by the **William E. Schmidt Foundation**, sees 400+ singers compete each year – this season for more than \$625K in cash awards and scholarships – just at the critical point in their early careers when they begin to look toward training on a professional level. SVA will hold sixteen day-long regional competitions throughout the 2021-22 season in locations from coast to coast, and the top three winners of each – as well as from an independent, virtual cohort – will be invited to compete in the national competition, hosted by **Sarasota Opera** in the company's William E. Schmidt Opera Theatre from **June 3-5, 2022**. Celebrated judges for the national competition will be bass-baritone **Eric Owens**, Sarasota Opera General Director **Richard Russell**, and soprano **Tamara Wilson**.

Since debuting in 1997, the Schmidt Vocal Competitions have touched the lives of over 5,000 developing singers, awarding a total of \$1.6 million in cash prizes and scholarships in pursuit of Schmidt Vocal Arts' mission to foster a passion in young artists for classical singing and create opportunities to propel them on their journey toward a career in the arts. The milestone of SVA's first national competition will take place over a long weekend, beginning with a Friday arrival of 51 singers from across the country and rehearsals with pianists. On Saturday are the semi-finals, heard by a panel of six judges. At an **alumni concert** that evening, up to **sixteen finalists** will be announced for the finals round on Sunday, and **four encouragement awards** (\$300) will be given to non-finalists, three of whom will also be invited to participate in a Sunday **master class** with soprano Judith Haddon, soprano Dr. Katherine Jolly, and tenor Stanford Olsen. Owens, Russell, and Wilson will judge the finals round and decide upon the **First Place** (\$10,000), **Second Place** (\$7,500), **Third Place** (\$5,000), and **Finalist** (\$650) Awards. A **reception and awards ceremony** wraps up the weekend on Sunday evening.

**Linda McAlister**, who assumed the role of SVA's Executive Director in 2019 after managing the competition since 2012, is enthusiastic about the prospect of elevating SVA's visibility on a national level. She explains:

"We're delighted to expand our programming to include the Schmidt Vocal Competition High School Nationals. It is an honor to reach this next generation of young singers and help them pursue careers in music at the collegiate level and beyond. We so look forward to hearing these voices from across the country perform live on the stage of the William E. Schmidt Opera Theatre at Sarasota Opera."

SVA's support and resources continue long after the competition. The prize-winners are eligible for need-based scholarships to support their continued study at the university level, and SVA continues to have relationships with many alumni throughout their careers, providing educational, mentoring, and networking opportunities as well as grants for summer study. SVA recently launched an **Undergraduate Awards** initiative, building on the programs designed for high school students to create opportunities for college-level singers as well. Also under the SVA umbrella are the **Schmidt Vocal Institute** (SVI), a two-week summer intensive training program established by McAlister in 2016, and its **Vocal Artists Network**, a roster of vocalists and vocal pianists/coaches boasting celebrated performers who are also dedicated teachers. The network includes such luminaries as **Christine Goerke, Denyce Graves, Nathan Gunn, Sylvia McNair, Craig Terry, Russell Thomas, Tamara Wilson**, and [many more](#), and from its ranks come competition judges, master clinicians, and guest faculty.

A video of alumni describing their experiences with the Schmidt Vocal Competition is available [here](#), and a promo video for SVI, which is hosted at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, is available [here](#).

## About William E. Schmidt

William E. Schmidt was a decorated military pilot, successful businessman, and lifelong, generous supporter of the arts and charitable organizations in the communities where he lived. Born in Irvine, Kentucky in 1933, he came from a family that loved music and believed in the power of education. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from DePauw University, and his master's degree in business administration from George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

After the death of his mother, and with close counsel of his sister, Anna Lee Schmidt Hamilton – a versatile singer who did postgraduate study at Indiana University and Germany's Heidelberg Conservatory of Music before teaching, conducting, and performing variously at Butler University, the Indianapolis Opera Company, and the Indiana Opera Theatre – he founded the Schmidt Vocal Competition, first held at the University of Indianapolis in 1997. With these contests, as well as with his meaningful support of other scholarship programs at numerous universities, schools, and community organizations, he provided a remarkable legacy of dedication to the arts and youth that his Foundation continues to build upon today.

In his later life, Schmidt moved to Sarasota, Florida, where he became a substantial behind-the-scenes supporter of several key community projects, including the Sarasota Opera. He died in 2014 after a lengthy battle with Parkinson's Disease, but his love for and commitment to the arts and the community live on in his family, friends, and colleagues. The William E. Schmidt Foundation captures his entrepreneurial and hard-working spirit in the initiatives and projects it selects to fund — always grounded in innovation and led by those committed to a worthy mission.

## About Schmidt Vocal Arts

Funded by the William E. Schmidt Foundation, Schmidt Vocal Arts is committed to fostering a passion for classical singing and creating opportunities for young singers. Led by Executive Director Linda McAlister, Schmidt Vocal Arts boasts many accomplished alumni who have gone on to pursue music degrees and enjoy successful careers in the arts. The Schmidt Vocal Competitions – the oldest of the Foundation's programs – have touched the lives of over 5,000 developing singers, awarding a total of \$1.6 million in cash prizes and scholarships since debuting in 1997. Other Schmidt Vocal Arts programs include the Schmidt Vocal Institute, a two-week intensive summer residential program where singers learn from world-renowned artists, participate in workshops and master classes, and perform with other talented musicians; Schmidt Vocal Education, offering regional and online programs for singers and teachers to learn, challenge themselves, and participate in performance experiences; and Schmidt Vocal Scholarships, a program that provides need-based support for talented singers continuing their professional vocal education.

## About Sarasota Opera

Sarasota Opera recently completed its 62nd Season of bringing world-class opera to Florida's Gulf Coast. The company was launched in 1960, when the Asolo Opera Guild was formed to present the annual productions of a touring chamber opera company in the historic 320-seat Asolo Theater on

the grounds of Sarasota's Ringling Museum of Art. By 1974 the Asolo Opera was mounting its own productions. The need for a space more conducive to opera eventually led the company to purchase the former A. B. Edwards Theater, which in 1984 (as the Sarasota Opera House) became home to the newly renamed Sarasota Opera. The building, which underwent a \$20 million renovation and rehabilitation in 2007, has been called "one of America's finest venues for opera" by *Musical America*. Victor DeRenzi has been Artistic Director of the company since 1983, and Richard Russell was named Executive Director 2012 and General Director in 2021. Sarasota Opera has garnered international attention with its Masterwork Revivals Series, which presents neglected works of artistic merit, as well as the Verdi Cycle, completed in 2016, that made Sarasota Opera the only opera company in the world to present all of Verdi's works. Maestro DeRenzi founded the Apprentice and Studio Artist's programs, and the company also maintains a commitment to education through its "Explorations in Opera" performances for local schools and the industry-leading Sarasota Youth Opera program.

High-resolution photos and logos are available [here](#).

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[schmidtvocalarts.org/about-sva/](http://schmidtvocalarts.org/about-sva/)

[www.facebook.com/SchmidtVocal](https://www.facebook.com/SchmidtVocal)

[www.instagram.com/schmidtvocal/](https://www.instagram.com/schmidtvocal/)

[www.youtube.com/channel/UC3aVs0iChT9uw3OuB3QtilA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3aVs0iChT9uw3OuB3QtilA)

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## **Schmidt Vocal Arts 25th Anniversary Competition, Regional Rounds**

**Oct 2**

**Waco, TX**

Baylor University

**Oct 9**

**Oxford, OH**

Miami University

**Oct 16**

**West Palm Beach, FL**

Palm Beach Atlantic University

**Oct 30**

**Las Vegas, NV**

University of Nevada Las Vegas

**Nov 7**  
**Montclair, NJ (New York)**  
Montclair State University

**Nov 13**  
**Nashville, TN**  
Vanderbilt University

**Dec 11**  
**Boulder, CO**  
University of Colorado Boulder

**March 5**  
**Atlanta, GA**  
Georgia State University

**March 12**  
**Philadelphia, PA**  
Temple University

**March 12**  
**Winston-Salem, NC**  
University of North Carolina School of the Arts

**March 26**  
**Berkeley, CA**  
University of California Berkeley

**April 9**  
**Indianapolis, IN**  
University of Indianapolis

**April 23**  
**Minneapolis, MN**  
University of Minnesota Twin Cities

**May 7**  
**Tacoma, WA**  
Pacific Lutheran University

**May 14**  
**Chicago, IL**  
Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University

**May 15**  
**Boston, MA**  
Boston Conservatory at Berklee

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