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## Schmidt Vocal Arts (SVA) Names Award-Winners of Second Annual High School National Competition



*Award-winners Dalila Lugo, Ella Vaughn, and Kimberly Alexandra Adam (photo: Lori Sax)*

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(June 2023)—[Schmidt Vocal Arts \(SVA\)](#) is delighted to announce that soprano **Ella Vaughn** (18) has won the top prize of \$10,000 in the second annual **Schmidt Vocal Competition Nationals**. Hailing from Cincinnati, Ohio, Vaughn has just graduated from Walnut Hills High School. Second prize of \$7,500 went to soprano **Kimberly Alexandra Adam** (18) of Chesterbrook, Pennsylvania, and third prize of \$5,000 to soprano **Dalila Lugo** (18) of Miami, Florida. These winners were selected from more than 300 U.S. high-school students who took part in regional competitions over the course of the 2022-23 season, 10 of them then going on to compete in the final round. That took place June 2-4 in Sarasota, Florida, where SVA's distinguished judges were star sopranos **Alyson Cambridge** and **Christine Goerke** (Associate Artistic Director of Detroit Opera) as well as the Cincinnati Opera Harry T. Wilks Artistic Director **Evans Mirageas**.

Alyson Cambridge said:

"The talent presented at the Schmidt Vocal Competition was truly outstanding. These are, without a doubt, the best and most promising high school singers in the country! The Opera and Broadway worlds are lucky to have these young singers on their way to very bright futures. The technical proficiency, beauty of voice, poise, charisma, and "it" factor on display in the final round was so impressive, and I was truly honored to be a part of recognizing, encouraging, and rewarding such terrific talent, and to hopefully impart some salient words to help guide and support them on their musical journeys."

Evans Mirageas commented:

"More than once, we three judges looked at one another and exclaimed: 'are we sure this is a high school student?!' To hear these passionate and already well-schooled singers gives me hope in the future of our art form."



*Final Round Judges Christine Goerke, Evans Mirageas, and Alyson Cambridge (photo: Lori Sax)*

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Funded by the **William E. Schmidt Foundation**, the **Schmidt Vocal Competition** is an annual event for U.S. high-school students who compete – this season for more than **\$650K in cash awards and scholarships** – at the critical point in their early careers when they start looking towards professional training. Designed to be accessible to singers from as many corners of the country as possible, this season’s final regional competitions were held in Tacoma, Chicago, and Boston, while their **virtual cohort** attracted singers from rural areas of Maine, North Dakota, and beyond. Held this past weekend in **Sarasota Opera’s** William E. Schmidt Opera Theatre, the semi-final round hosted 32 singers, representing the top three winners from each of 13 regional competitions and from the virtual cohort.

SVA’s support and resources continue long after the competition. The award-winners are eligible for need-based scholarships and grants to support their continued study at the university level, and SVA maintains relationships with many alumni throughout their careers, providing educational, mentoring, and networking opportunities as well as grants for summer study. The [SVA network](#) includes such luminaries as **Margo Garrett, Christine Goerke, Denyce Graves, Nathan Gunn, Craig Terry, and Russell Thomas**, and from its ranks come competition judges, master class clinicians, and guest faculty.

Christine Goerke noted:

“As a young singer who needed assistance to attend college and complete her training, I can very personally say that programs such as these—and Schmidt Vocal Arts specifically—are a gift and an absolute necessity to bring the stars of tomorrow to our stages. Giving them the support and opportunities to receive the training that they need to lead the next generation of artists into the future of our art form is our task, and one that simply could not be accomplished without wonderful organizations like Schmidt Vocal Arts.”

### About Ella Vaughn, First Place

Ella Vaughn (18) is a senior at Walnut Hills High School in Cincinnati, Ohio. She began her singing journey when she was 9 years old. Singing is a major part of Ella’s life. She regularly performs at her school in musical theatre productions and at community events, she attends vocal institutes/camps in the summer, she is in multiple choirs, participates in vocal competitions several times a year, and has been studying in an opera training program for 4 years. Ella is a 2021 and 2022 alumna of the Schmidt Vocal Institute and won First Prize in the 2022-23 Ohio Schmidt Vocal Competition Regional. Ella will be attending Oberlin Conservatory next fall to study Vocal Performance under Dr. Katherine Jolly.

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## About Kimberly Alexandra Adam, Second Place

Kimberly Alexandra Adam (18) was born in the Philippines. Next year, she will attend The Juilliard School, where she attended the voice pre-college program under the tutelage of Ms. Lorraine Nubar. Kimberly recently won the Irving Ludwig Competition and performed with the Grammy-nominated Lansdowne Symphony Orchestra, her second time performing with an orchestra. Kimberly is a grateful recipient of the 2022 George and Nora London Foundation grant, the Bruce Montgomery Foundation's Springboard Grant, and the Primavera Fund. In 2023, she will attend the Schmidt Vocal Institute. She won First Place in the 2021-22 Pennsylvania Schmidt Vocal Competition Regional, was a National Finalist in the inaugural 2021-22 Schmidt Vocal Competition Nationals, and won Third Place in the 2022-23 Pennsylvania Schmidt Vocal Competition Regional. Kimberly has always dreamed of becoming an opera singer.

## About Dalila Lugo, Third Place

Dalila Lugo (18) is an artist born in Miami, Florida. Dalila started with classical vocal training at the age of 6 with Manny Perez and world renowned opera singer Eglise Gutierrez. Three years ago, she started taking acting and musical theatre lessons in Sociedad Actoral Hispanoamericana. Some of her performing experiences include participating in vocal ensembles of Italian operas *Cendrillon* and *Tosca* since the age of 11 and singing the lead "Maria" in *West Side Story* at the age of 14. She is a 2022 alumna of the Schmidt Vocal Institute and won First Place in the 2021-22 Georgia Schmidt Vocal Competition Regional, Second Place in the inaugural 2022-23 Schmidt Vocal Competition Nationals, and First Place in the 2022-23 Indiana Schmidt Vocal Competition Regional. In 2023, Dalila was chosen as a National Young Arts Finalist. She currently attends the New World School of the Arts, where she studies with vocal coaches of mostly classical style. Dalila will continue with her hard work in classical training at The Juilliard School, where she hopes to grow on stage not only as a person, but as a performer.

## About Schmidt Vocal Arts

Funded by the William E. Schmidt Foundation, Schmidt Vocal Arts is committed to fostering a passion for classical singing and to 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 more than 5,000 developing singers, awarding a total of over \$2 million in cash awards and scholarships since its debut in 1997.

During the pandemic, SVA launched an Undergraduate Awards initiative, building on the programs designed for high-school students to create opportunities for college-level singers as well. Other Schmidt Vocal Arts programs include the Schmidt Vocal Institute, a two-week intensive summer

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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 64th Season of bringing world-class opera to Florida's Gulf Coast. The company was launched in 1960 in the historic 320-seat Asolo Theater on the grounds of Sarasota's Ringling Museum of Art. In 1984 the company moved into the former A.B. Edwards Theater—now the Sarasota Opera House. Since then, the company has gained an international reputation as one of the leading regional opera companies in the U.S. through initiatives such as the Masterworks Revival Series and the Verdi Cycle. The company's Sarasota Youth Opera is the most comprehensive Youth Program in the U.S. The Sarasota Opera House, called "one of America's finest venues for opera" by Musical America, underwent a \$20 million renovation in 2007, when the auditorium was named the William E. Schmidt Opera Theatre, in recognition of his leadership gift. Since 1983, the company has been under the artistic leadership of Victor DeRenzi and administrative leadership of General Director Richard Russell since 2012. Sarasota Opera is sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture and the National Endowment for the Arts. Programs are paid for in part by Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax revenues.

To download high-resolution photos, click [here](#).

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