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### ***Fifth Annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition Awards \$50,000 Among Emerging Opera Stars***

San José, CA ---- **Opera San José General Director Irene Dalis** is pleased to announce the results of the **Fifth-Annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition** held May 21, 2011 at the **California Theatre** in downtown San José.

Ten finalists selected from the annual three-day West Coast Auditions for Singers performed some of the most beloved opera arias vying for \$50,000 in cash prizes. At the end of the evening soprano **Alexandra LoBianco** from St. Petersburg, Florida was awarded First Prize and \$15,000 for her stirring performance of “In questa reggia” from Puccini’s *Turandot* and “Vissi d’ arte” from Puccini’s *Tosca*. Ms. LoBianco was also awarded the title of Audience Favorite, selected by popular vote during the final intermission, and received an additional \$5,000 for a grand total of \$20,000 in cash prizes.

“Alexandra LoBianco was simply sensational and demonstrated such high vocal standards that she not only won over the judges, but the audience members as well” said **Irene Dalis**. “I must say that this was the best talent we have seen in the five years of this competition and I am grateful that I did not have to judge. It would have been very difficult to select a winner from these fine operatic artists.”

Second Prize (\$10,000) was awarded to baritone Evan Brummel, who sang “Pari siamo” from Verdi’s *Rigoletto* and “Avant de quitter ces lieux” from Gounod’s *Faust*. Third Prize (\$5,000) went to tenor Christopher Bengochea who performed “O Paradis!” from Meyerbeer’s *L’Africaine* and “Parmi veder le lagrime” from Verdi’s *Rigoletto*.

The other seven finalists each received a prize of \$2,000:

Evgenia Chaverdova, mezzo-soprano; Russia

Rebecca Davis, soprano; Nevada

Jasmina Halimic, soprano; Bosnia-Herzegovina

Jouvanca Jean-Baptiste, soprano; New York

Krassen Karagiozov, baritone; Bulgaria

Jennie Litster, soprano; Nevada

Shawnette Sulker, soprano; Guyana

For the fourth consecutive year, a \$1,000 award sponsored by the Wagner Society of Northern California was presented to the most promising Wagnerian singer in the competition. The judges awarded this year's prize to soprano Jouvanca Jean-Baptiste for her performance of "Euch lüften" from Wagner's *Lohengrin*.

Judges for the competition were **Scott Altman**, General Director of Arizona Opera; **Aren Der Hacopian**, Artistic Administrator and Director of the Young Artists Program of Seattle Opera; and **Peter Jaffe**, Music Director and Conductor of Stockton Symphony. **Timm Rolek**, Artistic Director of Sacramento Opera and **Michael Ballam**, General Director of the Utah Festival Opera served on the preliminary panel, joining **Lotfi Mansouri**, former General Director of San Francisco Opera, who addressed the audience at the vocal competition finals, expressing his gratitude to Irene Dalis for her contributions to the opera profession.

**Sal Pizarro** from the San José Mercury News presented the Audience Favorite Award and accomplished pianist **Daniel Lockert** returned this year as accompanist for both the vocal competition finals and the preceding auditions.

***The annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition is sponsored by the Irene Dalis Fund for Singers.***

**Photos:** Photo Credit: Robert Shomler

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Caption: Irene Dalis pictured with the ten finalists from the Fifth Annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition

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Caption: Irene Dalis pictured with soprano Alexandra Lo Bianco, First Prize winner of the Fifth Annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition

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Caption: (L to R): Christopher Bengochea (Third prize), Jouvanca Jean-Baptiste (Wagnerian Award), Irene Dalis, Alexandra LoBianco (First Prize), Evan Brummel (Second Prize)

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