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November 2016

*From the Judge's Seat: A Conversation with  
Melissa Wegner, Associate Director,  
Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions*

**KM:** In the 5 years that you've been working for the National Council Auditions, what was your most inspiring experience?

**MW:** There are so many things that give me great joy from doing this job. One is when I get to witness singers start from the District level, go all the way through and win the Grand Finals and then make their Met debuts. My first singer to do that was Janai Brugger, who debuted in *Turandot* as Liù and she's back at the Met this fall singing in *Guillaume Tell*.

**KM:** What is it like to judge the auditions? What criteria do you use?

**MW:** The guiding principle that I hold to is our mission statement: to discover exceptional young talent and to assist those with the greatest potential for operatic careers. Sometimes the winners stand out easily and other times it takes a lot of discussion with the judges to sort out who is ready for the next level. There's vocal talent that some people have more naturally than others, but that has to be supported by excellent dramatic work, stylistic interpretation, language, musical expression and so many other details.

**KM:** Have you seen any changes in the level of preparation or performance style among the singers over the last 5 years?

**MW:** Overall, the level remains quite high. The talent pool in some areas of the country wax and wane depending on the health of the opera companies and universities in their area. I think that with YouTube and other online resources, young singers have every possibility to see what their peers are doing and be well-informed on opera greats from the past. This accessibility gives anyone with the internet a wealth of information that wasn't possible even twenty years ago.

**KM:** How effective are the auditions in identifying operatic talent for the Met?

**MW:** We have over 100 singers on the Met roster every year who have sung in our auditions at some level. That alone is a good indicator. The feedback the singers are given from judges really helps them make informed decisions about their singing and career potential. Many singers audition for that reason and go on to have wonderful careers, whether or not they make it to the Met.

**KM:** If a singer happens to be having a bad day, or if they are very young and still need training, or if they don't dress well, do you cut that singer any slack, or are you looking for an almost-complete package?

**MW:** I want to get a clear picture of who a singer is right now so that I can help them become who they will be. We take the training into consideration depending on a singer's age and background. I don't ever disqualify someone by their appearance, but try to gently let them know what the expectations are for next time. All singers have days when they are not at their best or most healthy, but how they deal with that shows us a lot. Of course, when a singer does have most parts of the puzzle put together, they usually do stand out as a winner. The audience can feel this, too.

*Winner Update: Adler Fellow Sarah Cambidge!*



It has been an amazing year and a half since returning from the 2015 Metropolitan semi-finals in New York as the Rocky Mountain representative. I have had the opportunity to compete in other competitions including the Denver Lyric Opera Guild Competition where I placed first this past spring. With my MONC and DLOG awards, I was able to fund my audition tour last year, which helped to secure (continued on page 2)

The Metropolitan Opera  
*National Council Auditions*

ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

Karen Mohr, Editor

**2017 ROCKY  
MOUNTAIN  
REGIONAL  
AUDITIONS**

**Utah District**  
Saturday, November 12  
11:00am  
Libby Gardner  
Concert Hall,  
University of Utah

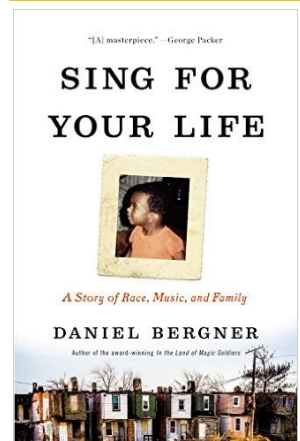
**Nevada District**  
Saturday, November 19  
11:00am  
Beam Music Center  
University of Nevada  
Las Vegas

**New Mexico District**  
Saturday, January 14  
10:00am  
African American  
Performing Arts Center  
310 San Pedro Dr NE  
Albuquerque

**Colorado-Wyoming  
District**  
Saturday, January 28  
9:30am

**Rocky Mountain  
Regional Finals**  
Sunday, January 29  
1:30pm  
Robert and Judi  
Newman Center for the  
Performing Arts  
University of Denver

**National Grand Finals**  
Sunday, March 19, 3:00pm  
Metropolitan  
Opera House  
New York, NY



This recently published book about 2011 MONC winner Ryan Speedo Green has been featured on CBS *This Morning*, NPR's *Fresh Air*, and in *People Magazine*.

(*Sarah Cambridge, continued from page 1*) many young artist program auditions throughout the states. One of my auditions granted me the opportunity to work with renowned singers, teachers, coaches, conductors and fellow colleagues as part of San Francisco Opera's Merola Program. During this 11-week summer training program, I performed my first Wagner scene as Elsa from *Lohengrin*, and Donna Anna's "Don Ottavio son morta... Or sai chi l'onore" from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. This adventure of a lifetime helped to solidify my goal of making this dream a career. Since returning to Denver, I have resumed my position at the Denver School of the Arts where I have been one of the Resident Artists for the Vocal Department for the past 4 years. However, this chapter of my life will be coming to an end. I was invited to be a 2017 Adler Fellow at the San Francisco Opera and I will be relocating to the Bay Area this coming January. This prestigious young artist program is a multi-year performance-oriented residency where I can continue to focus on my artistic growth as well as get the valuable experience I need to propel my career. I will be covering some of the lead roles in upcoming seasons and hopefully performing some of the smaller roles while working with their amazing staff on my own repertoire. I am so excited to see where this next journey will take me, and I cannot be more grateful for the support and encouragement I have received from the MONC! Thank you all so much!!!

## **RISING STARS SOCIETY: Supporting your local Met Auditions**

The RISING STARS SOCIETY helps guarantee our expenses and singer awards of \$33,000 per year. If you have not already made a pledge to the Society and were inspired by our singers this year, please fill out this form and return it with your donation. We have over 30 Rising Stars Society members at this time; 25 more members will take us to our membership goal.

### **Creating Opportunities:**

I pledge \$250 per year for 5 years for a total of \$1,250.

### **Nurturing Talent::**

I pledge \$500 per year for 5 years for a total of \$2,500.

### **Realizing Dreams:**

I pledge \$1000 per year for 5 years for a total of \$5000.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am unable to be a Rising Star Society member today; however, I want my support of young singers to matter by pledging \$\_\_\_\_\_ a year for \_\_\_\_\_ year(s) for a total of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ I wish to be an **MONC patron** for \$75/ year/person. Number of people \_\_\_\_\_

Join by credit card at [www.metoperaauditionsrockies.org](http://www.metoperaauditionsrockies.org) or call Steve Dilts at 720-530-0483.

You may also send this form with your check (payable to MONC-RMR) or credit card information to: Steve Dilts, 16684 Antero Street, Broomfield, CO 80023.

Please include your name(s), address, phone number and email address with your donation. Thank you for your generosity.

The Metropolitan Opera  
**National Council Auditions**  
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

Karen Mohr  
6226 West Jefferson Avenue  
Denver, CO 80235

**Save the Date!**  
**Rocky Mountain Regional  
Finals**  
**Sunday, January 29, 2017,  
1:30pm**  
**Robert & Judi Newman  
Center for the  
Performing Arts  
University of Denver**

## **Metropolitan Opera 2016-2017 HD Calendar**

**Saariaho:** L'Amour de Loin  
Saturday, December 10, 2016, 10:55am  
**Verdi:** Nabucco  
Saturday, January 7, 2017, 10:55am  
**Gounod:** Romeo et Juliette  
Saturday, January 21, 2017, 10:55am  
**Dvorak:** Rusalka  
Saturday, February 25, 2017, 10:55am

**Verdi:** La Traviata  
Saturday, March 11, 2017, 10:55am  
**Mozart:** Idomeneo  
Saturday, March 25, 2017, 10:55am  
**Tchaikovsky:** Eugene Onegin  
Saturday, April 22, 2017, 10:55am  
**Strauss:** Der Rosenkavalier  
Saturday, May 13, 2017, 10:30am

Encore screenings will be shown Wednesdays at 6:30pm the following week.  
See [www.metopera.org](http://www.metopera.org) for cast information and to find local theaters.