

2023-24 SEASON

# NEW ENGLAND

REGION COMPETITION

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28, 2024

Jordan Hall

New England Conservatory

 LAFFONT  
COMPETITION

The Metropolitan Opera



The 2023 Laffont Grand Finalists

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NATIONAL ADVISOR

**National Semifinals**

Monday, March 11, 2024

**Eric and Dominique Laffont  
Grand Finals Concert**

Sunday, March 17, 2024

For up-to-date auditions results, alumni news, and other general information, follow [@metoperacompetition](#) on Facebook and Instagram.

**THE METROPOLITAN OPERA ERIC AND DOMINIQUE LAFFONT COMPETITION**

The Met’s Laffont Competition—previously known as the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions—is designed to discover promising young opera singers and assist in the development of their careers, and is sponsored by hundreds of donors and volunteers from across the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Some of today’s greatest singers got their starts in the competition, including Renée Fleming, Susan Graham, Stephanie Blythe, Eric Owens, Lawrence Brownlee, Lisette Oropesa, Nadine Sierra, Jamie Barton, Michael Fabiano, Ryan Speedo Green, and Anthony Roth Costanzo.

The Competition is grateful to its donors for prizes at the national level and to the Tobin Endowment for the Mrs. Edgar Tobin Award, given to each first-place region winner.

Support for this program is generously provided by the Charles H. Dyson Endowment Fund at the Metropolitan Opera.

**SUPPORT OPERA’S FUTURE STARS**

When you make a gift to support the Laffont Competition, you make a statement about your commitment to the future of opera and to helping expand our work of identifying opera’s brightest rising stars. This unique initiative is possible thanks to the generous support that we receive from valued friends like you.

Please text LAFFONT to 44321 or visit [metopera.org/competitionsupport](https://metopera.org/competitionsupport) and make a gift to support the Laffont Competition today. Your contribution will make a truly meaningful difference.

**REPERTOIRE | JANUARY 28, 2024  
IN PERFORMANCE ORDER**

**KIRA KAPLAN, SOPRANO, 30 MECHANICSBURG, PA**

Regnava nel silenzio	LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR	Donizetti
Amour, ranime mon courage	ROMÉO ET JULIETTE	Gounod
Emily's Aria (Take me back)	OUR TOWN	Roem
Caro nome	RIGOLETTO	Verdi

**RANDA MELHEM, MEZZO-SOPRANO, 30 PHILADELPHIA, PA**

En vain, pour éviter	CARMEN	Bizet
Ja Gretelchen, wirst bald ein Brätelchen (Hexenlied)	HÄNSEL UND GRETEL	Humperdinck
Ah! mon fils!	LE PROPHÈTE	Meyerbeer
Condotta ell'era in ceppi	IL TROVATORE	Verdi

**JENNIFER ROBINSON, SOPRANO, 21 LAKELAND, FL**

Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante	CARMEN	Bizet
Depuis le jour	LOUISE	Charpentier
Chi il bel sogno di Doretta	LA RONDINE	Puccini
Signore, ascolta!	TURANDOT	Puccini

**GIORGI GULIASHVILI, TENOR, 28 TBILISI, GEORGIA**

Una furtiva lagrima	L'ELISIR D'AMORE	Donizetti
Salut! demeure chaste et pure	FAUST	Gounod
Avete torto!.Firenze è come un albero fiorito	GIANNI SCHICCHI	Puccini
Lenski's Aria (Kuda, kuda)	EUGENE ONEGIN	Tchaikovsky

**JOSIE LARSEN, SOPRANO, 25 SAMMAMISH, WA**

Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante	CARMEN	Bizet
Porgi, amor	LE NOZZE DI FIGARO	Mozart
Chi il bel sogno di Doretta	LA RONDINE	Puccini
Klänge der Heimat	DIE FLEDERMAUS	Strauss II

**GEMMA NHA, SOPRANO, 23 SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA**

Deh vieni, non tardar	LE NOZZE DI FIGARO	Mozart
Presentation of the Rose	DER ROSENKAVALIER	Strauss
A vos jeux, mes amis	HAMLET	Thomas
Caro nome	RIGOLETTO	Verdi

**BRIANNA J. ROBINSON, SOPRANO, 30 RAVENNA, OH**

My daddy wore a cap like yours	OMAR	Giddens and Abels
Ah! Je ris de me voir (The Jewel Song)	FAUST	Gounod
Non mi dir	DON GIOVANNI	Mozart
Donde lieta usci	LA BOHÈME	Puccini

**JIN YU, TENOR, 25 SHAN DONG, CHINA**

E la sorita storia del pastore	L'ARLESIANA	Cilea
Ah! mes amis, quel jour de fête!...	LA FILLE DU RÉGIMENT	Donizetti
Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön	DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE	Mozart
De' miei bollenti spiriti	LA TRAVIATA	Verdi

ALLYSON BENNETT, SOPRANO, 26 BOSTON, MA

Ah quando all'ara scorgemi... Ah! dal Ciel	MARIA STUARDA	Donizetti
Song to the Moon	RUSALKA	Dvořák
After you hear me out	GLORY DENIED	Tom Cipullo
Du bist der Lenz	DIE WALKÜRE	Wagner

JILLIAN TATE, SOPRANO, 25 FAIRFAX, VA

Oh! quante volte	I CAPULETI E I MONTECCHI	Bellini
Tiny's Song	PAUL BUNYAN	Britten
Tornami a vagheggiar	ALCINA	Handel
Presentation of the Rose	DER ROSENKAVALIER	Strauss

LAUREANO QUANT, BARITONE, 30 BARRANQUILLA, COLOMBIA

Votre toast (The Toréador Song)	CARMEN	Bizet
Mein Sehnen, mein Wähnen	DIE TOTE STADT	Korngold
Hai già vinta la causa!	LE NOZZE DI FIGARO	Mozart
O Carlo, ascolta...lo morirò	DON CARLO	Verdi

JAMILA DRECKER-WAXMAN, SOPRANO, 25 NEW YORK, NY

O malheureuse, Iphigénie!	IPHIGÉNIE EN TAURIDE	Gluck
Mi tradi quell'alma ingrata	DON GIOVANNI	Mozart
I worry, that's all	FELLOW TRAVELERS	Spears
Das war sehr gut, Mandryka	ARABELLA	Strauss

RUOXI PENG, SOPRANO, 24 BEIJING, CHINA

Ach, ich fühl's	DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE	Mozart
Presentation of the Rose	DER ROSENKAVALIER	Strauss
No word from Tom	THE RAKE'S PROGRESS	Stravinsky
Je suis Titania	MIGNON	Thomas

DANIEL ESPINAL, TENOR, 24 SARASOTA, FL

Tarquinius does not wait	THE RAPE OF LUCRETIA	Britten
Una furtiva lagrima	L'ELISIR D'AMORE	Donizetti
Salut! demeure chaste et pure	FAUST	Gounod
De' miei bollenti spiriti	LA TRAVIATA	Verdi

MARGARET TIGUE, SOPRANO, 28 WANTAGH, NY

Song to the moon	RUSALKA	Dvorak
Non mi dir	DON GIOVANNI	Mozart
Mi chiamano Mimi	LA BOHÈME	Puccini
Tu che di gel sei cinta	TURANDOT	Puccini

ALEXIS PEART, MEZZO-SOPRANO, 26 TITUSVILLE, NJ

Crude furie degli orridi abissi	SERSE	Handel
We Had One Room	ELIZABETH CREE	Puts
(Composer's Aria) Sein wir wieder gut	ARIADNE AUF NAXOS	Strauss
Da chas nastal	THE MAID OF ORLEANS	Tchaikovsky

## 2024 New England Laffont Competition Judges



**Denyce Graves**, mezzo-soprano, has thrilled audiences worldwide in title roles in *Carmen* and *Samson et Dalila* – signature performances that have taken her to the Metropolitan Opera, Vienna Staatsoper, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, San Francisco Opera, Opéra National de Paris, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Washington National Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper, Arena di Verona, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Opernhaus Zürich, Teatro Real in Madrid, Houston Grand Opera, Dallas Opera, Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, Los Angeles Opera, and the Festival Maggio Musicale in Florence. Her many other notable appearances include the world premieres of Douglas J. Cuomo's *Doubt* at Minnesota Opera and Terence Blanchard's *Champion* at Opera Theatre of St. Louis, as well as role debuts of Katisha in *The Mikado* at Lyric Opera of Kansas City and Herodias in *Salome* at Palm Beach Opera. In the 2021-2022 season, she returned to the Metropolitan Opera as Maria in *Porgy and Bess* and on the concert stage in the 2021 season-opening performance of Mahler's Symphony No. 2 *Resurrection*. As a solo recitalist, she has performed at Ithaca College, Lawrence University, and the Clarkesville Concert Artist Series. In 2022, she made her directorial debut in a new production of *Carmen* at Minnesota Opera and the Glimmerglass Festival.



**Christopher Cano** is Director of the Cafritz Young Artists and the American Opera Initiative of Washington National Opera at The Kennedy Center. He previously held positions of Head of Music and Director of Artistic Operations of Arizona Opera's Marion Roose Pullin Opera Studio between 2017-2022. Cano is a recitalist, orchestra soloist, and collaborative pianist who has performed throughout the U.S., Mexico, Israel, Europe, and Asia. He is a coach who has prepared vocalists for appearances at the Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Chicago Lyric Opera, and orchestral appearances with the New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, and Berlin Philharmonic among others.



**Melissa Wegner** is the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program and the Laffont Competition. She is responsible for identifying, awarding, and developing the world's most promising operatic talent. A member of the Met's Artistic staff since 2011, she was the casting consultant for the recent opera *Intimate Apparel* at Lincoln Center Theater. In addition to the District, Regional and National rounds of the Laffont Competition, Ms. Wegner has adjudicated international competitions including the Belvedere Competition (South Africa, Russia, Latvia), Opera's Golden Voice (Georgia), the Nicola Martinucci Competition (Italy). US Competitions include the SAI Vocal Competition, the McCammon Voice Competition, and NATSAA Competition. A faculty member of Ravinia's Steans Music Institute, Ms. Wegner has also been visiting faculty for Bard College's Graduate Vocal Arts Program and is a frequent guest speaker at academic institutions, professional companies, and digital media outlets. She has presented at the NATS Winter Workshop and is an active member of Opera America.

## Today's Official Pianist



**Douglas Sumi** is a frequent collaborator with many of today's artists and opera theaters. Having been engaged by Los Angeles Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and Wolf Trap Opera, among many other theaters, he has collaborated with legendary artists such as Renée Fleming, Plácido Domingo, Itzhak Perlman, Carol Vaness, and many of today's new opera stars like Angel Blue, Ailyn Pérez, and Janai Brugger. Currently, he is on faculty at Boston University's School of Music, teaching courses in song literature, lyric diction, and opera for pianists.

## New England Region Awards

**FIRST PLACE: \$6,000** – Patrons of New England \$5,200; Mrs. Edgar Tobin Award \$800 from the Tobin Endowment

**SECOND PLACE: \$5,000** – Sponsored by the patrons of New England

**THIRD PLACE: \$4,000** – Sponsored by the patrons of New England

**PHILIP R. NICHOLS ENCOURAGEMENT AWARD: \$3,000** – Sponsored annually by bequest of Irene Nichols

Thanks to a generous endowment from the estate of Irene Nichols (1929-2020), a fund was set up to give encouragement awards of \$500 to Connecticut and Boston District winners and one or more annual Philip R. Nichols Encouragement Awards of \$3,000 to New England finalists. Irene Nichols, who was an annual patron beginning in 1985, will be remembered by many for her devoted support of young singers.

Finalists who do not place or are not given encouragement awards will each receive stipends of \$1,000.

## 2023-2024 District Judges

### Boston District

**Michael Chioldi**, dramatic baritone  
**Evans Mirageas**, artistic director, Cincinnati Opera  
**Susan Davenny Wyner**, conductor

### Connecticut District

**Richard Bernstein**, bass  
**Dona D. Vaughn**, artistic director, Opera Maine  
**Sally Wolf**, soprano

## New England Region Committee

Pauline Ho Bynum, Chair  
John and Barbara VanScoyoc, co-directors  
Robert Eastman, Boston District director; Susan Gates and Jon Saxton, associate directors  
Robin Valovich, Connecticut District director; Sondra Kelly, associate director

**Boston Committee:** Cynthia Brown, Pamela and William Craven, Priscilla Deck, Ralph Gioncardi, Ellen Golde, Linda Heffner, Margot Holtzman, Deborah and Jonathan Kay, Sean Kelly, Sean Lair, Paul Hart Miller, Mimi O'Connor, Monique Phinney, Sarah Vendetti, Leslie Warshaw, Elena Zaretsky

**Connecticut Committee:** Michele Burdette, Dr. Thomas Cannon, Shirley Leong, Kyle Swann

## 2023-2024 New England Patrons

*The New England Region Committee wishes to recognize the generosity of the following supporters who made donations of any amount between Jan. 1, 2023 and Jan. 22, 2024.*

Ted Allen and Stephanie Krauss	Leane Page Garland	John Patek
Rosemary G. Ashby	Susan Gates	Leslie and William Patton
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Pamela and William Craven	Jonathan and Deb Kay	Jon Saxton and Barbara Fox
Frederica Cushman	Jack Keller	In memory of Eleanor I. Sheedy, mezzo-soprano
Gene Dahmen	Lucy Kelly	David and Janna Smith
Sharon Daniels	Carol Kirtz	Andrew Szentgyorgyi
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Sheila Donahue	Amy and Jon Leibowitz	Mirjam Trame
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Don Eyles	Paul Hart Miller	Charlotte R. Wolfe
John Ficarelli	Dee Moore	In memory of Henry and Marguerite Wyman
Maurice N. Finegold FAIA	Donna and Alec Morgan	Hui Zhou
Anne W. Forsyth	Nina Moriarty	
Donald and Marjorie Forte	Madeleine Needles	
Jean French	Philip R. Nichols Endowment	
	Mimi O'Connor	



To become a patron, please scan the barcode at left. The link is also provided at [neaudition.org](http://neaudition.org). To donate by check, please make payable to "Met Opera New England Region" and mail to P.O. Box 470813, Brookline, MA 02447.

### Special thanks...

To Boston Conservatory at Berklee and New England Conservatory for their patient cooperation and use of their performance halls and classrooms.

Student tickets have been generously underwritten by a gift from Boston Midsummer Opera.

*The Saul B. and Naomi R. Cohen Foundation will sponsor a free recital with 2024 Regional finalists at Temple Emanuel, Newton, on Sunday, May 12 at 3 p.m. Details at [templemanuel.com](http://templemanuel.com).*

**Contact us:** To be added to our mailing list, write to [moncne@gmail.com](mailto:moncne@gmail.com). For more information, contact Pauline Ho Bynum, [phobynum@comcast.net](mailto:phobynum@comcast.net).

# NEW ENGLAND 2024 LAFFONT COMPETITION FINALISTS



**Allyson Bennett**  
soprano



**Jamila Drecker-Waxman**  
soprano



**Daniel Espinal**  
tenor



**Giorgi Guliashvili**  
tenor



**Kira Kaplan**  
soprano



**Josie Larsen**  
soprano



**Randa Melhem**  
mezzo-soprano



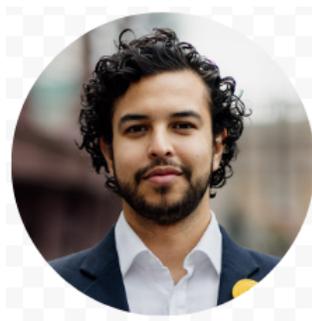
**Gemma Nha**  
soprano



**Alexis Peart**  
mezzo-soprano



**Ruoxi Peng**  
soprano



**Laureano Quant**  
baritone



**Brianna J. Robinson**  
soprano



**Jennifer Robinson**  
soprano



**Jillian Tate**  
soprano



**Margaret Tigie**  
soprano



**Jin Yu**  
tenor