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**Two Julliard-Trained Vocalists Win Top Prizes
at Third Annual James Toland Vocal Arts Competition**

OAKLAND, CA - (June 27, 2016) - Bass-baritone Cody Quattlebaum won both the Tier I Grand Prize and Audience Favorite awards and soprano Eva Gheorghiu was awarded first place in Tier II at the third Annual James Toland Vocal Arts (JTVA) Vocal Competition held on Saturday, June 25, 2016. Both have studied at The Julliard School; Quattlebaum is currently earning a master's degree in vocal performance and Gheorghiu recently graduated with a bachelor's degree in music. They were joined by soprano Yelena Dyachek and tenor Arnold Livingston Geis as Tier I second and third place winners respectively, and by bass-baritone Timothy Madden and soprano Julia Metzler as Tier II second and third place winners. Tenor Alexander Taite was named Audience Favorite for Tier II. Quattlebaum and Dyachek, who also won the Masterworks Chorale Award, are participants in the San Francisco Opera Merola Program this summer where they will both be featured in a production of *Così fan tutte* in early August.

Developed to support and nurture the emerging talents of artists as they begin a career in vocal performance, the JTVA Vocal Competition offers multiple cash awards in two tiers, as well as professional performance opportunities. Selected from a field of over 150 applicants in two tiers, seven finalists sang in the Tier II afternoon competition and, as one finalist withdrew the day before due to illness, just six competed in Tier I that evening. Each tier performed before a panel of judges and audience members at Holy Names University in Oakland California.

A key focus for JTVA as an organization is to provide training and performance opportunities for singers. As part of the Tier I Grand Prize, which includes a \$5,000 cash award, Quattlebaum will also perform as a guest artist in a performance with the Oakland Symphony under Maestro Michael Morgan, who presented the award at the close of the event. The Masterworks Chorale Award, which went this year to Dyachek, is open to a finalist from either tier chosen by Masterworks' artistic director Dr. Bryan Baker and includes a \$1,000 stipend and a performance opportunity in their upcoming season. Based in San Mateo, the Masterworks Chorale performs

a rich variety of music from major works of the Renaissance and Baroque periods, to modern masterpieces and contemporary works.

Singers in both tiers also participate in master classes the day prior to the competition. Tier I was taught by Timothy Shaindlin, a member of the Yale School of Music who has served on the music staffs of numerous companies including the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Washington Opera, and Pittsburgh Opera, where he has also conducted, served as chorus master and co-founded the Pittsburgh Opera Center training program. The Tier II master class was taught by coloratura soprano Robin Fisher, a professor of voice at California State University, Sacramento, whose career included performances in major venues around the world. Fisher also returned for the second year as master of ceremonies for the competition. After the competition, all finalists are also offered the opportunity to speak privately with judges to gain valuable feedback.

The JTVA Vocal Competition attracts applicants from throughout the U.S. and beyond. Divided into two tiers based on ability and vocal experience, the competition is open to exceptional singing across a range of genres, and has no specific age, education, or residency requirements. The three top finalists in each tier received cash prizes ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000. The Audience Favorite Awards, based on a tally of written votes, carry a separate cash prize of \$1,000 for Tier I and \$500 for Tier II. In addition, the Bell Investment Advisors Encouragement Awards grant \$500 to each finalist who does not win one of the top three prizes to help allay the costly expenses associated with pursuit of a career in vocal performance.

The fourth annual JTVA Vocal Competition is scheduled for June 23-24, 2017. A portion of the funds needed for prizes and ongoing operations is already in place and plans for additional fundraising are underway.

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Founded in 2010 and based in Oakland, California, **James Toland Vocal Arts, Inc.** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation dedicated to encouraging and cultivating, through competition and education, the emerging talents of singers who aspire to a professional career in vocal performance. An all-volunteer organization funded by individual donations, JTVA's primary

emphasis is the annual vocal competition with expert judging, live audience and monetary prizes held each June. For more information visit [www.jamestolandvocalarts.org](http://www.jamestolandvocalarts.org)

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**Photos:**

Bass-Baritone Cody Quattlebaum, Grand Prize (Tier I), Audience Favorite (Tier I)

Soprano Eva Gheorghiu, First Place (Tier II)

James Toland, JTVA Founder, with Tier I Winners: tenor Arnold Livingston Geis, soprano Yelena Dyachek, and bass-baritone Cody Quattlebaum

*Photo Credit: Samuel Crossley (larger files available upon request)*