Guildhall School announces finalists for its most prestigious prize: the Gold Medal

Alumnus and previous winner bass-baritone Sir Bryn Terfel on the judging panel

Friday 10 May at 7:00pm, Barbican Hall

Guildhall School of Music & Drama is pleased to announce the finalists for its most prestigious prize for musicians: the Gold Medal. The prize is awarded to singers and instrumentalists in alternate years. In 2019 it’s the turn of the singers, and the finalists are: Ema Nikolovska (mezzo-soprano), William Thomas (bass), Samantha Clarke (soprano) and James Newby (baritone).

On Friday 10 May, each finalist will perform a short programme accompanied by pianists Dylan Perez, Michael Pandya and Panaretos Kyriatzidis, followed by a second half of arias with Guildhall Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Richard Farnes before a Barbican Hall audience. Tickets are available from today from Barbican Box Office.

This year’s distinguished judges are: Guildhall School alumnus and previous winner of the Gold Medal (1989) bass-baritone Sir Bryn Terfel; mezzo-soprano Dame Ann Murray; Jonathan Vaughan, Guildhall School’s Vice-Principal & Director of Music; Richard Farnes, Gold Medal Final conductor; and Kevin Murphy, Director, Coaching & Music Administration for Indiana University Opera Theatre and Director, Singers’ Programme at Ravinia Steans Music Institute. Murphy is formerly Director of Music Administration & Casting for New York City Opera and Director of Musical Studies at the Opéra de Paris.

The finalists’ repertoire includes songs and arias by Purcell, Schubert, Wolf, Medtner, Rodrigo, Gounod, Britten, Mahler and Mozart performed by Ema Nikolovska; Wolf, Poulenc, Loewe, Rossini, Mussorgsky and Rachmaninov performed by William Thomas; Strauss, Poulenc, Copland, Rachmaninov, Mozart, Puccini and Stravinsky performed by Samantha Clarke; and Warlock, Liszt, Duparc, Butterworth, Handel, Mahler and Mascagni performed by James Newby.
The Gold Medal award was founded and endowed by Sir H. Dixon Kimber in 1915. Since 1950 it has been open to singers and instrumentalists in alternate years. Previous winners include William Primrose (1922), Jacqueline du Pré (1960), Patricia Rozario (1979) and Tasmin Little (1986).

Recent Gold Medal award winners are forging impressive careers. In 2015, the award’s centenary year, the joint winners were soprano Jennifer Witton, who performs with the Glyndebourne Festival Opera this summer, and mezzo-soprano Marta Fontanals-Simmons, who makes her Royal Opera House debut this season as Hel in the world premiere of Gavin Higgins’ The Monstrous Child at the Linbury Theatre. Harpist Oliver Wass, the 2016 winner, continues to perform a busy schedule of solo recitals and concerts with the award-winning Pelléas Ensemble, which was formed at Guildhall School, and 2017 winner Josep-Ramon Olivé was selected as a 2018/19 Rising Star artist by the European Concert Hall Organisation (ECHO). Last year’s winner, pianist Joon Yoon, is enjoying exciting chamber music collaborations, with upcoming performances including a cello/piano recital at the Korean Cultural Centre in London. In March 2019, he is one of four finalists competing in the prestigious Prix du Piano Bern.

**Finalists’ programmes**

**Ema Nikolovska (Mezzo-Soprano)**
*With Piano (Dylan Perez)*
- Purcell
- Schubert
- Wolf
- Medtner
- Rodrigo

- *Sweeter than Roses*
- *An die Entfernte*
- *Lied vom Winde*
- *Twilight*
- *Un Home, San Antonio!*

*With Orchestra*
- Gounod
- Britten
- Mahler
- Mozart

- *Que fais-tu, blanche tourterelle* (Romeo et Juliette)
- *Give him this Orchid* (The Rape of Lucretia)
- *Ich atmet’ einen linden Duft* (Rückert-Lieder)
- *Parto, parto* (La Clemenza di Tito)

**William Thomas (Baritone)**
*With Piano (Michael Pandya)*
- Wolf
- Poulenc
- Traditional
- Loewe

- *Gebet* (Mörike-Lieder)
- *Mazurka FP145*
- *Phil the fluter’s ball*
- *Edward (3 Balladen, Op.1)*

*With Orchestra*
- Rossini
- Mussorgsky
- Rachmaninov

- *La Calunnia* (Il barbiere di Siviglia)
- *Song of the Flea*
- *Aleko Cavatina* (Aleko)

**Samantha Clarke (Soprano)**
*With Piano (Michael Pandya)*
- R.Strauss

- *Das Rosenband* (from 4 Lieder Op. 36)
R. Strauss  
*Schlechtes Wetter (from 5 Kleine Lieder Op. 69)*

Poulenc  
*Fleurs & Violon (From Fiançailles pour rire PF101)*

Copland  
*The Little Horses*

Rachmaninov  
*Spring Waters*

**With Orchestra**

Mozart  
*Come scoglio (Così fan tutte)*

Puccini  
*Quando men vo (La bohème)*

Stravinsky  
*No word from Tom (The Rake’s Progress)*

**James Newby (Baritone)**

**With Piano (Panaretos Kyriatzidis)**

Warlock  
*Yarmouth Fair*

Liszt  
*Die drei Zigeuner*

Duparc  
*Phidylé*

Butterworth  
*Is My Team Ploughing (A Shropshire Lad)*

**With Orchestra**

Handel  
*Cara Pianta (Apollo e Dafne)*

Mahler  
*Revelge (Des Knaben Wunderhorn)*

Mascagni  
*Quelle è una strada (Le Maschere)*

**Tickets:** £20, £15 (£5 concessions), available from today from Barbican Box Office: 020 7638 8891 [barbican.org.uk](http://barbican.org.uk)

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[www.gsmd.ac.uk](http://www.gsmd.ac.uk)

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**Notes to Editors**

**Finalists’ biographies**

**Ema Nikolovska**

Ema Nikolovska studies on the Opera Course at Guildhall School of Music & Drama, and previously completed the Artist Masters programme. Her principal teachers have included Professors Rudolf Piernay and Susan McCulloch in London, and Helga Tucker in Toronto, Canada. Ema was born in Skopje, Macedonia, and has spent most of her life in Toronto, where she completed an undergraduate degree in violin performance on full scholarship at The Glenn Gould School of The Royal Conservatory of Music with professors Paul Kantor and Barry Shiffman.
Ema is the winner of the Guildhall Wigmore Prize with pianist Dylan Perez (resulting in a debut evening recital at Wigmore Hall on 18 May, 2019), winner of the Singers’ Prize at the 2018 Gerald Moore Award, and winner of the Second Place Singer Prize at the International Helmut Deutsch Lied Competition with pianist Michael Sikich in September 2018. Ema also won the 2018 Susan Longfield Prize at Guildhall, and First Prize and Audience Prize at the 25th Maureen Lehane Vocal Awards in Wigmore Hall.

Ema has performed in masterclasses and recitals at the Toronto Summer Music Academy and Festival, Britten-Pears Young Artists Programme, Music Academy of Villecroze, Les Azuriales, the Franz-Schubert-Institut (on full scholarship supported by a Jacqueline Desmarais Grant), and Thomas Hampson’s Lied Akademie at the Heidelberger Frühling Music Festival. Recital work has included performances at the Oxford Lieder Festival, Graham Johnson’s Song Guild, Side-by-Side with the Prince Consort in Wigmore Hall, and a Schubert Lieder recital with Malcolm Martineau in Berlin’s Pierre Boulez Saal.

Ema is grateful to the Shipley Rudge Scholarship and London Syndicate for supporting her Opera Course studies, and to the Countess of Munster Musical Trust as a recipient of their 2018/19 ‘Star Award’.

William Thomas

William Thomas was born in Harpenden, and started singing at the age of 17 with Helen Templeton. In 2013 he gained a place at Guildhall School of Music & Drama (BMus) and is currently studying under the guidance of John Evans.

His operatic roles include Bass Quartet, Malcolm Williamson’s English Eccentrics, British Youth Opera, Forrester in Janáček’s Cunning Little Vixen at Guildhall (abridged), Calmon (cover) in Jonathan Dove’s The Little Green Swallow at the Peacock Theatre with British Youth Opera, September 2014 and Sarastro in Broadstone Opera’s production of The Magic Flute, April 2015. He also played the role of Usher in Gilbert and Sullivan’s Trial by Jury with Winterbourne Opera, February 2015.

In April 2017 Thomas is joining the Garsington Chorus and covering roles in Pelléas et Mélisande and Semele.

He competed in the Kathleen Ferrier Society Bursary Competition for Young Singers October 2014 and received the Joyce Budd 2nd Prize. He has sung in a masterclass with Peter Rose in February 2015. Thomas is regularly involved in many choirs including Temple Church London, St Bride’s Fleet Street, Royal Hospital Chelsea and Caledonian Voices. He has performed in concert at St Albans Abbey with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Most recently, he performed as a soloist in Vaughan Williams’ Serenade to Music at the Birmingham Symphony Hall with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, which was broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in January 2016. In August 2017 Thomas sang with the Monteverdi Choir under Sir John Elliot Gardiner at the BBC Proms.

Thomas continues his studies on the Vocal Masters course at Guildhall School and is supported by Help Musicians UK and Guildhall School.
**Samantha Clarke**

Samantha Clarke is a British/Australian soprano studying with Yvonne Kenny in her second year on the Opera Course at Guildhall School of Music & Drama as a Baroness de Turckheim, Tait Memorial Trust, Countess of Munster Trust and Help Musicians scholar.

Samantha completed an Advanced Postgraduate Diploma and Intensive Masters of Music at the Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM), as a Sir John Fisher Foundation and Independent Opera scholar, under the tutelage of Mary Plazas.

Samantha is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Leverhulme Royal Northern College of Music Award, the Dame Eva Turner Award and the Michael and Joyce Kennedy Award for the singing of Strauss. Samantha was awarded a 2017 RNCM Gold Medal and the Nora Goodridge Developing Artist Award through the Australian Music Foundation for 2017/18 and 2018/19. Samantha is also privileged to be a Samling Institute scholar.

Samantha is very keen to explore more of the recital platform and has performed in venues such as Wigmore Hall and the Foundling Museum.

Roles include: Helena *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Guildhall), Fiordiligi *Così fan tutte* (Guildhall), Anne Trulove *The Rake’s Progress* (BYO) Anna Gomez *The Consul – Menotti* (Guildhall), Theodora *Theodora* (RNCM), Donna Elvira Don Giovanni (BYO), Fiordiligi *Così fan tutte* (RNCM), Pamina *Die Zauberflöte* (Longborough Festival Opera), First Lady *Die Zauberflöte* (LFO), Countess Cover *Le Nozze di Figaro* (LFO), Beth *Little Women* Mark Adamo (WAAPA).

Upcoming engagements include *Georgiana* (Buxton International Festival), Musetta *La Bohème* (Opera North).

**James Newby**

British baritone James Newby was the winner of the 2016 Kathleen Ferrier Award: that same year he was the recipient of the Wigmore Hall/Independent Opera Voice Fellowship, and in 2015 was awarded the Richard Tauber Prize (for best interpretation of a Schubert Lied) and overall Third Prize at the Wigmore Hall/Kohn International Song Competition. In 2017 he was awarded the Trinity Gold Medal by the board of Trinity Laban Conservatoire as well as the OAE Rising Stars prize. James is a BBC New Generation Artist from 2018–2020.

In 2017 James was a Jerwood Young Artist at Glyndebourne Festival Opera and appeared in *La Traviata* (Messenger), *Hamlet* (Marcellus/Player 4, world premiere), *La Clemenza di Tito* and *Don Pasquale* (Notary), for which he won the prestigious John Christie Award.

James is a keen recitalist and has performed at the Newbury Spring Festival and Leeds Lieder Festival with Joseph Middleton, (recorded for BBC Radio 3); Perth International Arts Festival, Australia; Oxford Lieder Festival with Eugene Asti; and Schumann’s *Dichterliebe* at Trinity Laban.

In the 2016/17 season James sang the role of Mercurio in Cavalli’s *La Calisto* with La Nuova Musica and David Bates, and made his BBC Proms debut in Vaughan Williams’ *Serenade to Music* conducted by Sakari Oramo.
Recent/future highlights include the role of Christus in the world premiere of Sally Beamish’s *The Judas Passion*, a staged Bach *St John Passion* with Bilbao Orkestra Sinfonikoa, directed by Calixto Bieito, Count Almaviva *Le nozze di Figaro* for Nevill Holt Opera, and debuts with the Gabrieli Consort, RTE National Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century. In 18/19 he makes his debut at Théâtre du Châtelet in a revival of Bieito’s *St John Passion* and at La Monnaie Brussels for Howard Moody’s *Push*. With the OAE he sings the role of Apollo in Handel’s *Apollo e Dafne* under Jonathan Cohen, and *St Matthew Passion* under John Butt. James will also perform at the Ryedale, Chiltern Arts and Three Choirs Festivals and makes his solo recital debut at Wigmore Hall in 2019.

James is a recipient of the Musicians’ Company Saloman Seelig Award, and is generously supported by the Drake Calleja Trust.