



National Society of Arts and Letters

Supporting young talent in the performing, visual, and literary arts since 1944



National Newsletter Summer 2024

We had a great time at our 80th Annual Meeting and Musical Theatre Competition in Champaign-Urbana in May. It was so good to see everyone! And something special for me happened there—I was elected your national president for 2024-2026 and I am so happy to serve, both our members and the young artists we support.

President Mary Ann Osborne presided and conducted our business during the general session. We met Paul Wigley, the president of the newly formed Central Iowa Chapter. We learned our budgetary outlook is brighter. And, we are starting three new initiatives. Hurrah!

- First is the Morgan-Lee/Peery Art Scholarship which will mirror the Career Opportunity Awards that we have available for past annual award winners. We will ask past Winston 2-D Art scholarship winners to apply for funds.
- Second is the National Society of Arts and Letters Writing Scholarship. This scholarship will be like the Winston scholarships, reaching out to writers from the ages of 16 to not yet 23. Brennen Edwards, a new member of the Indiana Chapter, will be the national chair. She has won three NSAL awards from the Indiana Chapter for her playwriting. Brochures will be sent out later this summer.
- Third, Judy Martorelli announced the Martorelli Classical Voice Scholarship. More on page 3.

NSAL continues to move forward into the age of technology. Online registration for the annual meeting was used for the first time this year. It will be simplified for next year, allowing you to choose your meal entrees and to report any food allergies, etc. Our Executive Committee, Board of Directors and Board of Trustees met via Zoom during the month preceding the annual meeting. Using Zoom for those meetings lessens the amount of time and resources we need to conduct an annual meeting, while concentrating on spending more time to enjoy our talented artists.

I am so proud of our Illinois Chapter. President Sarah Wigley and her team, including Emmie Fisher, Allison Moody and Bruce Bonds, created an incredible event. Everything down to the tiniest detail was perfect.

You will find much more about annual meeting activities and other NSAL news in the rest of the newsletter.

Best always,
Twyla Martins
National President
trmarts@mac.com



Back row: Albert Sterner, Allison Dorsey, Jose Andres Uribe Garza, Piper Selah, Parnassus Funk, Bridget Johnson, Christian Clausnitzer. Front row: TJ Pursley, Brianna Frehner, Bryanna Batts, Rachel Oppmann, Joseph Liberti, Molly Munn

And the Winners Are...

Thirteen outstanding musical theatre performers gathered in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, on May 15 and 16 for the National Society of Arts and Letters 80th Annual Meeting and Musical Theatre Competition. They came from as far away as Hawaii and as close as Illinois.

On Thursday, May 16, the finalists were taken to the Tryon Festival Theatre at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. They drew numbers for the order in which they would perform. They took to the stage and got a feel for the space. They also met with the accompanist, Carl Pantle, master's candidate in vocal accompanying and coaching at the University of Illinois. Carl already had their music but they were able to run through it with him.

Performances began Friday morning, May 17. The morning was devoted to the finalists' two songs and one monologue and the afternoon featured the dance class, led by Krisha Marcano, one of the judges.

The excitement and suspense continued until Saturday evening when the six winners were announced at the final banquet.

The winners are:

First place, the National Society of Arts & Letters Award, Albert Sterner, Illinois Chapter, \$15,000.

Second place, the Derek Oppen Award, Christian Clausnitzer, Ohio River Valley Chapter, \$12,000.

Third place, the Edith Bauman Award, Parnassus Funk, St. Louis Chapter, \$8,000.

Fourth place, the Bill Thunhurst Award, Allison Dorsey, Pittsburgh Chapter, \$5,000.

Fifth place, the Mary Jane Cultra Award, Jose Andres Uribe Garza, Arizona Chapter, \$3,000.

Honorable mention, Anne and Sam Martorelli Award, Rachel Oppmann, Alabama Chapter, \$2,000.

The top three winners, Albert, Christian, and Parnassus, performed again at the banquet.



From right: Albert Sterner, first place; Christian Clausnitzer, second place; Parnassus Funk, third place; Allison Dorsey, fourth place; Jose Andres Uribe Garza, fifth place, and Rachel Oppmann, honorable mention.

The four judges:



- Aisha Jackson made her Broadway debut in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*. She's gone on to be in the original Broadway casts of *Once Upon a One More Time*, *Paradise Square*, *Waitress*, and *Frozen*.
- Joe Deer is an award-winning director and choreographer of more than 200 productions—from Off-Broadway, London, regional, summer stock and university stages. He is former Chair and Artistic Director of the Department of Theatre, Dance, and Motion Pictures at Wright State University.
- Kevin Stites most recently finished a guest conductor position with the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, music directing a production of *City of Angels*. Last summer he served as curator/conductor for *Everybody Else*, *A Stephen Sondheim Celebration*, at the Hollywood Bowl.
- Krisha Marcano is an innovative theatre educator, choreographer, and entrepreneur with more than 30 years of experience in the performing arts. She has recently been appointed Dean of Theater at Boston Conservatory at Berklee.

Dorothy Lincoln Smith Classical Voice Winners



Veronique Filloux

For eight years Dorothy Lincoln-Smith has been providing awards for classical singers from the ages of 23 to 31. These awards have picked up where the Winston Voice Scholarships left off, age wise. Dorothy's commitment of eight years at \$10,000 a year has come to an end in 2024

- Thank you, Dorothy, for your generosity

The winners for 2024 are:

- First place: Veronique Filloux, Arizona Chapter, \$5,000.
- Second place: Joseph Parrish, Washington, D.C. Chapter, \$3,000.
- Third place: Maggie Renee, Florida Chapter, \$2,000.

NSAL members were able to enjoy the incredible voice of Joseph Parrish, on tape, at the Presidents' Luncheon. Joseph is currently an artist diploma candidate in opera studies at The Julliard School.

Judges for the 2024 competition were:

- Adam Turner, Director of Virginia Opera.
- Brian DeMaris, Director of Opera at Arizona State University and Chair of the Metropolitan Auditions in Arizona.
- Jeannine Wagner, Director of Wagner Chorale, and Director of Church Music in Fillmore, California.

Judy Martorelli, second vice-president and New Jersey Chapter president, will be funding these classical voice awards for the foreseeable future. Awards of \$10,000 will be given in 2025.

Winston Classical Voice Scholarships

Judy Martorelli, national chair of the Shirley Rabb Winston Scholarship in Classical Voice, reports another successful year. A total of \$16,000 is being awarded to seven young singers, two in the 19 to 22 age group and five in the 16 to 18 age group. Fourteen chapters participated in the competition. There were 24 finalists: 18 females and six males. Each chapter is encouraged to submit two finalists.

Jordan McCready, representing the Central Iowa Chapter, received the top award and sang at the reception at the University of Illinois president's house on May 17. She received a very warm welcome and enjoyed her interactions with both members and the musical theatre finalists.

Those receiving scholarships are:

Ages 19-22

- First Place, Jordan McCready, Central Iowa Chapter, \$5,000.
- Second Place, Jack Hicks, New Jersey Chapter, \$3,000.

Ages 16-18

- First Place, Olivia Glod, Illinois Chapter, \$3,000.
- Second Place, Tiara Abraham, Indiana Chapter, \$2,000.
- Encouragement Awards: Caitlyn Towell, Illinois Chapter; Catherine Creed, New Jersey Chapter, and Laura Mendez, Florida Chapter. Each will receive \$1,000..



Jordan McCready

All seven chose to use their scholarships for further education—tuition, voice lessons, or summer programs. The money is not given directly to the winners. Doni Lystra, past NSAL national president, administers the Winston money and issues checks to the proper people or organizations.

The Judges for the competition:

- Justyna Giermola is a voice professor at New Jersey City University and the Ridgewood Conservatory.
- Marco Nistico is the Artistic Administrator for Sarasota Opera. He spent two decades singing baritone roles in opera houses worldwide.
- Martin Sedak is chair of the music department and Director of Music at Keio Academy of New York and was recently named Artistic Director and Conductor for the Masterwork Chorus of New Jersey.

Winston 2D Art Scholarships

Twyla Martins and Norman Brown, co-chairs of the Naomi Rabb Winston Scholarship Award in Two-Dimensional Art, announced the winners for 2024 in April. The competition was intense, Twyla said, and a total of 39 young artists entered their work, with 28 artists in the 16-18 age group and just 11 in the 19-22 age group. The \$16,000 was divided evenly between the groups but more awards were awarded in the younger group.

Top winner, Ava Elizabeth Liberace, joined NSAL members in Champaign-Urbana to present her winning artwork.

Those receiving scholarships are:

Ages 19-22

- Ava Elizabeth Liberace, Washington, D.C. Chapter, \$4,000.
- Kathryn Ann Blommel, Central Illinois Chapter, \$2,000.
- Jordan A. Smajstria, Kentucky Chapter, \$1,000.
- Inga Jewell Wilhelmy, Ohio River Valley Chapter, \$1,000.

Ages 16-18

- Sophia Congyu Sun, Birmingham Chapter, \$2,500.
- Liana Minsuh Kim, Washington, D.C. Chapter, \$1,500.
- Cailyn Emily Choi, Arkansas Chapter, \$1,000.
- Jaimie Kim, Members at Large, \$1,000.
- Abbie Ahn, Birmingham Chapter, \$1,000.
- Phoenix S. Kooper, Kentucky Chapter, \$1,000.

Congratulations to all the winners and best wishes as you pursue your art career and graduate studies.

The Judges for the competition:

- H. Gray Park, BFA, Maryland Institute College of Art. He is a member of the new school of American Landscape Plein Air painters.
- Mari Murrer is a multi-faceted artist, specializing in painting, drawing, and ceramics, who has taught art at all instructional levels. She received her MFA in painting from Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York.
- Polly Seip met renowned maritime artist John Stobart when she was 14 and immediately developed an affinity for maritime art. She graduated from the Lyme Academy of Fine Arts in Old Lyme, Connecticut.



Ava Elizabeth Liberace

Kind words from Ava



Candlelit, Pencil and Chalk

I wanted to send my deepest, deepest thanks for your support throughout the entire NSAL conference. You have created an incredible space of warmth. I really cannot express how memorable an experience those days were in Champaign. I'm very grateful to have met Jordan (McCready)—such a light of a person—and to learn from all the musical theatre contestants.

The members of NSAL were also incredibly affirming; I have never felt this inspired to pursue art professionally, and I can't wait to bring the motivation I got from it all into next year's competition! I hope to keep in touch with you and NSAL in the future, and thank you again for having me in Champaign. It's been an honor to get to know you. Warmly,

Ava Liberace (Winston Art Scholarship recipient), Washington, D.C.

University of Illinois President Hosts NSAL Members



Front row, left to right: Molly Munn, Indiana; Piper Selah, Arkansas; Allison Dorsey, Pittsburgh; Jordan McCready, Winston Voice winner, Iowa; back row: Roberta Johnson, University of Illinois president's wife; TJ Pursley, Florida; Bridget Johnson, Iowa; Jose Andres Uribe Garza, Arizona; Christian Clausnitzer, Ohio River Valley; University of Illinois President Timothy L. Killeen; Rachel Oppmann, Alabama; Albert Sterner, Illinois; Bryanna Batts, Washington, D.C.; seated: Parnassus Funk, St. Louis and Brianna Fehner, Hawaii. Not shown, Joey Liberty, New Jersey. Ava Liberace, Washington, D.C.



Sarh Wigley, Illinois Chapter President, with U of I president and his wife

On Friday, May 17, University of Illinois President Timothy L. Killeen and his wife Roberta Johnson welcomed National Society of Arts and Letters members and finalists to their gracious 14,000-square-foot Georgian Revival home on the U of I campus.

It wasn't the first visit for a few of us. Charles Altman, Ruth Albright, and Twyla Martins had enjoyed the president's hospitality 20 years ago when NSAL had its first musical theatre competition, also in Champaign-Urbana. It was a different president, of course.

James J. Stukel was the president of the University of Illinois in 2004.

But the Midwestern hospitality was the same and a lovely evening was had by all.

The president's home is both a residence for the president and his family as well as a receiving point for visiting dignitaries, alumni, community groups and supporters. We, of course, identified with the visiting dignitaries group. When I commented to the president's wife what a wonderful house this must be to live in, she readily agreed but pointed out that a large staff arrives at 8 a.m. and you can't hang out for breakfast in your bathrobe.

The entertainment for the evening was provided by Jordan McCready, the top winner of a Winston Voice scholarship for 2024. She is a mezzo soprano and is currently completing her master's degree in opera at the San Francisco Conservatory. She represented the brand-new Central Iowa Chapter. While Jordan particularly loves performing opera, she also enjoys fostering her love of musical theatre and folk music. She fit in so well with all the musical theatre finalists who are pictured here.—Ruth Albright



National Officers Elected for 2024-2026

National Society of Arts and Letters officers were elected for 2024-2026 at the General Session on Thursday, May 16. Their terms began at the end of the Awards Banquet on Saturday, May 18.

The national officers are:

- President: Twyla Martins, Kentucky Chapter
- First Vice-President: Gail Fisher, Arizona Chapter
- Second Vice-President: Judy Martorelli, New Jersey Chapter
- National Secretary: Mindy Rossi-Stabler, Pittsburgh Chapter
- Treasurer: Ron Ivey, Washington, D.C. Chapter

Members of the Nominating Committee were Anne C. White, Chair, Arizona Chapter; Sherry Henderson, Arkansas Chapter, and Norman Brown, Pittsburgh Chapter.

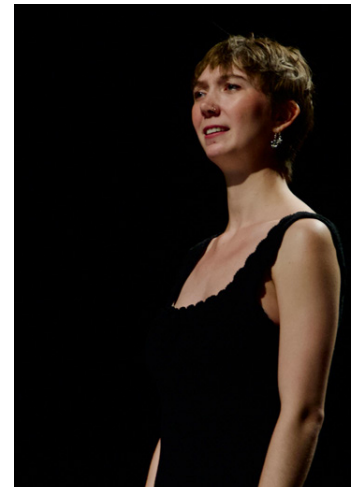
A big thank you to the national officers for 2022-2024: Mary Ann Osborne, President, Ohio River Valley Chapter; Judy Asselta, First Vice-President, Florida Chapter; Sarah Wigley, Second Vice-President, Illinois Chapter; Edgar Russell III, Recording Secretary, Washington, D.C. Chapter, and Ron Ivey, Washington, D.C. Chapter.

Photo Memories from the Annual Meeting 2024

The link to the google drive with all the photographs is

https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/13BY5pCLBTfvbSzQo3GNKhrOMEf_1hGPB





Thank you to Photographers Adelia Parker-Castro and Sherry Henderson.

SHARE YOUR NEWS

Please send information about your chapter and award winners to newsletter editors Ruth Albright and Twyla Martins at ruthalbright@yahoo.com and trmarts@mac.com