



A NEW GENERATION

The American Traditions Vocal Competition Gears Up For Its Best Year Yet

By Kristyn Fielding

The week of February 18 is sure to be an incredible one. The American Traditions Vocal Competition (ATC) will return to Skidaway Island United Methodist Church (SIUMC), for its highly anticipated 26th anniversary season. With an outstanding lineup of 28 contestants, three new judges and one new pianist – as well as a new venue in downtown Savannah – the ATC is enthusiastically embracing a new era for this annual event.

New to the ATC board this season is Kellee Haselton, who moved to the Landings from Kalamazoo, Michigan in August of 2017, with her husband, Don, and their dog, Ella Fitzgerald. The Haseltons have four children – Jennifer, Justin, Sarah and Nat – and two beautiful granddaughters – Claire and Anna. Kellee recalls her son, Nat, telling her last year he was coming to Savannah for a vocal competition. His friend, Mikki Sodergren, artistic director of the ATC, had encouraged him to apply. He was one of the 28 quarterfinalists in the 2018 ATC, winning the People's Choice award and performing a song at the finals. The experience opened Kellee's eyes to the caliber of the contestants and the quality of this exciting competi-



Kellee Haselton



Mikki Sodergren

tion. “As a professional musician for much of my life, I couldn't believe that the ATC had not been on my radar at all,” she says. “I attended the quarterfinals to hear my son sing and was thoroughly impressed with the accomplished level of talent by – not only – the vocalists, but the pianists as well. I love the ‘all-American music’ element of the ATC and how it stretched the musicianship of the vocalists, as each has to sing in nine different genres. As a musician with a varied background and a vocal teacher, I completely embraced the surprising virtuosity and diversity of the finalists. What a wonderful way to celebrate vocalists who can sing all styles of music!”

Kellee grew up in a musical family, and is a classically trained pianist and vocalist. She taught general and vocal music for 30 years at all levels, most recently in the musical theatre department of Western Michigan University, and the Gagie School in Kalamazoo. Her first husband – father of Nat and Sarah, Steve Zegee – was a Steinway Artist and internationally known jazz pianist. Kellee has also had her own original choral compositions published.

“I have music directed dozens of shows for community, collegiate and professional Actors’ Equity, and continue to teach voice and piano from my home,” she says. “I volunteer my piano skills for the Jewish Women’s Alliance of the Landings and Chatham County Public Schools. And, of course, I volunteer for the ATC and am thrilled to be on its board.”

The ATC is lucky to have the Haselton family as enthusiastic supporters. Don works as CEO for the 600 Group, a London-based multinational, and is currently its director of mergers and acquisitions. This year, the family is housing Hannah Zazzaro, a New York-based vocalist and friend of Nat’s. “We are so excited to get to know her and cheer her on,” Kellee says.

The ATC celebrates and preserves all styles

of classic American music. The non-profit organization promotes these songs by producing an annual vocal competition in Savannah, awarding \$35,000 in cash prizes. Committed to serving the greater Savannah community, the ATC provides musical education, exposure and performances for Savannah locals of all ages. Singers are required to prepare three rounds of three different songs, all written by American composers, in order to span nine different genres of music – exposing singers to the history, roots, key players and stylistic nuances of each. The ATC recognizes these a wide variety of American music: opera, musical theatre, Hollywood, jazz, folk, country, pop/rock singer-songwriters (1980-today), art song, gospel, songs of Johnny Mercer, blues, religious music, popular music of 1950-1980, Great American Songbook, and cabaret.

“The ATC operates at the highest level of musicality and it is all right here for our community,” Kellee says. “I love that the ATC partners with the Savannah Voice Festival as well as the Savannah Philharmonic, and that the ATC is branching out in new areas. Our ATC on Tybee Concert series was a fun collaboration with the Tybee Post Theater.”

Kellee is a big fan of the ATC’s community outreach, witnessing it firsthand when she and



Nat Zagree performs at last year’s American Traditions Vocal Competition

Make Travel Amazing!



When we want to make travel extra special, we call Amy Paderewski and the team at Four Seasons Travel. Over the years, Amy has booked for us an amazing array of places to stay... from a beautiful palazzo on the Grand Canal in Venice to Hobbit Houses in New Zealand to a former convent that is now a five-star hotel. The recent Peruvian tour she arranged for our family included the majesty of the Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu, but alternatively the local culture, even a chance to make “friends” with llamas and alpacas! When we want to make travel amazing, we call Amy!

~ Cary Negley and family ~

We are conveniently located in The Village • 598-8000

Crystal Nails Salon

BEST OF SAVANNAH

4 MANICURE / PEDICURE
YEARS IN A ROW!



7601 Waters Ave. • 912.356.1525
102 E. Liberty St • 912.349.3066

(Drayton Towers, across from the Desoto)



AMERICAN TRADITIONS VOCAL COMPETITION

Monday, February 18: The American Traditions Competition kicks off 7:30 p.m. with a Judge's Concert at Skidway Island United Methodist Church (SIUMC). Guests will enjoy an evening of music with performances by all three ATC judges. Tickets to this concert cost \$30 each.

Tuesday, February 19 and Wednesday, February 20: At 4 and 7:30 p.m., at the SIUMC, 28 quarterfinalists perform three diverse American songs. Half of the contestants will compete on Tuesday, and the remaining 14 will perform Wednesday. Day passes for the quarterfinals cost \$25.

Thursday, February 21: The 12 semifinalists will sing their next set of three songs at 4 and 7:30 p.m., at SIUMC. Semifinals passes are \$35.

Friday, February 22: New for 2018, the People's Choice award winner from each round will also perform in the finals, as well as the five shortlisted for the gold, silver and bronze medals, at 8 p.m. at the Trustees Theater, 216 E. Broughton Street. General seating tickets are \$40; premium seating is \$55.

To learn more about the ATC or to see these finalists sing their hearts out to win the coveted medals, please visit www.american-traditionscompetition.com.

Secure your assets.
Protect your future.

As one of the nation's largest independent insurance brokers, we understand successful individuals face special challenges when it comes to insurance planning. That's why we take a holistic approach to your insurance needs and get to know you and your personal goals, dreams, priorities and plans for the future. Experience peace of mind knowing you have protection for the things you and your family value most. McGriffInsurance.com



Courtney Marie Fowler
Director of Personal Lines and Private Client Services
912-544-5058 | Courtney.Fowler@McGriffInsurance.com

© 2019, McGriff Insurance Services, Inc. All rights reserved.

Sodergren performed in Chatham County Public Schools. "Introducing young people to the unique musical opportunity provided by the ATC was extremely gratifying," she says.

Kellee is most excited for the first-ever ATC Student Vocal Competition. As part of ATC's mission to provide education for students in the arts, Sodergren and the board will bring back ATC singers to train students in different styles, culminating in a one-day competition. "Stay tuned for more details," she says.

Looking to the future, former ATC gold medalist and current artistic director, Mikki Sodergren, shares some new aspects of this year's competition and plans for more. "We have three new fabulous judges, including award-winning jazz musician, Melba Joyce; American composer, conductor and music administrator, Michael Ching, who is also the Composer in Residence for the Savannah VOICE Festival; and Tony Award-winning Broadway performer, Phillip Boykin."

Returning to the 2019 competition as emcee is Rebecca Odoriso, the talented 2015 ATC Silver Medalist, 2015 and 2016 Ben Tucker Jazz Award winner and the 2016 Johnny Mercer Award winner. Two crowd-pleasing pianists will also return: David Shenton will celebrate 10 years of piano collaboration with the competition, and Wilson Southerland will join the festivities for his sixth year. Accompanying contestants for his first time will be accomplished pianist, Andrew Sotomayor.

The accomplishments of some of the singers from each round – each selected from among applicants worldwide – conveys the caliber and diversity of this year's contestants.

Round One: Chloe Legrand is a soprano bluegrass musician from Sparta, Kentucky. At 14, she formed a bluegrass band called Kentucky Sassafras. In 2008, the band was chosen by the International Bluegrass Music Association to represent bluegrass music on a tour in Japan. Legrand formed another bluegrass band called Blue Belles, and is now a student of voice performance at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

Round Two: Cyrille-Aimée Daudel ventured from sneaking out to sing in gypsy encampments and on street corners in Europe, to dazzling audiences at the world's most prestigious jazz festivals and performing on Broadway. She then braved the notoriously tough audiences at New York's Apollo Theater, and was described a "rising star in the galaxy of jazz singers" by the New York Times.

Round Three: George Lovett is a recording artist and performer. He's been seen on Fox's "Showtime at the Apollo," and was among the top 10 in season 13 of "American Idol." Cur-

rently, he is finishing his MFA in performing arts at SCAD.

Round Four: Jacob Keith Watson is an actor/singer, Arkansas native and avid Notre Dame football fan. Some of his favorite credits include the Tony-nominated/winning revivals of "Carousel," "Hello, Dolly!" and "Violet." Watson has also been seen on Broadway in "Amélie," "The Phantom of the Opera," and the acclaimed Encores! revival of "1776," and the international tour of "Chicago."

A Week Pass to all performances – starting at \$154 – is the best value available to ticket buyers. With a Week Pass, any unused tickets can be donated daily for students to enjoy concerts. "I can promise that all who attend any part of the ATC will leave inspired, with their musical cup overflowing," Kellee Haselton says. "I believe that the arts stimulate creativity within a community and help it find common connection. Skidaway Island and the Landings are full of successful, polished, artful people and creative thinkers who will appreciate, applaud and enjoy the talented musicians of the ATC. The vocalists come from all over the world and leave the ATC experience savoring our Savannah and Southern hospitality."

COASTAL Restoration & Remodelers



Commercial/Residential
New Homes
Kitchens & Baths
Additions & Custom Designs
Flooring
Decks & Porches
Windows & Siding
Roofing & Gutters

**CALL US TODAY
912.313.3252**

THERMiva®

Experience Feminine Rejuvenation &
Bladder Control **without** Surgery

Ask to speak to our Nurse Terri!

Schedule a 15-minute complimentary consult!

- ✓ Limit Dryness & Itching
- ✓ Limit Bladder Leakage
- ✓ Tighten Skin Inside & Out
- ✓ Improve Libido – Restore Your Intimate Life

Call 912-354-4411 to Book Today!

Visit www.NewYouthMedicalSpa.com to learn more!

