

It's News to Me

BY [JANOS GEREBEN \(/AUTHOR/JANOS-GEREBEN\)](#), *March 11, 2017*

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Met Auditions finalists: Kyle van Schoonhoven, Vanessa Vasquez, Samantha Hankey, Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen, Natalie Image, Cody Quattlebaum, Kirsten MacKinnon, Gabriella Reyes de

Merolini Take Manhattan (At Least at the Met Auditions)

Along with San Francisco Opera's Merola Program and Adler Fellowship, the **Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions** (<http://www.metopera.org/about/auditions/nationalcouncil/>) serve as catapults for young talent into musical stardom. Usually there is some overlap between the programs East and West, but this year is a majority score: five of the nine Met Auditions finalists are current or former Merolini:

Samantha Hankey, mezzo, Eastern Region — 2017 Merola

Natalie Image, soprano, Western Region — 2017 Merola (and S.F. Conservatory)

Aryeh Nussbaum-Cohen, countertenor, Eastern Region — 2016 Merola

Cody Quattlebaum, bass-baritone, Eastern Region — 2016 Merola

Kyle van Schoonhoven, tenor, Central Region — 2016 Merola

Also

Gabriella Reyes de Ramírez, soprano, New England Region

Richard Smagur, tenor, Central Region

Vanessa Vasquez, soprano, Middle Atlantic Region

Kirsten MacKinnon, soprano, Middle Atlantic Region



Auditions finalist Kyle van Schoonhoven sang at last year's Merola finale | *Credit: Kristen Loken*

The **Auditions finals will be held at the Met** (<https://www.metopera.org/Season/2016-17-Season-Gala/national-council-grand-finals/>), beginning at noon Pacific Time on Sunday, March 19. These finalists are **already winners** (<https://www.facebook.com/MetOpera/videos/10158485164090533/>), regardless of the final ranking because they have reached this stage out of some 1,200 singers in the competition.

Another local presence at the finals will be conductor Nicola Luisotti, outgoing music director of the San Francisco Opera. As usual, prior Auditions winners will also perform at the finals, including Amber Wagner, Jamie Barton, Michael Fabiano; the host will be Renée Fleming. The event will not be streamed live, which is a shame, but a video may be published later.

Meanwhile, good luck to them and everybody as **Winter Storm Stella** (<https://weather.com/storms/winter/news/winter-storm-stella-northeast-blizzard-warning-noreaster-snow-forecast-march-2017>) is hitting the city!



The Gang's All Here: Earplayers of Earplay | *Credit: Mark Shigenaga*

Earplay Fare for the 32nd Season: Music of Our Time

Earplay conductor Mary Chun (<https://www.sfoyo.org/events-calendar/artist->

[Earplay conductor Mary Chun](https://www.sioy.org/events-calendar/artist-spotlight/earplay-maestro-helps-to-export-broadway-to-china) (<https://www.sioy.org/events-calendar/artist-spotlight/earplay-maestro-helps-to-export-broadway-to-china>), who is leading the organization's next concert, **on March 20 in the ODC Theater** (<http://www.earplay.org/www/homepage.php>), says it's "unusual good fortune to present two exquisite Toru Takemitsu pieces that include harp in the program." The late Japanese composer, featured prominently on Earplay's current, 32nd season, fits in with the second of the season's triptych titled "Air, Wind, Water."

With the participation of harpist **Meredith Clark** (<http://earplay.org/www/bios.php?id=ClarkM>), the "Wind" concert's Takemitsu works are the 1992 *And then I knew 'twas Wind* for flute, viola, and harp, and the 1989 *Toward the Sea III* for alto flute and harp. The two works demonstrate well what **The Guardian**



Mary Chun leads Earplay | Credit: Aislinn Scofield

(<https://www.theguardian.com/music/tomserviceblog/2013/feb/11/contemporary-music-guide-toru-takemitsu>) has called "understated and crystalline compositions combining elements of his [Takemitsu's] own Japanese traditions with the Western modernism he loved so much."

The concert, says Chun, includes the West Coast premiere of the 2015 *Insight II*

for flute, bass clarinet, violin, cello, and piano by Stephen Yip, winner of the 2016 Earplay Donald Aird Composers Competition. The guest artist performing in Yip's work is pianist Keisuke Nakagoshi.

There is also a world premiere, of the revised version of Linda Bouchard's *Second Survival* (2009–2016) for alto flute, bass clarinet, violin, viola, cello, and prepared piano; and Heidi Jacob's 2012 *Metamorphosis I* for cello and piano.

The first "Air, Wind, Water," concert was the season-opening event in January (which also included two works by Takemitsu), and the "Water" concert will be on May 15, featuring Takemitsu's 1993 *Between Tides* for violin, cello, and piano; three world premieres — by Kyle Bruckmann, Cindy Cox, and Eric Moe; and a West Coast premiere by John Liberator. Tickets for the concerts are \$25 general admission, \$10 for students, available from the **ODC Theater website** (https://odc.secure.force.com/ticket/%23sections_a0Fj000000F3sukEAB).