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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WINNERS OF THE IRMA M. COOPER OPERA COLUMBUS INTERNATIONAL VOCAL COMPETITION ANNOUCNED

Columbus, OH-Opera Columbus presented the annual ***Irma M. Cooper Opera Columbus International Vocal Competition*** on March 29, 2009 at Weigel Hall on the campus of The Ohio State University. Guest judges included **Lenore Rosenberg**, Associate Artistic Administrator at the Metropolitan Opera, **Kristin Cowdin,** Artist Manager with Guy Barzilay Artist Management, and stage director/mezzo-soprano **Diane Kesling**. From a field of 30 semi-finalists, eight finalists were selected.

The winners are:

- First place: bass-baritone **Joseph Barron** (performing "Vecchia zimarra, senti" from Puccini's *La bohème* and "Bottom's Dream" from Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*)
- Second place and Audience Choice Award winner: soprano **Jennifer Forni** (performing "Glück das mir verblieb" from Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* and "Ain't it a Pretty Night?" from Floyd's *Susannah*)
- Third place: mezzo-soprano **Katherine Lerner** (performing "Wie du Warst" from R. Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier* and "Svegliatevi nel core" from Handel's *Giulio Cesare*)
- Honorable Mention: mezzo-soprano **Catherine Martin** (performing "Deh, per questo istante solo" from Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito* and "Podrugi mili'ye" from Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*)

The Irma M. Cooper Opera Columbus International Vocal Competition received more than 100 applicants from young singers throughout the country. After the preliminary judging, held in January via CDs, 30 semi-finalists were selected. The group was then narrowed down to eight finalists, including soprano **Carolina Castells**, baritone **Kevin Ray**, mezzo-soprano **Kate Tombaugh**, and soprano **Elizabeth Baldwin**, in addition to Barron, Forni, Lerner and Martin. Playing for the semi-final and final rounds was official accompanist **Donna Loewy**, Adjunct Professor of Accompanying at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

Distinguished past winners include Denyce Graves, Stanford Olsen, Todd Thomas and Dina Kuznetsova. Recent past winners include Alyson Cambridge, Lucas Meachum and Liora Grodnikaite.

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Opera Columbus enriches Central Ohio, educating, enlightening, and entertaining people of all ages and backgrounds through the live music theatre experience by employing a diverse supply of creative talent, ideas and artistic energies.