

30th Operalia competition winners announced

Bass Stephano Park and Soprano Julie Roset won first prize for the best male and the best female voice in the gala finale of Plácido Domingo's Operalia, presented by Rolex, in Cape Town on Sunday 5 November at Artscape.



Image supplied

The world's foremost opera competition that took place at Artscape, has now placed opera firmly in the hearts of South Africans of all ages, when Cape Town played host to the 30th edition of this extraordinary talent search contest this past week. Presenting hosts Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, Cape Town Opera and Artscape pulled off the biggest such event in South Africa, with aplomb.

After the final curtain was lowered on what has been an extraordinary week, Louis Heyneman, CEO of CPO, said: "Operalia was the biggest event we three hosts have collaborated on and I think we can say that it was a triumph."

Thirty-four contestants from 15 different countries, who had been selected from over 800 applications, started the week in Cape Town with a series of preliminary rounds, singing a broad range of arias and accompanied by piano for a share of total prize money of \$200,000.



Stars align for Opera UCT at Plácido Domingo's Operalia 2023

Terry Levin 24 Oct 2023



The final 12, including South Africans, soprano Nombulelo Yende and mezzo-soprano Siphokazi Molteno, sang with the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra to a packed Artscape Opera House, conducted by Maestro Domingo himself and assisted by guest conductor Kamal Khan. Domingo also presided over the 10-person jury.

All the winners

The complete prize winners list:

First Prize

Female Voice: \$30,000 – Julie Roset, soprano, France

Male Voice: \$30,000 – Stephano Park, bass, South Korea

Second Prize

Female Voice: \$20,000 – Eugénie Joneau, mezzo-soprano, France

Male Voice: \$20,000 – Luke Sutliff, baritone, USA

Third Prize

Female Voice: \$10,000 – Elena Villalón, soprano, USA

Male Voice: \$10,000 – Navasard Hakobyan, baritone, Armenia

Birgit Nilsson Prize

Awarded to the singers interpreting arias of Richard Strauss and Richard Wagner:

Female Voice: \$15,000 - Eugénie Joneau, mezzo-soprano, France

Zarzuela Prize

These prizes are awarded in honour of Plácido Domingo's parents, iconic Zarzuela singers, encourage singers to work in this art form:

Pepita Embil de Domingo – Female Voice: \$10,000 - Eugénie Joneau, mezzo-soprano, France

Don Plácido Domingo – Male Voice: \$10,000 - Navasard Hakobyan, baritone, Armenia

Rolex Audience Prizes

Female Voice: Rolex Wristwatch - Elena Villalón, soprano, USA

Male Voice: Rolex Wristwatch – Taehan Kim, baritone, South Korea

CulturArte Prize

Special Prize: \$10,000 offered by Guillermo and Bertita Martínez – Nombulelo Yende, soprano, South Africa

The remaining finalists received an Encouragement Award of \$5,000.

Summing up what has been an exceptional experience for all involved, Heyneman remarked: "Everyone in this competition are winners. Hearing such talent at the beginning of their careers and being part of these young singers' journey is always exciting, and Operalia was no exception. We are, of course, particularly proud, and happy that we had two South African finalists. This shows that some of the best voices in the new generation of opera singers come from this southern tip of Africa, which is seen as a nursery for rising voices and musicians."

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