



AMERICAN TRADITIONS COMPETITION UNVEILS REVAMPED ‘JUDGES AND WINNERS’ CONCERT AND SECOND CELEBRITY EMCEE

SAVANNAH, GA – January 28, 2016 The 2016 American Traditions Competition will start off with a new twist on an old favorite. *Judges and Winners* Concert, known for many years as the Judges’ Concert, has been broadened to include the talents of several previous ATC Gold Medalists.

Another thrilling alteration to the 2016 season has international opera sensation Kurt Ollmann emceeding many ATC events. The competition runs from Feb. 21-25, and Ollmann will preside over most of the performances and activities, with the exception of the finals, which will feature acclaimed radio journalist Celeste Headlee.

Lyric baritone Kurt Ollmann has recently made his home in Savannah and his association with the ATC is exciting for the competition and our region. His impressive and international operatic career led to a long standing artistic association with Leonard Bernstein beginning in 1986 with the first Vienna performance of Bernstein's *A Quiet Place*. Ollmann thereafter often worked with Bernstein, recording several of his stage works including *Candide* and *West Side Story* and appearing as the soloist in the orchestral work written by Bernstein for the re-opening of Carnegie Hall.

The competition organizers, who’ve made a few improvements and exciting changes this year, believe the new format will diversify ATC’s offerings and generate enthusiasm among fans and guests for the week’s activities.

The *Judges and Winners* concert, which boasts a patriotic theme, will also be staged on a new night of the week. Previously held on Thursdays, this concert now moves to Sunday and will serve to kick off the week’s festivities. The revamped event is slated for 5 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 21, at the Skidaway Island United Methodist Church.

“Reinventing the *Judges and Winners Concert* – adding a new dimension by inviting back previous champions and holding it at the beginning of the week – will be a wonderful way to get the competition started,” ATC Artistic Consultant Vale Rideout said. “We are sure the fun, folksy and bluesy concert will delight our audience.”

This 90-minute concert will feature the winner from 2000 - John Wesley Wright, 2012’s past joint winners, Ann Marie McPhail and Joshua Carswell and last year’s winner Alexander Edgemon, as well as judges Jim Wann and Marilyn Maye. Accompanying the vocal artists will be pianist David A. Shenton.

The show includes one intermission, and tickets are priced at \$35 for general seating and \$50 for premium seating. Tickets are available for purchase at www.americantraditionscompetition.com or by calling the Savannah Theatre Box Office at 912-233-7764.

Immediately following the concert, a Kickoff Party will be held at The Landings Plantation Club on Skidaway Island. Guests will enjoy dueling piano performances by returning ATC pianist, Anastasia Victory, and her husband Michael O. Mitchell. These internationally acclaimed musicians are heading to participate in Savannah’s ATC straight from their performances in New York City and will entertain the audience with a mix of well-known tunes, humor and some crowd involvement.

For a schedule of American Traditions Competition week events, more information, or to purchase tickets, please visit www.americantraditionscompetition.com. It is strongly recommended to purchase your Kickoff Party tickets in advance and they are also available through the ATC’s website.

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