UC SANTA BARBARA
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A Musical Triumph

The musical talent of seven UCSB graduate students has earned them top honors in the 2017 Santa Barbara Performing Arts Scholarship Foundation (PASF) competition.

Baritone Byron Mayes took first prize in the vocal division, with soprano Naomi Merer, coming in second and baritone Tyler Reece placing third. Soprano Carol Tsai received honorable mention. In the instrumental division, pianist Leslie Cain was awarded fourth place, and cellist Karen Yeh and flutist Cynthia Vong received honorable mentions.

“The large number of winners this year, and in the past, is indicative of the high level of talent, preparation, and quality of our singers and the UCSB voice area,” said Linda Di Fiore, an adjunct professor in the UCSB Department of Music’s voice program.

A first-year masters student who spent two years performing with the Houston Grand Opera chorus, Mayes recently joined the Opera Santa Barbara Chorus.

Merer, completing her Masters degree, studies voice and opera with Linda Fiore, an adjunct professor in UCSB’s voice program. Merer received her Bachelor of Music from Northwestern University.

Reece, a Master of Music and a Doctor of Musical Arts candidate, is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Gwendolyn Roberts Young Artist of the Year song recital competition. He sings professionally with All Saints by the Sea Episcopal Church, among other performance groups.

Tsai, a soprano, who is also working on a Masters degree in physical chemistry, studies with assistant voice professor Isabel Bayrakdarian. She has performed with numerous musical ensembles, including the Santa Barbara Choral Society.

A Doctor of Musical Arts candidate and pianist, Cain, studies with keyboard program professor Paul Berkowitz. Cain is a member of UCSB’s Young Artist Piano Quartet.

Yeh is completing her Doctorate of Musical Arts with Fulbright Scholar and cellist, Jennifer Kloetzel. She holds substitute cellist positions with the New West Symphony, Santa Barbara Symphony and Los Angeles Philharmonic.

A Master of Music candidate and flutist, Vong, studies with Jill Felber, a professor in UCSB’s brass and percussion program. She received her Bachelor of Music degree from Pennsylvania State University.

Established in 1982, PASF provides financial support to music students studying in the Santa Barbara area who demonstrate strong professional potential. First-place winners receive $5,000 and second-place winners are awarded $4,000 to assist them as they pursue careers as performers.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.