



Tuesday, April 16, 2002

## Student performers shine at Matilda Awards

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

A wide variety of student talent in the performing arts was displayed at the San Marino Club in Troy on April 15 as Oakland University's **Department of Music, Theatre and Dance** presented its third annual Matilda Awards before hundreds of students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends.

The Matilda Awards honor the contributions made by students, faculty and community members to the department. The awards are named for OU founder Matilda Wilson, who, with her husband Alfred, helped establish performing arts as one of the cornerstones of the university.

Among the student performers who showcased their talents were members of the musical theatre and vocal jazz ensemble Meadow Brook Estate; Travis Walter and Carrie LaFerle, who depicted a scene from a stage play; Jacquelyn Wagner and Heather Yanke, who each delivered vocal performances; and Kevin Nadolski, who gave a piano recital.

During the presentation of the final Matilda Award to Professor Emeritus Stanley Hollingsworth, it was announced that he has donated \$100,000 to establish a fund to help support student travel to study the arts.

In his remarks prior to the award ceremonies, David Downing, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, spoke of the growth of the department and corresponding excellence in the work produced by OU students and faculty.

"The Matilda Awards are exciting from many viewpoints," Downing said. "We have excellent students, wonderful faculty and tremendous support from our advisory groups and alumni. We're marching forward toward making Oakland University distinct, with the performing and visual arts as an important cornerstone. Our growth will have a positive impact on the curriculum of all students. The incredible strength you bring to that journey should be complimented."

The awards presented include:

- Distinguished Musicianship Award — Heather Yanke (Berkley)
- Outstanding Student in Piano Performance — Kevin Nadolski (Sterling Heights)
- Outstanding Student in Voice Performance — Jacquelyn Wagner (Bloomfield Hills)
- Outstanding Students in Music Education — Renee Sadowski (Clinton Township) and Benjamin Baldwin (Lake Orion)
- Outstanding Student in Instrumental Performance — Sarah Miller (Royal Oak)
- Outstanding Student in Composition — Christopher Holt (Troy)
- Outstanding Student in Musical Theatre — Joey Bybee (Lapeer)
- Meadow Brook Estate Award — Heather Yanke (Berkley)
- Gittlen Achievement Award in Theatre — Travis Walter (Traverse City)
- Gittlen Theatre Award — Joshua Polley (Clarkston)
- Jacob Decker Dance Award — Jennifer Miller (Washington, MI)
- Maggie Allesee Dance Award — Kristen Berger (Sterling Heights)
- Outstanding Student Service Awards — Caroline Cates (Rochester Hills) and Holly Lloyd (Davisburg)
- Alumni Arts Achievement Award in Music — Catherine Rollin (Bloomfield Hills)
- Alumni Arts Achievement Awards in Theatre — Lisa Jesswein (Royal Oak)
- Special Award for Contributions to Dance — Carol Halsted (Bloomfield Hills)
- Distinguished Community Service Award — Stanley Hollingsworth (Auburn Hills)

In addition to these awards, students present their own tongue-in-cheek awards called the Golden Screw Awards, which were presented by seniors Cassandra Svacha and Heather Yanke.

The most emotional point of the evening came when students made presentations honoring departing MTD publicist Beth Thibault. Svacha broke down in tears when she presented a bouquet of flowers to Thibault "for being my second mom after my parents moved out of state."

OU alumna Catherine Rollin, who won the Alumni Arts Achievement Award in Music, said she was very impressed by the

student performances and by the quality of the newer MTD faculty whom she met.

“The atmosphere at OU helped me to thrive and grow as a student,” said Rollin, who also brought six of her private piano students to perform. “It was very nice to have such wonderful mentors and teachers. It’s also great seeing the students perform tonight. You can see the joy that they’re finding in their work at OU. It’s also great to see the excellent new faculty that has joined OU. They are enthusiastic and well informed. They have a strong interest in teaching and pedagogy, and that’s exciting to see.”

**SUMMARY**

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