

Monday, Jul 18, 2016

Oakland student named best male voice at National Student Auditions national competition

Oakland University voice student Robert Skylis, a native of Ortonville and a graduate of Brother Rice High School in Birmingham, recently returned home as a national title holder.

He was chosen the overall winner of the "Lower College" (men's freshman and sophomore) category at the National Student Auditions event at the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) National Conference in Chicago.

Thousands of college singers competed for the award. The pursuit of the title began with preliminary rounds at the state level and progressed through regionals and semi-finals. Competitors included students from some of the largest and best known colleges across the U.S. and Canada.

Skylis, who just completed his sophomore year at Oakland, was one of four people to compete in the final round. He sang *Dein ist mein ganzes Herz* by Franz Lehar and his performance won him the judges' recognition as the finest Lower College male voice currently studying with a NATS teacher anywhere in North America.

Skylis was happy and grateful to earn the award. "Thank you all so much for the love and support," he wrote to followers on social media. "Coming home with a national title has been nothing short of surreal. Let this be a testament to the great things that happen at Oakland. We are blessed with a combination of unrelenting skill, talent, hard work and dedication between the faculty, staff, teachers and student body."

In addition to Skylis' achievement, OU celebrated two other highlights at the NATS conference. Associate Professor of Music Drake Dantzer received an Emerging Leader Award from the organization, and OU alumna Ann Toomey, who was a finalist at the recent Met Opera competition and is now appearing with the Chicago Lyric Opera, appeared on stage with a true opera legend in the "Renée Fleming and Friends" concert. She also took part in a master class with Ms. Fleming. Toomey trained under Dr. Alta Dantzer while at OU.



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OU Alumna Ann Toomey appeared on stage at the NATS conference with opera legend Renee Fleming.