

Twelve semi-finalists selected for SAMRO

Twelve young singers have been selected and two will win SAMRO Overseas Scholarships from the Western Art and Jazz/Popular categories. The scholarships are worth R160 000 (plus a R10 000 travel allowance) to further their music studies abroad.

This year, two alumni of this competition - Ben Schoeman and Bokani Dyer - were named Standard Bank Young Artist Award winners, joining a long list of SAMRO bursary and scholarship recipients who have gone on to make their mark on the local and international music scene.

In 2011, the scholarships competition - which rotates on a four-yearly cycle, rewarding keyboard players, instrumentalists, composers and singers - focuses on vocal prowess, and is always a popular and hotly contested event.

The semi-finalists

- Western Art Music: Sunnyboy Dladla, Hlengiwe Mkhwanazi, Maudé Montierre, Nozuko Teto, Christopher Vale and Filipa van Eck.
- Jazz/Popular Music: Emily Bruce, Sandile Gontsana, Bongile Mabaso, Sotashe Vuyolwethu, Nomfundo Xaluva and Zarcia Zacheus.

Seven of the candidates hail from the Western Cape, with four from Gauteng and one from KwaZulu-Natal.

The adjudicators for the qualifying, intermediate and final rounds include respected music academics and industry luminaries, such as Professor Chatradari Devroop and Professor Virginia Davids (both genres), as well as Eugenie Chopin, Dr Conroy Cupido, Lize Coetzer, Hanna van Niekerk and Thami Zungu (Western Art Music); and Gloria Bosman, Dr Mageshen Naidoo, Natalie Rungan, Amanda Tiffin and Melanie Scholtz (Jazz/Popular Music). Leon van Wyk is the non-voting chairman of the panel.

Thrilled with the calibre

Dr Cupido said: "We were all very thrilled with the calibre of the six Western Art semi-finalists who progressed through to the next round. All candidates displayed wonderful potential for a professional career. Not only was the singing and artistry of a very high standard, but we had quite a diverse selection of voices. "

SAMA-winning jazz supremo Bosman agreed: "It really was a tough one, looking at the great vocal talent emerging in our country, especially of late. We didn't specifically lean to making a selection that was biased towards a specific genre. We

were more interested in vocal quality and were also looking at the natural delivery of the songs.

"There are purely talented singers and rehearsed ones, so one has to look out for that and see if a specific singer has the ability to tackle more than one style and is also open to learn. Then you look at how musical they are and at their selection of notes when improvising.

"There are, of course, singers who have a nostalgic vocal quality that echoes existing successful vocalists, but you can hear they are not making an effort to mimic any of them. Originality is important and the choices of songs suited their vocal texture and range."

Intermediate round

The 12 candidates will compete in the intermediate round on 1 September, 2011, where the top two performers in each category will be selected to compete in the final round. This takes place during the gala evening at the Linder Auditorium in Johannesburg on Saturday, 3 September, 2011.

Both of these live events are open to the public, and ticket enquiries may be directed to sena@samro.org.za.

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