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**THE OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN MUSEUM AND
THEATRE EDUCATION CENTER ANNOUNCES WINNERS FOR THE
HAMMERSTEIN INTERNATIONAL YOUTH SOLO CONTEST**

Doylestown Students Claim Victory in both Local and College Categories

DOYLESTOWN, PA (2/12/2021) – Winners for the nonprofit Oscar Hammerstein Museum and Theatre Education Center’s (OHMTEC) International Youth Solo Contest were announced in a pre-recorded awards ceremony broadcast live from Highland Farm this evening. Three Doylestown students claimed victory in the local (Bucks County) category.

First place went to Sierra Safran, 18, a student at Central Bucks West High School, who sang “All the Things You Are” from the musical *Very Warm for May* by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein. Safran commented that she chose the song because it is her very favorite song to sing, and that she feels a strong connection with it. “From the very first time I heard the song, I fell in love with it. I just think it is so gorgeous and poetic. Singing all the lyrics, I just feel so connected and grounded, not even in a romantic way...but for my future and my goals, and all the people around me.”

Second place in the Bucks County category was won by Helena Badiali, 13, a student at Tohickon Middle School, for her rendition of “This Nearly Was Mine” from *South Pacific* by Rodgers and Hammerstein. Badiali was excited to participate in the contest because, “I believe preserving historic properties like Oscar Hammerstein’s home is very important. Some of the most recognizable musicals were written there, including shows like *Oklahoma!* and *South Pacific*. If we don’t preserve places like this one, future generations may never get the opportunity to learn about their rich history.”

Third place amongst the local submissions was awarded to Cold Spring Elementary School student Addison Rogers, 10, who sang “The Sound of Music” from Rodgers and Hammerstein’s renowned musical of the same name. Addison noted that her favorite lyric of Hammerstein’s is the last line of the song “Edelweiss,” which is “Bless my homeland forever.” “It’s the last words he ever wrote for a musical, and it means a lot to our nation and it means a lot to me,” she said.

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Students from 28 states and 2 from Canada submitted solo entries for the contest. In addition to the winners of the local category, Doylestown native Taylor Mitchell took first place in the college division. Mitchell is currently a sophomore at Elon University majoring in musical theatre, and a graduate of Central Bucks West High School. She chose to sing the title song from *The Sound of Music*, in her words, “because to me, that song is the epitome of why I love music. Everything that I want to convey about music in words is perfectly captured in that song, with its beautiful melody and lyrics.”

A complete list of winners is below. Soloist videos can be seen at hammersteinmuseum.org/finalists and on Facebook @hammersteinmuseum.

College Division

First Place: Taylor Mitchell, 19, Doylestown, PA
Second Place: John Brannigan, 19, Dacula, GA
Third Place: Ryan Wolpert, 21, Philadelphia, PA

High School Division

First Place: Yumeko Stern, 17, Broad Brook, CT
Second Place: Audrey Bailey, 17, North Logan, UT
Third Place: Emelia Aceto, 15, Hinckley, OH

Middle School Division

First Place: Lily Wolocko, 13, Northville, MI
Second Place: Callie Chae Pyken, 13, Los Angeles, CA
Third Place: Nicholas Vivar, 12, Nutley, NJ

Elementary School Division

First Place: Brooklyn Martin, 10, Glendale, AZ
Second Place: Sofie Poliakoff, 11, Davie, FL
Third Place: Alliana Lily Yang, 9, San Francisco, CA

Bucks County Division

First Place: Sierra Safran, 18, Doylestown, PA
Second Place: Helena Badiali, 13, Doylestown, PA
Third Place: Addison Rogers, 10, Doylestown, PA

First-place winners will receive a cash prize, have the opportunity to film their song at Highland Farm and receive a voice lesson with Broadway performers [Justin Guarini](#) (of American Idol fame) or [Andrew Polec](#) (Broadway’s *Bat Out of Hell*). Videos of their performances will hold a prominent place on the Hammerstein Museum website for one month each.

A prestigious panel of judges evaluated the final round of solo submissions, including Joseph Ohrt, Choir Director for Central Bucks High School West in Doylestown; Peter Reynolds, Head of Musical Theatre, Temple University; John Simpkins, Head of Musical Theatre, Penn State University; and Ivy Walz, Interim Associate Dean and Professor of Vocal Performance at Ithaca College.

OHMTEC is immensely grateful to generous sponsors for the contest, including the Bucks County Symphony Orchestra (Local Category), Jim and Kelly Brexler (Elementary Category), the Bucks County Country Gentlemen. (Middle School Category), Atlanta, Georgia music educator Dale Duncan (High School Category) and Lyra Lender Services (College Category).

Proceeds from the contest benefit The Oscar Hammerstein Museum and Theatre Education Center, which is engaged in a fundraising campaign to support the nonprofit's ongoing vision to secure Highland Farm, Oscar Hammerstein II's former home and workplace and realize the dream of a museum and theatre education center on the site in the heart of Doylestown, PA. To learn how you can make an impact and #SaveOscarsHome please visit www.HammersteinMuseum.org.

ABOUT HAMMERSTEIN MUSEUM & THEATRE EDUCATION CENTER: The Oscar Hammerstein Museum and Theatre Education Center, a recognized 501(c)3, is raising funds to purchase, restore, and preserve Oscar Hammerstein's II former home and creative epicenter at Highland Farm in Doylestown, PA. The goal is to create a multifaceted and dynamic museum experience, with a strong theatre education component, that will serve as a place of inspiration for Broadway fans and humanitarians alike, from Hammerstein's backyard and across the world. More at HammersteinMuseum.org

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