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**Sarah Sippl of Plainfield, Ill.
Metropolitan Opera Judges Award
Honorable Mention to IWU Soprano**

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--An Illinois Wesleyan University senior, who has studied the flute since fifth grade, took her musical talent in a new direction last month, when her soprano voice won an honorable mention at a district audition conducted by the New York's famed Metropolitan Opera Co.

Sarah Sippl, a music-education major from Plainfield, Ill., won the accolade at an Oct. 22 contest held at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston.

Commenting on her honorable-mention citation, Sippl said: "It was a shock. I didn't expect it at all."

Sippl said that the audition is having an effect on her career plans following graduation next May.

"It made me realize that singing and performing are a large part of my life," she explained. "Up until then, I was ready to give it up and teach little children. The audition forced me to rethink my plans."

Sippl was on course to a career teaching music to elementary-school students. Now, she's eyeing applications to graduate schools, where she would major in vocal performance.

Sippl was among a handful of undergraduates who participated in the competition. The audition attracted more than a dozen participants, including graduate students from the University of Illinois and elsewhere. Sippl competed against older, more experienced performers, who were as old as age 33. The two competition winners were ages 30 and 24.

Three judges--professors and retired faculty from Indiana University and the Eastman School of Music--evaluated Sippl and the other contestants' performances.

Sippl performed two operatic works at the competition--one she selected and another the judges picked from a group of five arias in four languages that she was prepared to sing.

The judges asked Sippl to perform Marcellina's aria from Mozart's opera, *The Marriage of Figaro*. Her selection was Nancy's aria from the opera, *Martha*, by Flotow.

Sippl selected the Flotow piece, she said, because "it covers such a wide range in my singing and I personally love the piece." The aria by Mozart, Sippl added, "showed my higher range" and confirmed in the judges' minds that "I'm a soprano" as opposed to a mezzo-soprano.

The district audition Sipll participated in is part of a three-step Metropolitan Opera competition. District-level winners advance to a regional competition, which is followed by a national contest. Carren Moham, IWU assistant professor of voice, won the national competition at age 19.

Sipll studies the flute with IWU Associate Professor of Music William West. She studies voice with Dawn Harris, IWU lecturer in music.

Sipll, a Plainfield High School graduate, who joined the school's choir as a junior, is the daughter of Penny and Dennis Sipll of 2506 Chevy Chase, Joliet.

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls more than 2,000 students in a College of Liberal Arts, and individual schools of Music, Theatre Arts, Art, and Nursing. Since 1994, these facilities have been added to the IWU campus: a \$15 million athletics and recreation center, a \$25 million science center, a \$6.8 million residence hall, a \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts, and a \$1.65 million baseball stadium. A \$26 million library and a \$6 million student center are under construction.