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Koch '17 Earns First Place at National Classical Singer Convention

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — While juggling international performances and an opera residency, [soprano Megan Koch '17](#) earned a first place award at the National Classical Singer Convention in Chicago last month.

During the convention, Koch sang “Quel guardo il cavaliere,” a piece from the opera “Don Pasquale” by Gaetano Donizetti. [Competing with 700 other vocalists](#), Koch won first place in the classical young artist/emerging pro category.

“I was thrilled by the camaraderie amongst my fellow finalists. I think it is so important to lift each other up and I was proud to be up there with four unique artists and kind souls,” she said.

Also competing in the Classical Singer Convention were IWU Titans Madeline Johnson '24, mezzo-soprano, who advanced to the second round; Cameron Kidd '22, soprano, who advanced to the semi-finals; and Lyndsey Notaro, '20, mezzo-soprano, who advanced to the finals.

Koch studied [music education at Illinois Wesleyan](#) and later attended the University of North Texas to earn a master's of music in vocal performance and a graduate artist certificate in opera. Although she used to experience “incredible stage fright,” Koch said learning at IWU under Bill Hudson, associate professor of music, helped boost her confidence on stage.

“That time with him really developed my critical ear, practice skills and performance strategies,” said Koch. “Performing in studio classes multiple times a semester helped me to master my nerves.”

Hudson said his students are given the opportunity to sing in public and in front of steadily larger groups. He also teaches relaxing breathing techniques and encourages students to know their music as well as possible so they can focus any nervous energy on being “productive and exciting, rather than fretting over words or part of the melody.”

“I couldn't be happier for Megan,” said Hudson. “She deserves every accolade she's receiving. I'm so happy to have had the opportunity to work with her. I merely showed her the path. She's walking – or running – down that path.”

Now, Koch said she is able to channel her nerves into her characters on stage and use that adrenaline to energize her singing. Her confidence and talent is evident through the invitations she has received to perform in The Czech Republic, Bulgaria and England since graduating from IWU.

“One of my favorite performances happened in the Czech Republic, when my colleagues and I presented a modern premiere of two lost baroque one-acts by Johann Heinrich Schmelzer. The process was incredibly rewarding because the cast was tight-knit, and we made the story our own,” she said.

Since 2018, Koch has performed with [Fort Worth Opera House](#) in Texas, where she also trained as a Lesley Resident Artist. Koch is currently in London to perform in the premiere of Taylor Scott Davis' “Magnificat” at the Southwark Cathedral. She is preparing for the upcoming audition season and has high hopes for the coming year. Koch was also recently cast as Berta in Rossini's “Barber of Seville,” which will kick off her Shreveport Opera debut in Louisiana in November.

“My advice for singers in particular is to work hard on the details, but be willing to let loose in performance. It is just as important to take informed liberties in order to portray the character and have fun doing it,” she said.



Soprano Megan Koch '17 earned first place in the classical young artist/emerging pro category at the 2022 National Classical Singer Convention in Chicago.