



## The English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition

May 3, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### HONOLULU TEEN WINS THE 33<sup>rd</sup> ANNUAL ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION NATIONAL SHAKESPEARE COMPETITION IN NEW YORK CITY

*New York City:* With a performance of a sonnet and monologue from Shakespeare on stage at Lincoln Center in New York City, **ARI DALBERT** from Honolulu, HI, a student of Betty Burdick at Hawaii Homeschool Association in Honolulu, won the 33<sup>rd</sup> annual English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition. The Competition took place on May 2, 2016 with 55 semi-finalists from as many ESU Branch competitions nationwide. Ari previously won the ESU Hawai'i competition.

With English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition, the ESU participated in Shakespeare400, the international yearlong celebration of Shakespeare's works in 2016. This year, the Competition marked the milestone of exceeding 300,000 student participants since its inception in 1983. Among the winners and finalists of the Competition who have gone on to national acclaim are actor and director Joe Sofranko, whose Hulu series *Complete Works* is, in fact, based on the National Shakespeare Competition; actors Emily Bergl (*Shameless*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Southland*); Tyler Hilton (*Walk the Line*, *One Tree Hill*); Heather Lind (*Demolition*, *Boardwalk Empire*, *Turn: Washington's Spies*); Bronwyn Reed (*Law and Order: SVU*); as well as Broadway's Matt Harrington (*Twelfth Night*, *Matilda*) and Adam Wesley Brown (*Once the Musical*).

As the winner of the 33<sup>rd</sup> English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition, **Ari Dalbert** from the Hawai'i Branch received a full scholarship to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art's *Young Actors Summer School* in London, England, this summer. The second place winner, **Zoë Oliver**, won a scholarship to the American Shakespeare Center Theatre Camp in Staunton, VA, while third place winner, **Cecilia Harchegani**, from the San Diego Branch, received \$500 from The Shakespeare Society.

This year, actress Dana Ivey served as a judge, joining an illustrious roster of former judges that includes such luminaries as Sarah Jessica Parker, Sam Waterston, Phylicia Rashad, Blythe Danner, Jesse L. Martin, Cynthia Nixon, Richard Thomas, Courtney B. Vance, Dianne Wiest, and Helen Hayes.

The English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition is a school-based program designed to help students develop their speaking and critical thinking skills and their appreciation of literature as they explore the beauty of

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the language and timeless themes in Shakespeare's works. In three progressive competition levels, students memorize, interpret, and perform monologues and sonnets in their own schools, at ESU Branch-sponsored community competitions and at the English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition. Citing its 33rd season this year, the Honorable Bill De Blasio, Mayor of the City of New York, proclaimed May 2, 2016 as William Shakespeare Day in New York City. Danny Lopez, the British Consul-General in New York, read the proclamation, and Paul Beresford-Hill, CBE, KSt.J, Chairman of the English-Speaking Union, awarded certificates to the competitors.

The ESU provided the semi-finalists with two full days of educational and cultural activities in New York City, including an exclusive acting workshop at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University and a performance of the *Something Rotten!* on Broadway. Perhaps best of all for these teenagers was the opportunity to spend a weekend in New York City with other students from across the country who share a love of the English language and, particularly, Shakespeare.

Founded in 1920, the English-Speaking Union is a nonprofit, nonpolitical organization that promotes English as a shared language to foster global understanding and good will by providing educational and cultural opportunities for students and educators.



**Ari Dalbert**, winner of the 2016 English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition, competing at Lincoln Center in New York City.



The three winners of the 2016 English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition on stage at Lincoln Center Theater in New York City. (l to r – Third place winner Cecilia Harchegani, First place winner Ari Dalbert, and Second place winner Zoë Oliver.