



Karen Longwell
klongwell@northumberlandnews.com

NEW YORK -- Former Vernonville resident Julia Dawson first got the performing bug in a Cobourg production.

Now a rising star in the opera world, the mezzo-soprano was among six singers to win \$10,000 in the 44th annual George London Foundation Competition for young American and Canadian opera singers. The winners were announced at the conclusion of the competition's final round on Feb. 27, which took place in front of a capacity audience at Gilder Lehman Hall at The Morgan Library and Museum in New York City.

Ms. Dawson, 26, and her family moved to Vernonville when she was eight, she said in a telephone interview from her home in Philadelphia.

NORTHUMBERLAND
NEWS MAR. 12/15

A rising opera star

George London Foundation
Competition winner Julia Dawson got her start in Cobourg

Ms. Dawson's father, Timothy Dawson, is a double bassist with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and music was always a big part of the family life, she said. As soon as the family moved to Vernonville, she signed up for piano and vocal lessons with Catherine Ford and joined La Jeunesse Youth Choir.

See FORMER page 13

NEW YORK -- Opera singer Julia Dawson, 26, a former Vernonville resident, performed in the 2015 George London Foundation competition on Feb. 27.
Shawn Ehlers photo

FORMER from page 1

She worked with Deirdre Morrell and Marie Anderson in those early years with the choir, she said. Ms. Dawson was home schooled.

She recalled her first trip overseas to Greece with La Jeunesse, which was a great learning experience, she said. She also remembers later teaching music lessons at George's Guitars in Cobourg.

"I have many fond music experiences in Cobourg," she said.

She got her first taste of music theatre with VOS, a Cobourg Theatre company. She still recalls her first role as Cinderella when she was 14.

"It scared me to death," she said.

But it didn't take long for her to enjoy the stage.

"I was bitten by the bug," she said.

From that moment on, she dreamed of a career in musical theatre until one day she came across Greek-American opera singer Maria Callas's record in her family home. She was immediately taken by the music.

"It was such a mysterious world ... and musically, for me, it is so fulfilling," said Ms. Dawson.

She went on to study at Oberlin Conservatory earning a bachelor of music and her master's from Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. She is currently a second-year student in a four-year resi-

dent artist program at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia. As a resident artist she is given help with her career -- preparing music for freelance parts, voice lessons and support. She has done much freelance work performing across the country including with the Santa Fe Opera's Apprentice Showcase, Opera Philadelphia's Double Exposure, and multiple principal roles at the Academy of Vocal Arts.

The recent George London Foundation Competition win is a big boost to her career, she said.

"It's huge. The support its absolutely incredible ... it gives me visibility in the industry," she said.

Established in 1971, the award is well

known in the opera world and singers such as Canadian Measha Brueggergosman are past recipients.

Ms. Dawson has been called a singer who "can release roulades of coloratura with a shimmering sound" (Los Angeles Times). She has received fellowships from

the Aspen Music Festival and the Music Academy of the West, and sung in master-class with James Levine at Carnegie Hall under the auspices of Marilyn Horne's The Song Continues festival.

Visit www.juliadawsonmezzo.com for more information on Ms. Dawson.

E 'It was such a mysterious world... and musically, for me, it is so fulfilling.' Julia Dawson, speaking about opera