



For Immediate Release (January 8, 2018):

ADELA & LARRY ELOW ESTABLISH A MUSICAL “TEENAGER ENDOWMENT FUND,” TO BE ADMINISTERED BY THE MABEL MERCER FOUNDATION

A NEW, DECADE-LONG PROGRAM WILL “ENCOURAGE YOUNG SINGERS TO LEARN AND PERFORM THE GREAT AMERICAN SONGBOOK” VIA ANNUAL COMPETITION AND CASH AWARDS

(New York, NY) The Mabel Mercer Foundation announced this week that Adela and Larry Elow have established a fifty-thousand-dollar endowment fund, created specifically to “encourage teenagers to learn *and* perform The Great American Songbook, as composed between the years 1900-1970.” The Elows’ grant -- restricted to this use -- will be administered through the Mercer Foundation and provide annual cash awards across the next decade for three outstanding students, ages thirteen to nineteen. Young performers will compete in concert for the individual honors and are to be selected from performing-arts public high schools in the greater New York area.

The initial competition for the teenage vocalists, “Songs Were Made to Sing While We’re Young,” will be held on Saturday, February 3rd, at 2 p.m. at the Laurie Beechman Theater, 407 West 42nd Street. As seating is limited, reservations are essential and may be made by calling the Mabel Mercer Foundation offices at (212) 980-3026, or by writing: info@mabelmercer.org. The event carries a \$20 cover charge and \$20 food or beverage minimum.

This year’s participants will be nominated from pupils who attend Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School, Frank Sinatra School of the Arts, Talent Unlimited High School, and Professional Performing Arts School (PPAS). Each of these facilities requires auditions before enrolling students, and each school may select up to four participants for the concert on February 3rd. The singers will then compete for cash awards: a \$2,500 first prize, a \$1,500 second prize, and a \$1,000 third prize. Their performance material for the event must be drawn from the Great American Songbook, 1900-1970.

Already set as judges for February 3rd are *Village Voice* and Huffington Post commentator David Finkle; cabaret entertainer Jeff Harnar; producing director of the York Theatre, Jim Morgan; jazz vocalist La Tanya Hall; and music author/historian and producer Deborah Grace Winer. Their choice as the first prize winner on February 3rd will also be invited to appear during the opening night performance of the annual Mabel Mercer Foundation Cabaret Convention on October 9th at the Rose Theater, Frederick P. Rose Hall, Jazz at Lincoln Center.

“Songs Were Made to Sing While We’re Young” is a lyric phrase by William Engvick, written to an Alec Wilder/Morty Palitz melody; the song was particularly associated with Mabel Mercer (1900-1984), whose own international cabaret career established her as the preeminent interpreter of the Great American Songbook. The Foundation in her name was inaugurated in 1985 and has since produced diverse performances, productions, workshops, and educational events all over the world. February 3rd, the date of the first Teenage Endowment Fund concert, is Ms. Mercer’s birthday anniversary.

In announcing the Elows' endowment, Foundation artistic director KT Sullivan noted that, "Although Mabel had no children of her own, she was an eternal, enthusiastic champion of burgeoning young talents; they were colloquially termed 'Mabel's babies.' We think she would be delighted by this shining opportunity to encourage teenage singers, especially in this repertoire. And the Adela and Larry Elow Teenager Endowment Fund has been created solely to fund the activities essential to that. They want to encourage teenagers to learn, perform, and promote the Great American Songbook intrinsic to the decades between 1900 and 1970."

Adela Elow offers, "We are committed to preserving and presenting this material; that's our mission, that's our goal. My husband and I are very involved with music and the arts: for twenty-six years, we've been active in the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts in Katonah, NY. Now this new endowment fund enables us to reach out through the Mabel Mercer Foundation to young people -- because it's through the performances of these young people that these songs will live for the next hundred years."

Larry Elow concurs: "This is Adela's idea: the teens of today singing the Great American Songbook. Millennials coming along now are the children -- and even grandchildren -- of parents who came of age in the 1960s and later, when rock was taking over the music world. The goal of the endowment program is to reach these young people, that age group of thirteen to nineteen, to offer them the opportunity to appreciate, enjoy, and perform the classic songs. We want high school students in these public schools to be exposed to this material -- and we want to provide the financial rewards that would be appreciated and needed, to further their careers in music."

The preeminent songwriters across the decades specified by the Elow Grant not only comprise but define the Great American Songbook. Among them are such notable composers and lyricists as Harold Arlen, Irving Berlin, Leonard Bernstein, Eubie Blake, Sammy Cahn, Hoagy Carmichael, Cy Coleman, Betty Comden and Adolph Green, Howard Dietz, Vernon Duke, Duke Ellington, Dorothy Fields, George and Ira Gershwin, Oscar Hammerstein II, W. C. Handy, E. Y. "Yip" Harburg, Lorenz Hart, Jerry Herman, Bart Howard, Jerome Kern, Burton Lane, Carolyn Leigh, Alan Jay Lerner, Frank Loesser, Frederick Loewe, Henry Mancini, Johnny Mercer, Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers, Arthur Schwartz, Jule Styne, Stephen Sondheim, Harry Warren, Thomas "Fats" Waller, Richard Whiting, Alec Wilder, Jimmy Van Heusen, and Vincent Youmans.

The Adela & Larry Elow Teenager Endowment Fund is the latest in an ongoing series of the couple's contributions to The Mabel Mercer Foundation. They annually underwrite the Donald F. Smith Award, presented at the New York Cabaret Convention and named for the founder of the organization. The Teenage Endowment Fund is also regarded as the most recent endeavor by the Foundation to reinforce its outreach to younger performers and audiences. Their activities along these lines already include in-school seminars and performances and the 2017 establishment of a \$10 Cabaret Convention student rush policy, which will continue in 2018.

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For further information:

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