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### Ouachita to host Shambarger Competition for Singers Feb. 21

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Ouachita News Bureau

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**OUACHITA**  
BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



**NEWS**

For immediate release

**Ouachita to host Shambarger Competition for Singers Feb. 21**

*By Kacy Spears*

February 13, 2017

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at [newsbureau@obu.edu](mailto:newsbureau@obu.edu) or (870) 245-5208

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Ouachita Baptist University's Division of Music will host the 19<sup>th</sup> annual Mary Shambarger Competition for Singers Tuesday, Feb. 21, at 2 p.m. in Mabee Fine Arts Center's McBeth Recital Hall. This year's competition features arias from opera and oratorio, and the performances are free and open to the public.

The Shambarger Competition is an opportunity for Ouachita students studying vocal music to expand their repertoire and gain experience auditioning in a professional setting. The event was founded by Mary Shambarger, Ouachita professor emerita of music. Shambarger served on Ouachita's music faculty for 32 years as a voice instructor, classroom teacher and founder of Ouachi-Tones and Ouachita Sounds vocal ensembles. She and her husband, Dr. Jake Shambarger, professor emeritus of education, endowed the competition after their retirement, and she continues to be involved in the competition as a judge.

Competition repertoire rotates each year among arias from opera and oratorio, art songs and musical theatre. Winners are awarded cash prizes ranging from \$50 to \$500.

"Every year I watch the competition I feel so pleased and encouraged by the work all our students are doing," said Dr. Jon Secrest, professor of music and coordinator of Ouachita's vocal studies program. "I know they are headed in the right direction in the development of their individual artistry." He added that it's exciting "because we have such an incredible voice faculty and watching our students grow in such a magnificent way is just amazine."

Dr. Secrest encouraged anyone interested in music to attend the performances. "If they're already music lovers, they're going to hear the repertoire that is near and dear to their hearts," he said. "If they aren't necessarily music lovers, they still get to be around a bunch of young people who are excited and enthused about their work."

Esther Atkinson, a junior music major from Rogers, Ark., is a student of David Stanley, instructor of music. She has been working with Stanley for a year to prepare her Italian aria to present at the Shambarger Competition.

"Before every performance, I try to realize who I'm doing this for and where my voice came from," Atkinson said. "My voice was given to me by God, and if I'm not doing this for Him, then it's empty."

Scotty Scott, sophomore musical theatre major from Russellville Ark., also has been diligently preparing for a year with his voice teacher, Dr. Secrest.

"Since my piece is in Italian, I had to translate word for word," Scott said. "You have to learn the language, and then you have to really take that and use it in your music to be able to paint it the best way you possibly can."

The competition "brings out the best in our students," Secrest added. "These arias are slow cooker projects, not microwavable pieces. A student can't just throw something together in the last week and walk out there and expect it to be quality."

In addition to Shambarger, this year's judges include Dr. Charles Wright and Stephen Anthony Ray. Dr. Wright served as longtime dean of Ouachita's School of Fine Arts, recently served as interim president and currently is a development officer. Ray is a 2008 Ouachita alumnus who currently serves as youth pastor of Fellowship Church of North Little Rock, Ark. In 2006 and 2008, he became the only OBU student ever to be selected twice as a national semi-finalist in the Metropolitan Opera Council auditions in New York, and, in 2008, he was selected as one of nine national finalists.

For more information on Ouachita's vocal studies program or the Shambarger Competition, contact Dr. Jon Secrest at [secrestj@obu.edu](mailto:secrestj@obu.edu) or (870) 245-5134.

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A PHOTO FROM THE 2016 COMPETITION IS AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD  
AT <https://www.obu.edu/news/2017/02/13/ouachita-host-shambarger-competition-singers-feb-21/>.