



SOUTHERN UTAH UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF PERFORMING & VISUAL ARTS
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SUU'S DR. KEVIN L. BAKER WINS THE AMERICAN PRIZE IN CONDUCTING

Southern Utah University, Cedar City, UT: National recognition has fallen upon **SUU's Dr. Kevin L. Baker, Assistant Professor/Director of Choral Activities**, who has been named as the 2014 winner of **The American Prize in Conducting in the college/university division**. Maestro Baker was selected from applications reviewed this summer from all across the United States. **The American Prize** is a series of new, non-profit competitions unique in scope and structure, designed to recognize and reward the best performing artists, ensembles and composers in the United States. **The American Prize** was founded in 2009 and is awarded annually in many areas of the performing arts. Complete information on the website: www.theamericanprize.org.

This year's judges commended Dr. Baker's conducting and commented: "...clear and expressive, reflecting the musical style of each piece...a conductor easy to sing for..."

Shauna Mendini, Dean of SUU's College of Performing and Visual Arts, praised Baker's honor, "Dr. Baker's achievement of national recognition confirms what we observe on a day-to-day basis, a faculty member with exceptional skills who is dedicated to student success. We are immensely proud of Dr. Baker in receiving this national honor." Additional acclaim came from **Dr. Keith Bradshaw**, Chair of SUU's Department of Music, "We are extremely pleased with Dr. Baker's award, though not terribly surprised. He does an excellent job with the choirs, achieving technically strong and musically moving performances. We are fortunate to have a gifted conductor like Dr. Baker on our faculty at SUU."

Winners of **The American Prize** receive cash prizes, professional adjudication and regional, national and international recognition based on recorded performances. In addition to monetary rewards and written evaluations from judges, winners are profiled on **The American Prize** website, where links will lead to video and audio excerpts of winning performances.

The American Prize grew from the belief that a great deal of excellent music being made in this country goes unrecognized and unheralded, not only in our major cities, but all across the country: in schools and churches, in colleges and universities, and by community and professional musicians. With the performing arts in America marginalized like never before, **The American Prize** seeks to fill the gap that leaves excellent artists and ensembles struggling for visibility and viability. **The American Prize** recognizes and rewards the best America produces, without bias against small city versus large, or unknown artist versus well-known.

David Katz, chief judge of **The American Prize**, is a professional conductor, award-winning composer, playwright, actor and arts advocate. He is author of *Muse of Fire*, the acclaimed one-man play about the art of conducting. Joining Katz in selecting winners of **The American Prize** is a panel of judges as varied in background and experience as we hope the winners of **The American Prize** will be. Made up of distinguished musicians representing virtually every region of the country, the group includes professional vocalists, conductors, composers and pianists, tenured professors and orchestra, band and choral musicians.

“Most artists may never win a Grammy award, or a Pulitzer, or a Tony, or perhaps even be nominated,” Katz said, “but that does not mean that they are not worthy of recognition and reward. Quality in the arts is not limited to the coasts, or to the familiar names. It is on view all over the United States, if you take the time to look for it. **The American Prize** exists to encourage and herald that excellence. By shining a light on nationally recognized achievement, winners of **The American Prize** receive world-class bragging rights to use in promotion right at home. “If **The American Prize** helps build careers, or contributes to local pride, or assists with increasing the audience for an artist or ensemble, builds the donor base, or stimulates opportunities or recruitment for winning artists and ensembles, then we have fulfilled our mission.”

The American Prize sponsors competitions for conductors, ensembles, vocalists, composers, stage directors and pianists. **The American Prize** is administered by Hat City Music Theater, Inc., a 501(c)3 non-profit performing arts organization based in Danbury, Connecticut. For more about The American Prize, visit WEBSITE: www.theamericanprize.org

Dr. Kevin L. Baker holds a Bachelor’s degree in music from Southwest Baptist University, a Master of Music degree in Choral Conducting and the Ph.D. in music Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Missouri-Columbia. He spent seven years as a high school choral director, and has held the position of Director of Choral Activities at Mineral Area College, St. Norbert College, Culver-Stockton College and Southern Utah University. He has been awarded tenure at the high school and collegiate levels and is

highly active as a conductor, clinician and adjudicator, having led nearly 100 such events. He has championed community engagement and the choral/orchestral genre, starting multiple Music Masterworks programs that bring together community singers, instrumentalists and collegiate musicians. He has held membership in professional organizations such as the American Choral Directors Association, the National Association for Music Education and the National Association of Teachers of Singing.

ABOUT THE COLLEGE

The Southern Utah University College of Performing and Visual Arts is comprised of nationally accredited departments of Art and Design, Music, Theatre Arts and Dance, as well as the new Center for Shakespeare Studies and a graduate program in Arts Administration. The College offers 16 different degree areas, including liberal arts Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees; professional Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Fine Arts in art and theatre degrees; and a Master of Fine Arts in Arts Administration degree. The Center for Shakespeare Studies offers a minor in Shakespeare Studies. More than 60 full- and part-time faculty and staff are engaged in teaching and mentoring over 550 majors in the College. Over 1100 students enroll each year in over 195 arts classes on the SUU campus. The College presents 100 performances, lectures, presentations, and exhibitions each year. The College's affiliate organizations include the Braithwaite Fine Arts Gallery, Utah Shakespeare Festival, and the SUU Ballroom Dance Company. For more information about the College of Performing and Visual Arts, contact the Office of the Dean (435) 865-8561, or by e-mail at cpvamktg@suu.edu.