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Countertenor Mark Crayton wins 1st Prize at *first* Classical Singer Vocal Competition

On Sunday, May 30, 2004, in Millard Auditorium, in Hartford, Connecticut, Countertenor Mark Crayton was awarded 1st Prize at the first Classical Singer Vocal Competition sponsored by Classical Singer Magazine. For his winning arias, Mr. Crayton sang, "I know a bank where the wild thyme blows." from A Midsummer Night's Dream by Benjamin Britten and "Muora Cesare, muora... L'empio, sleale." from Giulio Cesare by Georg Friedrich Handel.

The Award was presented to Mark Crayton at the closing ceremonies of the 1st Classical Singer Convention by Shawna Gottfredson, Coordinator of the Competition in the presence of Classical Singer Magazine's publisher, David Wood, its Editor-in-Chief, CJ Williamson, Mark Stoddard, the magazine's Manager, and opera soprano Carol Vaness. The judges were Joy Davidson, Dominic Cossa, Joanna Levy and Faith Esham whose comments included, "What a super performer! ... This is a wonderful day & age for the Countertenor... sweet, clear timbre, excellent diction... excellent in every way: phrasing, breath management, intonation, presentation, variety and imaginative ornaments, Bravo!"

Mark Crayton performs on concert stages and in opera houses throughout the United States and Europe, and his extensive repertoire includes many and diverse works. Mr. Crayton created the role of the "First Minstrel" in The Holland Festival's production of Peter Onnes opera/theatre piece *Pantagruel et Gargantua*. This role was specifically written for Mark Crayton.

Besides his operatic and orchestral engagements, the recital repertoire continues to be very important to Mark Crayton. Ever since his recital debut at the Ravinia Music Festival in 1995, he has been regularly heard in recitals that have included performances at New York's Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, a live studio broadcast by Chicago's classical radio station WFMT that was also transmitted via the internet, and an engagement at The Philips Collection in Washington, DC. Recently Mr. Crayton was heard in recital in Amsterdam and London. Also, Mr. Crayton is frequently a guest soloist, with the Chicago-based chamber ensemble called Haydn By The Lake, which performs music of the late 18th and early 19th centuries on period instruments. Ahead for Mr. Crayton are performances with the Elgin Symphony Orchestra, *Messiah* with the National Chorale at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall, his recital debut on Chicago's acclaimed Jewel Box Series, and a debut with the San Diego Opera.

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In 2002-2003, Mark Crayton was invited by the composer Philip Glass and the Tony Award director Mary Zimmerman to sing in the world premiere performances of Glass' opera *Galileo Galilei* in Chicago, New York City and London.

Mr. Crayton made his debut at the Kennedy Center with Maestro Stephen Simon and The Washington Chamber Symphony singing Purcell's *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*, and soon after, Mark Crayton made his debut at Chicago's Orchestra Hall singing Handel's *Messiah* with The Apollo Chorus of Chicago under the direction of Stephen Alltop; this Chorus was founded in 1872. Other highlights from past seasons include his role as Bacchus in Alexander Goehr's critically acclaimed *Arianna* for the Opera Theatre of St. Louis, performances as Amore in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and as Ericlea in *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* with Music of the Baroque, and his Carnegie Hall performances as the alto soloist in Bach's *Magnificat* and in Mozart's *Regina Coeli*.

In addition to his engagements in concert halls and opera houses, in 2002, Mark Crayton was chosen by composer John Kander and lyricist Fred Ebb to sing the role of Louis Perch in their new musical called *The Visit* starring Chita Rivera at Chicago's The Goodman Theatre; discussions are now underway for a possible New York production.

A native of Indianapolis, Indiana, Mr. Crayton attended Butler University and the University of Tennessee. He later pursued advanced studies with Nina Belavin Kor, Sharon Beckendorf Searles and Max van Egmond. Currently, Mark Crayton studies with the renowned soprano Judith Haddon.

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