

March 3, 2009

ASU students take top honors at state vocal competition

Two Albany State University voice majors stood out among the competition recently in the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) State Auditions, held at Kennesaw State University. Students from the state's public and private colleges and universities competed in the auditions, which were held Feb. 20-21.

"The opinions from the judges mean a lot because the experience is priceless," said Dr. Leroy Bynum, dean of the College of Arts and Humanities. "Winning gives a better sense of how competitive these students can be in a national arena."

Edwin Gilliam, a 23-year-old senior applied voice major from Atlanta, won first place in the Four Year College Male Division.

"I found out while I was in the practice room, and I was very nervous," Gilliam said. "When I was told, I was extremely excited and astonished."

Gilliam beat out every other senior male in the state, including students from larger institutions, such as the University of Georgia, Georgia State University, Georgia Southern University, Columbus State University, Mercer University, Shorter College and Kennesaw State University.

"This is going to marketable," Gilliam said. "It's beyond me. It lets people know that you can be at a smaller institution and still go and give a top-notch performance and compete with any other, much larger school. I recognize that God has given me this opportunity and begin to graduate and venture off."

Kelly Harlemon, a 20-year-old sophomore voice major from Atlanta, placed second in the semifinal competition of the



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"It felt really good seeing my mother crying and showing emotion," she said. "I was crying and excited when I found out as well."

Bynum said, "Though she didn't place in the state finals, placing this high in the semi-finals is an accomplishment in itself. This was a huge category with more than 100 singers representing every school."

Harlemon said she started singing in church and her mother, a vocalist, was her inspiration. After graduation, she plans to attend graduate school at Florida State or Georgia State.

"I could not do this with out God," she said. "If I did not meditate and have the support of my colleagues, it would've been difficult."

Harlemon will perform in *Dido Aenus* as part of ASU's Opera Workshop later this month.

Photo caption: Edwin Gilliam (right) won first place in the Four Year College Male Division at the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) State Auditions held recently at Kennesaw State University. Kelly Harlemon (left) placed second in the semifinal round of the competition. Both are voice majors at Albany State University.