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NEW YORK-MAY 19: Career Bridges' 7th Annual Gala Concert and Dinner was held on May 19, 2009 at the Jumeirah Essex House, 160 Central Park South, New York City, NY (Tel: 212.247.0300) The special evening was held with over 200 guests in attendance, honoring [Speight Jenkins](#), the general director of the [Seattle Opera](#), a national advocate for the support of young opera singers, as well as maestro [Julius Rudel](#), former general director and conductor of the [NYC Opera](#), a man who has discovered many a young opera talent. It introduced 2009 Career Bridges grant winners as well. Also honored were the [Metropolitan Opera Chorus](#), with **Chorus Master, Donald Palumbo**, and the Career Bridges 2009 Grant Winners who justifiably are dubbed as 'stellar.' Attending the glittering event as one of its Honorary chairs, [Patrice Munsel](#), an American coloratura soprano who was the youngest ever to star at the Metropolitan Opera. Also attending was the ever-vivacious [Arlene Dahl](#) and husband **Mark Rose**. The silent auction featured **DESIGNS by Rafael Sanchez** including a Matisse print bag, a hand-painted dragon fly earrings, a carved rock crystal and Faux Amber pendant necklace worth \$6,000, and an assortment of items such as lunch at upscale NY restaurants, dinner at John Livanos' Molyvos restaurant, Café Des Artistes among others, a week's accommodations for two at Quisisana in Maine, and two night stay with 4 course dinner at [Oheka Castle](#) on Long Island's Gold Coast. **Barbara and David Bender**, co-founders, stated "We are so thankful; because of you we are able to continue to provide grants over a three year period for training and performance opportunities to highly talented young classical singers in order to prepare them to launch their careers." **Photos & Story Courtesy of Lorraine Cancro.**

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NEW YORK-MAY 19: Co-Founders of Career Bridges, David Schuyler Bender and Barbara Meister Bender with Speight Jenkins attend Career Bridges 7th Annual Gala Concert & Dinner on Tuesday, May 19, 2009 at Jumeirah Essex House, 160 Central Park South, New York City, NY

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