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The Metropolitan Room erupted into wild cheers when David Baida was announced as the next MetroStar last night. Many leapt to their feet as the "On Your Feet" ensemble member stepped forward to acknowledge the roars of approval rumbling through the club. For many it was a situation of "they all deserved to win," but few could quibble with the funny, lovable and steady-voiced Baida coming out on top of the 7-week singers' contest.

To win the very evenly matched finals featuring three men and two women, Baida had to beat out the graciously seductive empty-nester Wendy Scherl (the 1st runner up) and the forever inventive satirical songstress [April Leonhard](#) (the 2nd runner up). Grabbing the Special Audience award was the electrifying song and dance man [Stanley Martin](#) ("Aladdin" on Broadway). The sweet-toned and equally sweet natured Samuel McDonald rounded out the Top Five.

Baida, who plays an array of character roles as an ensemble member of Broadway's "On Your Feet," showed how he was, in the words of one judge "always prepared, so smart, like he knew what he needed to do at every turn." Another judge commented, "we like your talent, it's so obvious, but you are likable too, and that's just so special to see." The Southern California native told the story of how he had come this close to giving up on an acting career before getting the call to join the cast of "On Your Feet."

Baida will develop a new show for the Metropolitan Room as part of his prize for winning. Leonhard, who played four instruments including trombone, guitar, yukelele and kazoo in the course of the 7-week competition, and Scherl -- the always poised Ridgefield CT mom who let her hair down every week to reveal a soaring lazer sharp alto -- will open for Baida when he premieres his new show.

While the audience and jury votes were being tallied, singer and director [Gretchen Reinhausen](#) (who served as one of the competition's four permanent judges) performed and paid tribute to the stamina and strong work ethics of the finalists. Last year's MetroStar winner [Minda Larsen](#), who had just this month finished her very well-received winning show "My Southern Song," performed and was as winning as ever. Another special treat was last year's Special Audience Award winner -- the precocious 10th grader [Josephine Bianco](#) -- who delivered another barnburner of a vocal performance.

The MAC Award-winning [Tom Gamblin](#), who was the contest's host and talent wrangler for the sixth time, was loose and good-natured throughout the night; MetroStar's resident music director, the prodigiously talented [Tracy Stark](#) once again managed multiple styles and personalities with a seemingly effortless touch.

The 2016 MetroStar Talent Challenge's permanent judges included the singer and writer (and 2012 MetroStar) [Billie Roe](#); Reinhausen; the Metropolitan Room's booking manager and cabaret producer [Joseph Macchia](#), and cabaret journalist [Roy Sander](#), who has served as jury chairman since the contest's inception. Top director [Barry Kleinbort](#) was MetroStar's resident mentor for the second year-in-a-row, offering performance-improving pointers to the contest's late-stage contestants.

MetroStar, a contest that challenges singers to raise their standards and push themselves artistically, got underway on July 11 and performed on seven consecutive Mondays. Since it began in 2008, MetroStar has launched and redefined the careers of several standouts in cabaret and jazz. Past winners, in chronological order have included [Anne Steele](#), [Liz Lark Brown](#), [T. Oliver Reid](#), [Marissa Mulder](#), [Billie Roe](#), [Lauren Stanford](#), [Kristoffer Lowe](#), and [Minda Larsen](#), the 2015 MetroStar.

The MAC, Bistro and Nightlife Award-winning Metropolitan Room, 34 West 22nd Street, has been keeping kids off the streets and adults from spending too much time watching television since 2006. The club celebrated its 10th anniversary in May. For reservations, call 212/206-0440 or to order online visit [www.metropolitanroom.com](http://www.metropolitanroom.com).