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ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE
For teen from AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School

New York City, April 28, 2009 -- Captivating audiences with a performance of a sonnet and monologue from Shakespeare, Merri Rashoyan, a student of Adrienne Alvarez at AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School, placed as a semi-finalist at the English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition. The competition was held on April 27th at Lincoln Center in New York City for 59 winners of ESU Branch competitions nationwide. Merri had won the ESU Los Angeles Branch regional competition.

This year's winner of the ESU Boston regional competition, Talene Monahon, won first prize in the ESU National Shakespeare Competition, winning a full tuition scholarship to the British American Drama Academy's *Midsummer Conservatory Program* in Oxford, England. Second place winner, Addison Hamilton, representing the Atlanta Branch, won \$1000.00 from the English-Speaking Union. Third place winner, Matthew Amira, representing the New York Branch of the ESU, won \$500 from the Shakespeare Society.

The English-Speaking Union's National Shakespeare Competition is a school-based program to help students develop their speaking and critical thinking skills and their appreciation of literature as they explore the beauty of the language and timeless themes in Shakespeare's works. In three progressive competition levels, students memorize, interpret, and perform monologues and sonnets in their own schools, at ESU Branch sponsored community competitions and at the National Shakespeare Competition. Inaugurated in 1983, the program has engaged more than 250,000 young people.

As the winner of a local English-Speaking Union Branch Competition, Merri was awarded the trip to New York City for the final stage of the Competition. The ESU National Headquarters provided the finalists with three full days of activities, including a performance of the new Broadway production of, *Waiting for Godot*, an acting workshop at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and tours of New York City. Perhaps best of all for these teenagers was the opportunity to spend three days with other students from across the country, who share their love of theater and, particularly, Shakespeare.

Among the distinguished judges for this year's Competition were actor Gene Wilder; Shakespeare scholar Maurice Charney, Rutgers University Professor of English; Directors Barry Edelstein, of the Public Theater Shakespeare Lab, and Michael Sexton, The Shakespeare Society; Manhattan Theatre Club Casting Director Nancy Piccione; Actor Peter Francis James; and Louis Sheeder, Director of the Classical Studio, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University.

The English-Speaking Union of the United States is a non-profit, non-political educational organization whose mission is to promote scholarship and the advancement of knowledge through the effective use of English in an expanding global community. The ESU carries out its work through a network of 72 U.S. Branches, sponsoring a variety of language and international education programs. For information on joining the ESU, visit www.esuus.org or call 212-818-1200.

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Merri Rashoyan, semi-finalist in the 2009 English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition at Lincoln Center in New York City.