



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Academy of Vocal Arts Celebrates its
75th Anniversary with
“BrAVA Philadelphia!
A Concert extrAVaganza of Opera Stars”

Gala concert will feature a stunning lineup of some of AVA’s most prominent alumni, including Metropolitan Opera star Joyce DiDonato. AVA Music Director Christofer Macatsoris conducts the AVA Opera Orchestra

Wednesday, March 31, 2010

Philadelphia: The Academy of Vocal Arts will celebrate seventy-five years of “giving voice to opera’s future” in a gala concert extravaganza featuring AVA star alumni and resident artists, including international superstar, mezzo-soprano **Joyce DiDonato**, plus sopranos **Eglise Gutiérrez**, **Angela Meade**, **Latonia Moore** and **Ailyn Pérez**. AVA’s three tenors will be **Stephen Costello**, **Michael Fabiano** and **James Valenti**. Bass **Burak Bilgili** and baritone **Luis Ledesma**, as well as the entire current roster of AVA resident artists, will complete this operatic tour-de-force. **Christofer Macatsoris** will conduct the AVA Opera Orchestra.

During its seventy-five year history, Philadelphia’s famed opera training program has produced some of the world’s finest classical vocal artists. Founded in 1934 by prominent Philadelphian Helen Corning Warden, the mission of The Academy of Vocal Arts is to prepare singers of the highest caliber for international careers in opera. On **Wednesday, March 31, 2010**, this milestone will be celebrated in style with **BrAVA Philadelphia!** The star-studded concert at the Kimmel Center’s **Verizon Hall** will be preceded by cocktails and a sumptuous dinner at the **Hyatt at the Bellevue**. Patrons will then enjoy special reserved seating at the concert, and a return to the **Hyatt at the Bellevue** for a “Meet the Artists”

Champagne and dessert reception afterwards (\$500 – \$750). Tickets are also available for opera lovers who prefer to attend the concert only (\$28 - \$48) or the concert/reception combination (\$125).

The presenting sponsor for **BrAVA Philadelphia!** is **Wachovia – A Wells Fargo Company**.

THE ARTISTS

CHRISTOFER MACATSORIS, *conductor*

Maestro Macatsoris began his conducting career in Italy at the Conservatory in Milan. He went on to study conducting privately with such famed maestri as Fausto Cleva, Max Rudolf, and Tullio Serafin, and studied composition with Vincent Persichetti. Among his many performance credits are appearances with **Philadelphia Lyric Opera Company, Pennsylvania Opera Company, San Francisco Opera Center**, and numerous regional opera companies. In 1970, Max Rudolf invited him to The Curtis Institute of Music, where he taught and conducted for seven years. Mr. Macatsoris was the music director of the weekly NBC-TV program, *Opera Theatre*, and was music director and conductor for two seasons with the **Opera at Ambler Festival**. As a pianist, he toured with **Metropolitan Opera** singers in recital programs.

As music director of AVA since 1977, he has led acclaimed performances of *Il tritico*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Don Giovanni*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, and *Albert Herring*, which was broadcast on PBS. In addition, many operas received their Delaware Valley premieres at AVA under his baton, including *Idomeneo*, *La finta giardiniera*, *Deidamia*, *Capriccio*, *Un giorno di Regno*, and Wargo's *A Chekhov Trilogy*. Mr. Macatsoris has appeared at **The International Corfu Festival**, Greece, in 1981 and 1982, leading performances of *The Rape of Lucretia*, *La sonnambula*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and *Così fan tutte*. He has conducted in many regional American houses and has been on the conducting staff of **San Francisco Opera Company**. In great demand as a lecturer and for master classes, he has conducted them at major universities, including Johns Hopkins, Tulane, Loyola of New Orleans and SUNY-Buffalo. He frequently serves as a panel judge for the **National Council Auditions of the Metropolitan Opera**, and earns high praise for his interpretive abilities and total commitment to excellent opera theater. This past season Maestro Macatsoris celebrated thirty years as AVA's Music Director.

JOYCE DI DONATO, *mezzo-soprano* AVA '95

Wherever she sings, Joyce DiDonato earns rhapsodic reviews. Called "the flame-toned American mezzo" by Britain's *Daily Telegraph*, she is among the world's most enchanting performers and the winner of many honors including the Metropolitan Opera's Beverly Sills Award and the 2009 *Opera News* Award. The mezzo-soprano launches 2010 in Spain with a recital tour of Italian love songs, also to be performed in Brussels and twice in London's Wigmore Hall. She returns to Lyric Opera of Chicago as Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*, before making another role debut as Rossini's Elena in *La donna del lago*, first in Geneva and then, with Juan Diego Floréz, at the Opéra National de Paris. The pair reunites again in July, at Milan's La Scala for their trumpeted collaboration in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*.

EGLISE GUTIÉRREZ, soprano AVA '04

A fast rising star on the international opera scene, Eglise Gutiérrez, is blazing her way across the operatic stages of Europe and America with her committed embodiments of the *bel canto* coloratura heroines. Her 2009/2010 season includes Gilda in *Rigoletto* at Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Elvira in *I puritani* at Teatro Real of Madrid, the title role in *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the Savonlinna Festival, the Ravinia Festival, and performances with Vancouver Opera and the Greek National Opera.

STEPHEN COSTELLO, tenor AVA '07

The 2009 recipient of the Richard Tucker Award, Mr. Costello's upcoming engagements include Roméo in *Roméo et Juliette* with San Diego Opera, the role of Greenhorn in the world premiere of Jake Heggie's *Moby Dick* with the Dallas Opera, Rodolfo in *La bohème* at Deutsche Oper Berlin and Cincinnati Opera, and the Salzburg Festival for Roméo in *Roméo et Juliette*. Future seasons will find his return to the Metropolitan Opera for the opening production of the 2011/12 season, and debuts with San Francisco Opera, the Glyndebourne Festival, and the Wiener Staatsoper.

JAMES VALENTI, tenor AVA '06

The 2009/10 season marks Valenti's debuts with the Metropolitan Opera and the Royal Opera at Covent Garden, both as Alfredo in *La traviata* opposite Angela Gheorghiu. He portrayed the Duke in *Rigoletto* to open the season of the Maggio Musicale in Florence, before performing Massenet's *Werther* for the first time with Opera National de Lyon in Tokyo. He debuted at Milan's Teatro alla Scala last year as Rodolfo in *La bohème* under the baton of Gustavo Dudamel and has portrayed Pinkerton in *Madama*

Butterfly at San Francisco Opera and New York City Opera, which including an Emmy Award-winning PBS telecast.

AILYN PÉREZ, soprano AVA '06

Ms. Pérez sang Leila in *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* with the Teatro Municipal in Santiago, Chile, in the summer of 2009, followed by her debut at the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin as Violetta in *La traviata*. She makes further debuts at the Arizona Opera, as Mimì in *La bohème*, followed by San Diego Opera, as Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette*, Spoleto Festival USA, in her role debut as Magda in *La Rondine*, and Cincinnati Opera, for further performances of Mimì. Future seasons will feature a debut at Santa Fe Opera, Marguerite in *Faust* with San Diego Opera, Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* with Dallas Opera, and a return to Opera Company of Philadelphia.

BURAK BILGILI, bass AVA '04

Turkish-born bass-baritone Burak Bilgili recently performed Zaccaria in Michigan Opera Theatre's *Nabucco* and Ferrando in San Francisco Opera's season-opening *Il trovatore*, a role he performed at the Metropolitan Opera last spring. This past summer he was Giorgio in *I Puritani* with Teatro Massimo Palermo at the Savonlinna Festival. Since his 2002/03 debut at Milan's Teatro alla Scala as Don Alfonso in *Lucrezia Borgia*, he has enjoyed a busy international schedule of engagements. He made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Leporello in *Don Giovanni* in 2004. Upcoming performances include roles in *Simon Boccanegra* in Montreal, *I puritani* in Cagliari, Verdi *Requiem* with the Atlanta Symphony, and his Bayerische Staatsoper debut as Don Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in 2010/11.

ANGELA MEADE, soprano AVA '09

Less than two years after her professional debut, American soprano Angela Meade has quickly become recognized as one of the outstanding vocalists of her generation. She made her professional operatic debut in 2008 at the Metropolitan Opera as Elvira in *Ernani*. As one of the winners of the 2007 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, she was featured in the documentary film *The Audition*. Angela Meade's 2009/10 season includes a return to the Metropolitan Opera as Mozart's Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro*. She also covers the title role in Rossini's *Armida*. Ms. Meade will cover Konstanze in Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* with the San Francisco Opera, and returns to The Caramoor Festival to perform the iconic title role in Bellini's *Norma*, conducted by Will Crutchfield.

MICHAEL FABIANO, tenor AVA '09

American tenor, Michael Fabiano is establishing himself as one of the major young talents in the world today. A first-prize winner of the 2007 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, he is prominently featured in *The Audition*, the recently released documentary produced by the Metropolitan Opera about this competition. Mr. Fabiano's 2009/10 season began with his London debut at English National Opera as the Duke in *Rigoletto*. He made his Metropolitan Opera debut in January 2010 as Raffaele in Verdi's *Stiffelio*. Future performances include *La traviata* at the Teatro San Carlo, and *L'elisir d'amore* at the Fort Worth Opera.

LATONIA MOORE, soprano AVA '04

Soprano Latonia Moore sang the title role of *Aida* this past summer with the Minnesota Orchestra under Maestro Andrew Litton. She performed *Madama Butterfly* with the Hamburgische Staatsoper last spring and just prior, Micaela in *Carmen* in Bilbao and at New York City Opera. She also made her debut at Covent Garden as Liu in *Turandot*. Her current season at the Hamburgische Staatsoper includes *Aida*, a role she will repeat at Covent Garden in 2010/11. She also returns to Bilbao in the title role of *Susannah* in a new production, and to Covent Garden in 2010/11 as *Aida*.

LUIS LEDESMA, baritone AVA '98

Luis Ledesma has established himself as a singer with "powerful, yet refined vocal and theatrical gifts." His career already includes appearances in several international opera houses around the world, including Teatro alla Scala. In the 2009/10 Season and beyond, he performs Scarpia in *Tosca* with Nashville Opera; the title role *Rigoletto* at Florentine Opera of Milwaukee; Escamillo in *Carmen* with the Manitoba Opera, Arizona Opera, Opera New Jersey, and in concert with the Orlando Philharmonic; Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* with the San Antonio Opera; Valentin in *Faust* at the Hawaii Opera Theater; and a return to the Savonlinna Festival in summer 2010 as Escamillo in *Carmen*.

THE ACADEMY OF VOCAL ARTS

The mission of The Academy of Vocal Arts, founded in 1934 by Helen Corning Warden, is to provide tuition-free vocal and opera training of the highest quality, and financial support during training, to exceptionally talented and committed young singers who have the potential for international stature, and to present them in professional performances that are accessible to a wide community.

Gifted singers come from throughout the world to seek the exceptional guidance and training that The Academy of Vocal Arts offers. AVA's four-year program is unique, not only because it is a fully tuition-

free institution that focuses solely on operatic training, but also because it has established a niche as an organization that produces opera. Admission is determined by competitive annual auditions, with an average of 8 to 10 singers admitted each year. The total roster of resident artists is purposely kept low and averages 25-30 in total. Those who are accepted receive training equivalent to more than \$70,000 per year. A faculty of individuals who are among the finest in their fields provides intensive training in voice, acting, stage combat, repertoire, languages, and other related subjects necessary for an operatic career.

Over the past seven decades, outstanding singers of international stature have attended AVA, including David Adams, Lando Bartolini, Gwendolyn Bradley, Thomas Carson, Elizabeth Carter, Richard Clark, Dominic Cossa, John Darrenkamp, Joyce DiDonato, Harry Dworchak, Ryan Edwards, Wilhelmina Fernandez, Allan Glassman, Vernon Hartman, Nancy Fabiola Herrera, Luis Ledesma, James Morris, Stuart Neill, John Packard, James Pease, David Poleri, Julien Robbins, Valerian Ruminski, Jane Shaulis, Hugh Smith, Ruth Ann Swenson, Indra Thomas, Richard Troxell, Victoria Vergara, Stephen West, Beverly Wolff, and currently making their mark in the opera world, recent graduates Burak Bilgili, Stephen Costello, Ellie Dehn, Michael Fabiano, Jesus Garcia, Othalie Graham, Eglise Gutierrez, Angela Meade, Latonia Moore, Ailyn Pérez, Dongwon Shin, and James Valenti.

FACT SHEET

The Academy of Vocal Arts

BrAVA Philadelphia!

A Concert ExtrAVaganza of Opera Stars

Honorary Chairs

Carole Haas Gravagno and Emilio Gravagno

Gala Co-Chairs

R. Randolph Apgar and Lucinda S. Landreth

Presenting Sponsor

WACHOVIA – A Wells Fargo Company

Wednesday, March 31, 2010

5 p.m. Cocktails & hors d'oeuvres

6 p.m. Dinner with special guests from the world of opera

The Hyatt at the Bellevue

7:30 p.m. Gala Concert

Verizon Hall, Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts

Featuring

oyce DiDonato, mezzo-soprano
Eglise Gutiérrez, soprano
Angela Meade, soprano
Latonia Moore, soprano
Ailyn Pérez, soprano
Stephen Costello, tenor
Michael Fabiano, tenor
James Valenti, tenor
Luis Ledesma, baritone
Burak Bilgili, bass-baritone

The AVA Resident Artists

Christofer Macatsoris, conductor
The AVA Opera Orchestra

10:00 p.m. Champagne and dessert reception with the stars
The Hyatt at the Bellevue

Gala tickets: \$750 or \$450 per person (all proceeds benefit the AVA scholarship fund)

Concert plus Champagne and dessert reception: \$125 per person

Concert tickets only: \$48 (adult), \$43 (senior), \$28 (student) per person
Premium Seating upgrade add \$35 per ticket
Group discounts available

Contact 215-735-1685 or dstuart@avaopera.org for more info.

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