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For more information contact: Denise Stuart, *Director of Marketing and Public Relations*

1920 Spruce Street Philadelphia, PA 19103

215 735-1685 dstuart@avaopera.org

The Academy of Vocal Arts Opens its 77th Season with *Offenbach's Les Contes d'Hoffmann*

**Saturday, November 12 – 22, 2011
Center City, Warrington, and Haverford venues**

Philadelphia: The Academy of Vocal Arts will open its 77th season with one of opera's most theatrical offerings, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (The Tales of Hoffmann). In addition to three performances in AVA's intimate Warden Theater, the production will be presented at Central Bucks South High School on November 19th and at Centennial Hall, the Haverford School, November 21st and 22nd.

Les Contes d'Hoffmann was Jacques Offenbach's last opera, and premiered four months after the composer's death. The French libretto was written by Jules Barbier and is based on short stories by German poet and author E. T. A. Hoffmann, also known for his *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*, upon which *The Nutcracker* ballet was based. Because Offenbach never finished the opera, several versions have been performed over the years. Recently, American musicologist Michael Kaye has edited what is considered to be the "definitive" version, and this is the version that AVA will perform.

Christofer Macatsoris and stage director David Gately will speak at a Preview of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* at AVA on Wednesday, November 2nd at 5:30 p.m. The cast will also perform excerpts from the opera. The Preview is free and open to the public, but reservations are required. Those interested should call AVA at 215 735-1685.

SYNOPSIS

Prologue

The poet Hoffmann has deserted his Muse, because he has fallen in love with Stella, an opera singer. In an effort to win Hoffmann back, the Muse takes on the appearance of his best friend, Nicklausse. Stella, currently performing in *Don Giovanni*, has sent a letter to Councillor Lindorf, another of her suiters, telling him that she has become involved with Hoffmann, but Lindorf believes he can win Stella back.

During intermission, Hoffmann and Nicklausse join members of the audience in a nearby tavern. Not sure where Stella's affections lie, Hoffmann begins to drown his sorrows. Seeing Lindorf, he blames him for perhaps losing Stella, then his imagination takes off and he begins to tell stories of his three great loves, all aspects of Stella – the doll Olympia, the artist Antonia, and the courtesan Giulietta.

Act One – Olympia

Hoffmann has seen a beautiful girl in the window of the home of scientist Spalanzani. Wanting to meet her, he visits Spalanzani, feigning interest in his inventions. Spalanzani tells him the girl is his daughter Olympia, but she is actually an automaton that he co-created with Coppélius, a trader in optical devices. Coppélius introduces himself to Hoffmann, and offers to sell him magic glasses. When Hoffmann puts the glasses on, he sees Olympia as a beautiful girl, and cannot tear his eyes away from her.

Coppélius and Spalanzani argue as to who owns Olympia and who is entitled to the profit made by her. Spalanzani says that he is her father, while Coppélius claims that he gave Olympia her eyes. The two make a bargain where Spalanzani arranges to pay off Coppélius via a third party. Spalanzani hosts a ball to introduce Olympia to society. After the guests have left for dinner, Hoffmann declares his love to her, but she responds mechanically. Still, behind the glasses, Hoffmann believes her to be real. Coppélius discovers that Spalanzani has cheated him, and vows to take his revenge. At the ball, Hoffmann is dancing a waltz with Olympia, when all of a sudden she begins frantically speeding up the tempo. Hoffmann falls on the floor and breaks his magic glasses. Spalanzani tries to take her away, but in the confusion, Coppélius destroys Olympia. Only then does Hoffmann realize that he was in love with an automaton.

Act Two – Antonia

Before the action begins, we learn that Hoffmann has been searching for Antonia, a young singer. He finds her in Munich, living with her father, Crespel. Antonia's mother, also a singer, died from a weak heart, which Antonia has inherited, along with her voice. Crespel has tried to sequester Antonia from Hoffmann and all of society, and he has forbidden her to sing, fearing for her life.

As the act opens, Hoffmann has found Antonia, and has obtained entrance to Crespel's home. His friend

Nicklausse cautions Hoffmann against pursuing his beloved, but Hoffmann ignores his advice. Hoffmann and Antonia express their mutual love, but Antonia fears that her father will discover Hoffmann, so she sends him away. Hoffmann, however, hides in the house in an attempt to discover why her father is so adamantly against him.

Doctor Miracle arrives and offers to cure Antonia. Crespel is opposed to this, as his wife died following Dr. Miracle's treatment, but is unable to expel him from the house. Hoffmann learns that Antonia may die if she sings and realizing that Dr. Miracle is endangering her life, begs Antonia to give up singing and marry him. Doctor Miracle reminds Antonia of what she is giving up, and conjures up the image of her dead mother. Antonia perceives Dr. Miracle's evil intent, but is unable to resist and sings passionately with her mother until she collapses. Crespel and Hoffmann rush to help her, but it is too late – Antonia is dead.

Act Three – Giulietta

The scene is Venice, and Hoffmann is a guest of Giulietta, a courtesan. He is disillusioned with love, but once again, ignores Nicklausse's warning. This time, Hoffmann's rival is Dapertutto, who has promised Giulietta a diamond in return for her stealing Hoffmann's reflection from a mirror – a euphemism for stealing his soul. Previously she stole for him the shadow of Schlemil, another admirer. Giulietta agrees.

At a gambling party, Giulietta teases and flirts with Hoffmann. She sings a song, giving Hoffmann meaningful looks. Giulietta asks Hoffmann to obtain the key to her boudoir from Schlemil. Schlemil, unwilling, challenges Hoffmann to a duel. Dapertutto gives Hoffmann his sword, and Hoffmann kills Schlemil. Giulietta pretends concern that Hoffmann will be arrested for murder, and begs him to flee. Hoffmann passionately professes his love, and Giulietta, taking advantage of the situation, asks him to give her his reflection in the mirror so that she can keep the memory of their love. Hoffmann is willing to give his reflection, soul, and life, and Giulietta, keeping her part of the bargain, gives Hoffmann's reflection to Dapertutto.

Epilogue

Hoffmann has finished his tales and his friends try to console him. The performance of *Don Giovanni* has ended, and Stella is receiving standing ovations. Hoffmann, at this point, is completely inebriated, and just wants to drink and forget. When Stella appears, Hoffmann is so drunk, that she blends with the visions from his tales. She leaves the tavern on Lindorf's arm, as Hoffmann's friends sing a drinking song. The Muse appears, no longer in disguise and comforts Hoffmann, telling him that through her, he will regain peace and will be able to transform his sorrow into poetry.

ABOUT 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 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**, and is in great demand as a lecturer and for master classes which he has conducted at major universities such as 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.

DAVID GATELY, stage director Recent reviews have hailed stage director David Gately as "Endlessly clever and witty in his direction of the opera" (Calgary Herald), and "certain honesty all too rare in big opera permeates this production." (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel). Mr. Gately is known for telling a story with his opera direction. Recently he directed *Carmen* with the Opera Company of Philadelphia, as well as productions of *l'elisir d'amore* with The Dallas Opera, *Madama Butterfly* with Seattle Opera, *La bohème* with Florida Grand Opera, *Carmen* in New Orleans, *Les Contes d'Hoffman* in Edmonton, *Die Zauberflöte* with the Cincinnati and Vancouver Operas, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Florentine Opera and Glimmerglass Opera, *Falstaff* with Opera Omaha and *Rigoletto* with Utah Opera. His last production at AVA was his hugely successful "wild west" production of *Don Pasquale*, for the 2008/2009 season, which has also been performed by San Diego Opera, Kentucky Opera, Calgary Opera, Chautauqua Opera, Virginia Opera, Dayton Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Opera Omaha,

Edmonton Opera, and Fort Worth Opera. Mr. Gately has directed many productions at AVA, including *La bohème* in 2005, *Das Rheingold* in 2006, and *Arabella* in 2011.

SCOTT CONNER, *bass* (Lindorf, Coppélius, Dr. Miracle, Dapertutto)

Scott Conner, from Olathe, Kansas, is a third-year AVA resident artist. In 2010 he was the Philadelphia district winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. At AVA he has sung the title role in *Don Giovanni*, Colline in *La bohème*, First Man in *The Scarlet Letter*, Direktor in *Capriccio*, and Oroveso in excerpts from *Norma*. Other roles include the title role in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Nashville and Columbus Opera; Masetto and Il commendatore in *Don Giovanni* with Opera Cleveland; the King in *Aida*, Don Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Nourabad in *The Pearl Fishers*, Wagner in *Faust*, all with Wichita Grand Opera; Mathieu in *Andrea Chenier* with Mobile Opera; Alidoro in *La Cenerentola*, Dr. Grenvil in *La traviata*, both with Opera New Jersey; Sparafucile in *Rigoletto* with Springfield Regional Opera; and Curio in *Giulio Cesare* with Lyric Opera of Kansas City. Mr. Conner holds a B.M. in Vocal Performance from the University of Missouri—Kansas City Conservatory of Music.

CHLOÉ MOORE, *soprano* (Antonia)

Chloé Moore, from Toronto, is a second-year AVA resident artist. Ms. Moore's recent performances include Giulietta in *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, Frasquita in *Carmen*, and Antonia in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* with the Crested Butte Music Festival. At AVA she has sung Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, Zdenka in *Arabella*, Mistress Brown in *The Scarlet Letter*, and Sister Osmina, Sister Dolcina and the Infirmary Sister in a concert version of *Suor Angelica*. In 2011 Ms. Moore was the recipient of the Rosalind Jackson Memorial Award from the Crested Butte Music Festival, first place winner in the Sacred Vocal Competition with *Concerts@First*, and received encouragement awards from both the Gerda Lissner International Vocal Competition and the Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation International Vocal Competition. Ms. Moore holds a M.M. in Vocal Performance from the University of Arizona and a B.M. from the University of Toronto.

CHRYSTAL E. WILLIAMS, *mezzo-soprano* (The Muse, Nicklausse)

Chrystal E. Williams, from Portsmouth, Virginia, is a second-year AVA resident artist. Ms. Williams earned a M.M. in Opera Performance from the Yale University School of Music and a B.M. in Voice Performance from Carnegie Mellon University. She is a regional winner of the National Association of Negro Musicians, Inc. in 2011, second place winner of the 2010 Washington International Competition for Voice and the 2009 New England region of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. At AVA she has sung Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*, Mistress of the Novices in *Suor Angelica*, Mistress Stone in *The Scarlet Letter*, and the Fortune Teller in *Arabella*. Ms. Williams recently was featured as a soloist in both St. Matthew Passion with the American Classical Orchestra and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the New Haven Symphony Orchestra

THE CAST (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

The Muse (mezzo-soprano) – Chrystal E. Williams
Nicklausse (mezzo-soprano) – Chrystal E. Williams, Bettina Schweiger, Sasha Hashemipour
Councillor Lindorf (bass) - Scott Conner, Musa Ngquangwana
Andrès (tenor) – Jeffrey Halili (AVA alumnus)
Luther (baritone) – Wes Mason
Nathanael (tenor) – John Viscardi
Hermann (baritone) - Christian Bowers
Hoffmann (tenor) – Sean Arnold, William Davenport
Spalanzani (tenor) – Jeffrey Halili (AVA alumnus)
Cochenille (tenor) – John Viscardi
Coppélius (bass) – Scott Conner, Musa Ngquangwana
Olympia (coloratura soprano) – Maria Aleida
Antonia (soprano) – Sydney Mancasola, Chloé Moore
Crespel (bass) – Patrick Guetti
Frantz (tenor) – Jeffrey Halili (AVA alumnus)
Dr. Miracle (bass) – Scott Conner, Musa Ngquangwana
Antonia’s Mother (mezzo-soprano) – Margaret Mezzacappa
Giulietta (soprano) - Alexandra Maximova, Olivia Vote
Schlemil (tenor) - Mo El Zein
Pittichinaccio (tenor) – Jeffrey Halili (AVA alumnus)
Dapertutto (bass) – Scott Conner, Musa Ngquangwana
Stella (soprano) – Sydney Mancasola, Chloé Moore

FACT SHEET**Les Contes d’Hoffmann (The Tales of Hoffmann)**

Premiere: Opera Comique, Paris on February 10, 1881

Jacques Offenbach, composer and Jules Barbier, libretto

Based on stories by E. T. A. Hoffmann

Saturday, November 12, 15, 17, 19, 21, and 22, 2011 at 7:30 p.m.

Christofer Macatsoris, conductor

David Gately, stage director

The AVA Opera Orchestra

Sung in French with English supertitles

\$60 adults / \$50 seniors / \$25 30 and Under / Students \$10

For tickets and information call 215 735-1685 or visit www.avaopera.org

For the November 19th performance at Central Bucks South High School call 215-862-2526

The Academy of Vocal Arts’ 2011 / 2012 Season

Les Contes d'Hoffmann / Offenbach*AVA's Helen Corning Warden Theater*

Saturday, November 12, 2011 @ 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 15, 2011 @ 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 17, 2011 @ 7:30 p.m.

Central Bucks South High School

1100 Folly Road, Warrington, PA

Saturday, November 19, 2011 @ 7:30 p.m.

Centennial Hall, The Haverford School

450 Lancaster Ave. Haverford, PA

Monday, November 21, 2011 @ 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 22, 2011 @ 7:30 p.m.

An Evening of Russian Romances*AVA's Helen Corning Warden Theater*

Tuesday, December 13, 2011 @ 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, December 15, 2011 @ 7:30 p.m.

Oberto / Verdi*Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center*

Thursday, January 26, 2012 @ 7:30 p.m.

Friday, January 27, 2012 @ 7:30 p.m.

Centennial Hall, The Haverford School

Tuesday, January 31, 2012 @ 7:30 p.m.

Pelléas et Mélisande / Debussy*AVA's Helen Corning Warden Theater*

Saturday, February 25, 2012 @ 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 28, 2012 @ 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 1, 2012 @ 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 3, 2012 @ 7:30 p.m.

Jubilate! A Concert of Sacred Music*Haddonfield United Methodist Church*

29 Warwick Road, Haddonfield, NJ

Sunday, March 11, 2012 @ 7:00 p.m.

St. Mary's Episcopal Church

104 Louella Avenue, Wayne, PA

Saturday, March 17, 2012 @ 7:30 p.m.

The Church of the Holy Trinity

Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia

Sunday, March 18, 2012 @ 7:00 p.m.

L'elisir d'amore / Donizetti*AVA's Helen Corning Warden Theater*

Saturday, April 28, 2012 @ 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 1, 2012 @ 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 3, 2012 @ 7:30 p.m.

Central Bucks South High School

1100 Folly Road, Warrington, PA

Saturday, May 5, 2012 @ 7:30 p.m.

Centennial Hall, The Haverford School

Tuesday, May 8, 2012 @ 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 10, 2012 @ 7:30 p.m.

*Walter K. Gordon Theater at Rutgers/Camden*3rd and Pearl Sts. Camden, NJ

May 13, 2012 @ 2:30 p.m. matinée

Farewell Recital*The Church of the Holy Trinity*

Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia

Friday, May 11, 2012 @ 7:30 p.m.

Operas: \$60 adults / \$50 seniors / \$25 30 & Under / \$10 students
Add \$35 per person for PREMIUM SEATING / Special group rates available

For more information, contact 215-735-1685 or visit www.avaopera.org

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, Wilhelminia 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

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world, recent graduates Burak Bilgili, Jan Cornelius, Stephen Costello, Ellie Dehn, Manon Strauss Evrard, Michael Fabiano, Jesus Garcia, Othalie Graham, Eglise Gutiérrez, Bryan Hymel, Takesha Meshé Kizart, Angela Meade, Latonia Moore, Ailyn Pérez, Dongwon Shin, Taylor Stayton, and James Valenti.

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