AVA’s Resident Artists in Massenet’s Manon
The mission of the Academy of Vocal Arts is to be the world's premier institution for training young artists as international opera soloists. Through rigorous instruction and coaching, and by presentations of Resident Artists from around the world in concerts, oratorios, public programs, and fully staged professional opera productions, the Academy trains artists with the high potential for career success while enriching lives in Philadelphia and beyond.

Founded in 1933, the Academy of Vocal Arts is the only tuition-free institution dedicated exclusively to the study of voice. When singers leave AVA, they are prepared to share their gifts with audiences of the world, fulfilling not only their own hopes and dreams, but those of AVA’s wise and generous founder, Helen Corning Warden.

Gifted singers come from throughout the world to seek the exceptional guidance and training that the Academy of Vocal Arts offers. Admission to the tuition-free program is determined by competitive annual auditions. While hundreds apply, only 8-10 are annually accepted into the four-year program. AVA’s student body is comprised of approximately 25 artists whose training is equivalent to more than $100,000 each year.
WELCOME

Letter from the President and Artistic Director

It is my pleasure to present to you High Notes, the annual report of the Academy of Vocal Arts. The report covers our most recent fiscal year, from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014. It represents a concise and accurate picture of AVA during the past year. Aside from the four professional operas and numerous concerts, recitals, lectures, and informal gatherings, the Resident Artists were hard at work training and preparing, not only for the Opera Theater season, but also for their future professional careers. The Resident Artists each receive an hour of vocal training each week in addition to many hours of vocal coaching, language lessons, stage combat lessons, and stage interpretation. Behind the success of each AVA artist stands the outstanding AVA faculty, who guide the Resident Artists through their advanced vocal training.

This has been another successful year of accomplishment at AVA. We graduated seven Resident Artists to promising careers in the field. Soprano Chloe Moore, mezzo Chrystal Williams and bass-baritone Musa Ngqungwana graduated with artist diplomas after completing four years at AVA. Bass Patrick Guetti, after winning the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, has a full year of professional work scheduled before he joins the Chicago Lyric Opera artist program in the spring. And sopranos Sydney Mancasola, Jessie Ngeunang and Shelley Jackson also left to accept professional contracts.

Tito Capobianco returned once again to direct Massenet’s Manon, the final production of the season, which included Mozart’s Cosi fan tutte, Verdi’s La traviata, and for the first time at AVA Tchaikovsky’s Pique Dame. World-renowned soprano Benita Valenti joined the voice faculty. This season we hope you will join us in welcoming eight new artists join the AVA roster: four sopranos, two mezzos, one baritone and one bass-baritone.

The Academy of Vocal Arts’ capital campaign, Raising Our Voices, allowed us to significantly expand the AVA facilities by adding the third building at 1916 Spruce Street, and provided much-needed space for a recital/lecture hall, rehearsal hall, four additional teaching studios, as well as a three-floor library, an exercise room for the artists, and additional offices. The campaign secured an additional $6 million for AVA’s endowment, which provides supplementary funding for training scholarships and for fellowships to assist the Resident Artists.

We hope that you had the opportunity to join us this past season to see our Resident Artists in action. We also hope that you might consider supporting us in the upcoming season, both by attending AVA performances, and supporting the tuition-free training of these outstanding young artists. Thank you for being such a valuable member of the AVA family. It is through your support that the Resident Artists and the Academy of Vocal Arts continue to enjoy great success.

Warm regards,

K. James McDowell
President and Artistic Director
During the 2013-2014 Season, AVA presented over thirty concerts and performances with approximately 10,000 attendees. The Opera Theater Season featured a fall production of *Così fan tutte*, staged by director Nic Muni, who set Mozart’s timeless romantic comedy in Martha’s Vineyard during the late 1960s. The winter production of Tchaikovsky’s dramatic *Pique Dame* (*The Queen of Spades*), was semi-staged and featured piano accompaniment by Russian vocal coach Ghenady Meirson. The next production of Giuseppe Verdi’s *La traviata*, staged by David Gately, sold out so quickly by subscription that an additional performance was added to accommodate demand. The AVA season concluded with Massenet’s masterpiece, *Manon*, a production beautifully realized by Tito Capobianco.

The AVA concert season featured the popular Giargiari Bel Canto Competition, with winners Diego Silva (first prize), Shelley Jackson and Sydney Mancasola (tied for second prize), and Patrick Guetti (audience choice winner of the James Parkinson Award). Other concerts included the New Artist and Farewell Recital, as well as our annual Concert of Sacred Music and Oratorio Masterpieces, *Jubilate!*, which was presented in the spring and featured a performance at a new venue in Chestnut Hill. An evening of chamber works by Chausson, Beethoven, Britten, Saint Saëns, and Rachmaninoff displayed the artistic excellence of members of the AVA Opera Orchestra in collaboration with the Resident Artists at the Academy of Vocal Arts, in repertoire not often performed at AVA.

In addition to professional productions and concerts, AVA once again presented a series of pre-production lectures on each of its operas. These lectures, which gave patrons an inside look at the production and rehearsal process, were enthusiastically received by over 500 people who took advantage of the free series.

AVA continued with its successful Opera Outreach program in 2013-2014; teachers participated from sixteen public, private, charter, and home school groups across the greater Philadelphia region, with four who were first-time participants. Over 1,200 students, teachers, and chaperones attended two special, Wednesday matinee performances of our fall and spring opera productions: *Così fan tutte* and *Manon*. In addition to special performances, comprehensive study guides were prepared for students and teachers to learn more about the history of the specific opera as well as more general information on opera as an art form. Following each special matinee, the Resident Artists remained on stage to take questions from the eager audience members.

To learn more about the Academy of Vocal Arts’ Opera Outreach program or to help Opera Outreach come to a school near you, contact Rebecca Carr at 215.735.1685 or at rcarr@avaopera.org.

Top-Bottom: Julia Dawson and Michael Adams in *Così fan tutte*, AVA’s cast of *La traviata*, Marina Costa-Jackson and Dominick Chenes in *Pique Dame*, and Director Tito Capobianco working with AVA’s Resident Artists on staging for *Manon*. 
AVA bid a fond farewell to seven graduating artists. We will miss these talented Resident Artists and look forward to following their promising careers around the world.

**THE YEAR IN REVIEW: CLASS OF 2014**

**PATRICK GUETTI, Bass**

Upcoming: Fifth Jew in *Salome* with The Dallas Opera

Recent: Apprentice program with The Santa Fe Opera for a second consecutive year

**SHELLEY JACKSON, Soprano**
Memorable AVA roles: Violetta in *La traviata*, Oscar in *Un ballo in maschera*, Pedro in *Don Quichotte*, Tatyan in *Eugene Onegin* and Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*

Upcoming: Maid Marian in *Robin Hood* with Opernhaus Zürich and Echo in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Opernhaus Zürich

**SYDNEY MANCASOLA, Soprano**

Upcoming: *Les pêcheurs de perles* with Florida Grand Opera, *La fille du régiment* with Palm Beach Opera, and *La rondine* with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis

Recent: *Summer of 1915* with Sun Valley Summer Symphony and *Le Comte Ory* with Des Moines Metro Opera

**CHLOÉ MOORE, Soprano**

Upcoming: Soloist in the Giulio Gari Foundation Winner’s Concert, and Leila in *Les pêcheurs de perles* with Dayton Opera

Recent: Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* at the Castleton Festival, and soloist in *A Night in Old Vienna*, Ocean City Pops

**MUSA NGQUNGWANA, Bass-baritone**

Upcoming: Soloist with the Opera Orchestra of New York and Eve Queler, *La bohème* with Washington National Opera, *Carmen* with Norwegian National Opera, and *L’elisir d’amore* with Florentine Opera Company

**JESSIE NGUENANG, Soprano**
Memorable AVA roles: Fiordiligi in *Cosi fan tutte*, Dulcinée in *Don Quichotte*, Berta in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*

**CHRYSAL E. WILLIAMS, Mezzo-soprano**

Upcoming: ‘Opera with a Twist’ with Annapolis Opera, and her Birmingham Opera Company (UK) debut in early 2015

Recently: Chrystal recently returned from Norrköping, Sweden as the First Place winner and Audience Choice Award Winner of the Wilhelm Stenhammar International Music Competition.
NEW AVA BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

In 2012 Peter Gould retired as president of Superior Group, Inc. and has in recent years been an active Board member at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology as well as the Founding Director of Sustainable Preservation Initiative in New York. Since 1997 Peter has been a Director at The Zoological Society of Philadelphia, as well as a Trustee at The Gesu School.

I. Gail Howard joined the Liberty Business Strategies, Ltd. in Ardmore, Pennsylvania as Managing Director and Senior Consultant in 2011. Gail is currently a volunteer coach to the Leadership Team at the Kimmel Center, and was a Board member and VP at Opera Delaware for over a decade.

Leon L. Levy is the Founder and President of Leon L. Levy & Associates in Philadelphia, and has received awards including “Agent of the Decade” over his long career in the insurance industry. Leon is an active Board member at Gratz College and Golden Slipper Center for Seniors, an Executive Committee Member of the Southern New Jersey Jewish Federation, an Honorary President of Boys Town Jerusalem, and a Founding and Honorary member of the Board of the Politz Day School. Leon is also a member and one of the founders of the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia. You may recognize Leon from his memorable performance as a (walk-on) role in AVA’s spring production of Massenet’s Manon.

Mario Mele is the President of Fidelio Insurance Company, Commonwealth Holdings Corporation, Dental Delivery Systems, Inc. Mario is also an active Board member of the Aqua Pennsylvania, Inc. and the Mutual Fire Marine and Inland Insurance Company, as well as the President of Caterina de’ Medici Gastronomic Society, the Treasurer of Boys’ Towns of Italy, Inc., an Advisory Board member of Holy Redeemer Health System, and a Board member of The Penn Club.

NEW AVA EMERITUS BOARD MEMBERS:

Dr. Rosalie Burns Goldberg’s emeritus status is in honor of her nine years of distinguished service to the Academy of Vocal Arts and its Board of Directors. Dr. Goldberg contributed to major organizational projects, especially through her leadership position with the Jacob Burns Foundation, through which she provided lead sponsorship annually for major opera productions, bringing much needed support and prestige to the Academy’s season, thus contributing to the Academy’s superb record of artistic excellence and institutional financial stability. Rosalie’s support has continued to be a great encouragement to the Academy and for the future of opera.

Adele S. Hebb served with great distinction for seventeen consecutive years from May 1997 to June 2014 as a Member of the Academy of Vocal Arts Board of Directors, as well as a volunteer prior to joining the board. Adele contributed to major organizational projects, especially through her active and determined pursuit of accreditation for AVA through the National Association of Schools of Music, resulting in accreditation as a non-degree granting institution, and thus permitting AVA resident artists to obtain and defer payment of student loans.

Jules Merron’s emeritus status recognizes his seventeen consecutive years of distinctive service from October 1997 to June 2014 as a Member of the Academy of Vocal Arts Board of Directors. Jules drew upon his years of experience in business leadership positions to provide leadership and to make significant contributions through a wide range of Board Committee assignments, including serving as Chair of the Building Committee during AVA’s campus expansion into 1918 and 1916 Spruce Streets.
The Academy of Vocal Arts’ 2014 VIVA LA VOCE! Gala was record-breaking. More than 325 guests joined the Academy of Vocal Arts’ faculty, staff, and Resident Artists for this spectacular evening at the historic and beautiful Union League of Philadelphia. This memorable evening began with a lovely cocktail hour in the Union League’s elegant Library Lounge and Lincoln Memorial rooms, accompanied by a wonderful silent auction. Gala attendees then headed into the beautifully restored Lincoln Hall for a sumptuous banquet, a thrilling live auction, and stunning musical selections featuring the voices of opera’s future, the AVA Resident Artists. The evening came to a crescendo with Champagne, desserts, and dancing to the music of the Jack Faulkner Orchestra.

We give our heartfelt thanks to everyone who supported this thrilling evening, under the leadership of Gala Co-Chairs Drs. Emmeline and Romeo Abella, and Pat and John Conte.

The Gala Committee of the AVA Board of Directors would like to thank everyone who attended for making the event such a spectacular success! Over $210,000 was raised for the AVA Scholarship Fund.

AVA would like to extend a special thank you to our corporate and foundation sponsors: Donnelly Marketing Services Associates, LLC., First Priority Bank, Independence Foundation, KDI, Leon L. Levy and Associates, Merrill Lynch, Owner’s Rep Inc., PECO, Pitcairn, PricewaterhouseCoopers, The Rose Group, Seiler+Drury Architecture, WRTI 90.1FM.

AVA would like to extend a special thank you to our corporate and foundation sponsors: Donnelly Marketing Services Associates, LLC., First Priority Bank, Independence Foundation, KDI, Leon L. Levy and Associates, Merrill Lynch, Owner’s Rep Inc., PECO, Pitcairn, PricewaterhouseCoopers, The Rose Group, Seiler+Drury Architecture, WRTI 90.1FM.
MICHAEL FABIANO, recently starred as Alfredo in La traviata with Santa Fe Opera and also at the Glyndebourne Festival. In April Michael was named the 2014 Winner of the Richard Tucker Award, joining recent past AVA alumni winners: Joyce DiDonato, Stephen Costello, James Valenti, Angela Meade and Ailyn Pérez. Michael was also named winner of the Metropolitan Opera’s Beverly Sills Award, the first artist to win both awards in the same year, and the fourth AVA winner (out of a total of seven).

Earlier this summer, CORINNE WINTERS released her CD, Cancion amorosa: Songs of Spain to critical acclaim. Corinne also surveyed the roles of Mimi in Arizona Opera’s La bohème and Micaela in Virginia Opera’s Carmen, before starring in the world premiere production of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen in Santa Fe this summer.

OTHALIE GRAHAM’S busy season culminated in Sicily with a celebrated production of Aida with Marcello Giordani.

AVA alumni and star-studded husband-and-wife duo, STEPHEN COSTELLO and AIYN PÉREZ will perform several “Love Duets” concerts with San Diego Opera, Washington National Opera, Opera Philadelphia, and The Dallas Opera to promote the release of their debut CD of the same name. Stephen starred as Alfredo opposite Ailyn as Violetta in La traviata at the Royal Opera House and with San Francisco Opera.

A returning veteran to the role, ELLIE DEHN graced both the San Francisco Opera and Palm Beach Opera company stages as Musetta from Puccini’s La bohème. Ellie recently had the opportunity to perform the title role in Von Weber’s Euryanthe at the Bard Music Festival.

JOYCE DIDONATO received an Honorary Doctorate from Juilliard and delivered the commencement speech at the 109th Commencement Ceremony earlier this year. She also performed in Santiago, Montevideo, Buenos Aires, Sao Paolo and Rio de Janeiro in August 2014 for her South American Recital Tour.

After having received phenomenal reviews for his work as Arnold in Guillaume Tell at the Bayerische Staatsoper, BRYAN HYMEL is scheduled to return to the Metropolitan Opera in September to sing Rodolfo in La bohème. Earlier this year, Bryan also portrayed Hoffmann in Opernhaus Zürich’s production of Les contes d’Hoffmann, tenor solos in the Rotterdam Philharmonic's Verdi’s Requiem, and Pinkerton in Madama Butterfly in Vienna, where the AVA travel group toasted him at dinner immediately after his performance.

Recent AVA graduate, SHELLEY JACKSON, as an apprentice artist, was asked to replace the Norina in the Santa Fe Opera’s Don Pasquale, a performance she delivered with aplomb.

EGLISE GUTIÉRREZ enjoyed a great success in the title role of Thaïs with Florida Grand Opera.

In addition to a full year of performances JAMES VALENTI performed Pinkerton in Madama Butterfly with Metropolitan Opera and sang Verdi’s Requiem with The Phoenix Symphony.

INDRA THOMAS performed the lead role in Aida at Bob Jones University and made her Tonkuenstler Orchestra debut as soloist in An American Evening Concert.

ANGELA MEADE graced the Metropolitan Opera stage as Alice Ford in Falstaff and as the title role in Norma. In addition to a full schedule of concerts and recitals, Angela also performed in Teatro Regio di Torino’s production of Guglielmo Tell as Mathilde.

RICHARD TROXELL sang the role of Pinkerton in Lyric Opera Chicago’s production of Madama Butterfly and sang in Anna Nicole at the Brooklyn Academy of Music Opera House.

LATONIA MOORE starred in the title role of Verdi’s Aida at the Metropolitan Opera and performed as Cio-Cio-San in Hamburg State Opera’s production of Madama Butterfly. The AVA touring group was able to see her performance of Aida in Zurich, enjoying the privilege of her company for dinner immediately after the performance.
The Raising Our Voices Campaign for the Academy of Vocal Arts concluded on June 30, 2014, having surpassed its $10 million goal and nearing the $10.5 million level. This ushers in an exciting new chapter in the history of the Academy.

The goals of Raising Our Voices were two-fold: to renovate and expand upon AVA’s existing historic facilities to better serve both our artists and our audiences, and to increase AVA’s endowment to ensure financial stability in the years to come.

Several key gifts helped assure the success of this campaign, beginning with the first endowed faculty chair, given by alumna Jeannine Bouchard Cowles (AVA 1950), who named the Jeannine B. Cowles Music Director Chair in honor of Maestro Christofer Macatsoris. The Sally Paxson Davis Building at 1916 Spruce Street, was named through a generous gift from Sally’s extended family (the Davises, Claytors, Wardens, Stones and Hitschers). The three-story Presser Library was underwritten by a generous gift from the Presser Foundation. AVA Board member, Kay Bossone, provided the gift to name the beautiful new Kay Bossone Hall. The already popular rehearsal space on the third floor was provided through a gift of the Gray Charitable Trust. The renovations to the exterior façade, including the streetscape beautification and historically appropriate gas lamps, were made possible through a grant from the William B. Dietrich Foundation. Board member Charlotte Watts named the Charlotte H. Watts Reading Room in the Presser Library, and the front reception room was named for long-time AVA board member, Ann R. Stephenson.

The first two “Comprehensive Scholarship and Fellowships” were given: by long-time friend and former neighbor of AVA, Peggy Maclaren Ulrich; and also by Susan Olde, in honor of Bryan Hymel. These $350,000 endowed funds will provide a living stipend to one Resident Artist as well as pay a portion of the cost to provide for voice lessons and other instruction. Mrs. Olde also established the Bryan Hymel Travel Fund, to assist Resident Artists who wish to take a summer language course in Europe.

LEGACY GIFTS!
Two very significant gifts were received during the Campaign from long-time friends of the Academy, who remembered AVA in their estates. Subscriber and patron, Edward D. Davis, used his bequest to fund six fellowships named for famous singers of the last decade. Well-known music critic Robert Baxter taught History of Opera at AVA, and through his bequest funded many capital improvements, including the much-needed Robert Baxter Elevator.

HAVE A SEAT! THEATER SEAT NAMING CAMPAIGN
There is still an opportunity to help support the recent improvements at AVA. With a gift of $500 or more, a plaque with your name or tribute will be attached to one of the newly purchased seats in the Helen Corning Warden Theater. Take this opportunity to show your commitment to the training of future generations of great opera singers at AVA. For details, please contact Bob Lyon, Director of Institutional Advancement, at rlyon@avaopera.org, or call 215-735-1685 x 16.
AVA continues to thrive thanks to the valuable support of its many donors and patrons. If you love opera, a gift to the Academy is a wonderful way to invest in this vital art form. You can take heart in knowing that you are doing your part to ensure the success of the art form by supporting the Resident Artists who are the voice of opera’s future.

If you would like make a donation to AVA, there are a number of ways that you can make an impact by supporting the AVA Resident Artists and the future of opera.

ANNUAL GIVING THROUGH THE FRIENDS OF AVA
The Friends of AVA are a dedicated group of supporters who, by investing in AVA’s mission through annual gifts, nurture and launch the world’s most promising vocal artists. Friends of AVA members have the rare opportunity of getting to know the Resident Artists and artistic team personally through intimate and exclusive parties, concerts, and opera trips.

FELLOWSHIPS
AVA is the only post graduate, tuition-free institution in America devoted solely to operatic training. All AVA Resident Artists receive the equivalent of more than $100,000 training in the vocal and operatic arts training for each of the four years of the program. While the program has always been tuition free, AVA also provides fellowships to assist Resident Artists with the cost of living in Philadelphia during their training at AVA. Resident Artist fellowships can be endowed or funded on a yearly basis, beginning at $5,000 per student annually.

THE HELEN CORNING WARDEN SOCIETY: PLANNED GIVING
The Helen Corning Warden Society recognizes patrons who have made a bequest or other deferred financial gift arrangement for AVA in their financial planning. Gifts can be made in a variety of ways and allow donors to make meaningful gifts that they might not otherwise be able to commit to currently. In addition to bequests, AVA accepts: charitable remainder trusts, charitable lead trusts, charitable gift annuities, life insurance, and retirement plan designations. The AVA Development Department will work with you to identify the best planned giving option for your needs.

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS
Many visibility opportunities are available to corporations through AVA opera and concert sponsorships, and through sponsorship of the annual gala, Viva la Voce! The AVA Development Office can tailor your sponsorship package to meet the unique philanthropic and marketing objectives of your business.

MATCHING GIFTS
Your employer may match your gift to AVA, either entirely or in some portion. In some instances, this may double or even triple the benefit of your gift to the Academy of Vocal Arts and its Resident Artists! Check with your employer’s benefits office to determine their matching gift requirements. Donors who arrange a match for their gift will be recognized for the total combined value.

THE UNITED WAY
AVA’s Opera Outreach program is eligible to receive individual contributions made through the United Way Specific Care Program. All you need to do is complete the top portion of your United Way form, and then find the line for SPECIFIC CARE and enter AVA’s code #3164, the amount of your gift, and the eligible agency name: Academy of Vocal Arts Opera Outreach.

Drs. Romeo and Emmeline Abella surround AVA’s 2014 Benefactors Party hosts, Carole Haas Gravangno and Emilio Gravangno
Operating income consists of revenue from a variety of sources. Like many schools, the largest single revenue source for AVA is the investment income from its endowment, as provided by a spending rule that is approved each year by the AVA Board of Directors. Other sources of revenue are individual contributions, box office ticket sales, fellowships, and special events, like the annual gala, among other sources. The biggest sources of the AVA revenue all stem from one commonality: they are all greatly influenced by the generous supporters and donors like you! AVA was also the recipient of several large bequests from generous donors over the fiscal year that may receive a special designation to the capital campaign.

The two largest expenditures that AVA has, personnel and opera theatre/production expenses, are directly related to the training program. Personnel expenses include salaries for top faculty and teachers, as well as administrative staff. The opera theatre expenses include costs for three full-scale, professionally staged opera productions, in addition to any costs associated with other recitals, concerts, and piano productions.
A SPECIAL THANK YOU

We would like to extend our thanks to all of our donors and contributors. No matter the size of the donation, you are doing your part to ensure the future of opera by donating to the Academy of Vocal Arts and supporting talented Resident Artists.

WE WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO:

Our generous 2013-2014 season sponsors:

Walter and Alice Strine, Esqs, sponsors of the Giargiari Bel Canto Competition and Tchaikovsky’s Pique Dame

Drs. Rosalie Burns and Herbert Goldberg and the Jacob Burns Foundation, sponsor of Massenet’s Manon

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Top left photo: AVA Resident Artists Deigo Silva and Michael Adams; Bottom Left photo: AVA Second Year Resident Artists Anush Avetisyan and Daniel Noyola; Bottom Right: AVA Resident Artists in Mozart’s Cosi fan tutte