
HIGH NOTES

THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ACADEMY OF VOCAL ARTS

2022/2023 SEASON



Photo caption: From left to right: Jenny Anne Flory, Matthew Goodheart, Benjamin Dickerson, Yihan Duan, Shawn Roth, Peter Barber, Emily Margevich, Yue Wu, Monique Galvão, and Lydia Grindatto in Don Pasquale.

Photo credit: Morgan Horell

AVA

ACADEMY OF
VOCAL ARTS

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ACADEMY OF VOCAL ARTS

The mission of the **Academy of Vocal Arts** is to be the world's premier institution for training young artists as international opera soloists. With its rigorous instruction and coaching, as well as performance opportunities in concerts, recitals, and fully staged operas, the Academy trains the most promising young singers from around the world, while also contributing to the performing arts community in the greater Philadelphia region.

Founded in 1934, the Academy of Vocal Arts is the only tuition-free institution dedicated exclusively to the study of voice. When Resident Artists graduate from AVA, they are prepared to share their gifts with audiences around 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 to Philadelphia from all over the world to seek the exceptional guidance and training that the Academy of Vocal Arts offers. Admission to the tuition-free program is determined yearly by competitive auditions. While hundreds of hopeful singers apply, only 8-10 are accepted into the four-year program.

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Head of Vocal Science Department

**In memoriam*



Dear Friends,

It is my pleasure to present *High Notes*, the annual report of the Academy of Vocal Arts. This report looks back at our fiscal year from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023. I am proud to report that AVA presented a full season of in-person performances beginning with *La traviata* at AVA and The Haverford School. Our season continued with a hilarious *Don Pasquale* set in South Philadelphia in the 1960's staged by AVA alumnus Richard Troxell and finished with the dramatic comedy *Don Giovanni*. We also presented various recitals and concert, our annual *Jubilate!* program, and the ever-popular *Giargiari Bel Canto Competition*.

We finished the season with our annual Farewell Recital featuring our newest graduates Peter Barber, Yihan Duan, Titus Muzi, Zachary Rioux, and Sahel Salam. It is always bittersweet to say goodbye, but we look forward to watching their careers bloom in the coming years and wish them much success.

This past season also marked the end of Kevin McDowell's 37-year tenure as President and Artistic Director of the Academy of Vocal Arts. Beginning in 1986, McDowell led the organization through significant growth. An AVA alumnus himself, McDowell oversaw and led the expansion of the AVA campus now encompassing three historic buildings in Philadelphia's Rittenhouse Square neighborhood, significantly increased AVA's scholarship endowment, established and endowed fellowships for all Resident Artists, and successfully sought accreditation of AVA's curriculum with the National Association of Schools of Music. He also produced numerous seasons of productions that showcased and developed the talents of AVA's Resident Artists, and in recent years he also designed and stage directed several operas.

Harold F. (Rick) Pitcairn II, chairman of AVA's Board of Directors, says McDowell has left an indelible impact on the organization. "It is difficult to express in words Kevin's contributions to the AVA across the 37 years of his leadership. His positive impact on the institution over the years will remain his legacy, as will the scores of talented AVA artists who have flourished on opera stages across the world." We all wish Kevin a very happy retirement!

I am honored and deeply grateful to now lead this exceptional organization and carry on our important mission of providing the very best tuition-free training to the next generation of great opera singers. I look forward to seeing you all many times this season!

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Guzielek". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Scott Guzielek
President and Artistic Director

THE 2022-23 SEASON



From *La traviata*:

Top Left: Cast in Act I.

Bottom Left: From left to right: Luke Norvell as Alfredo Germont, Angel Gómez as Gastone de Letorières, and Lydia Grindatto as Violetta Valéry

Photo credit: Morgan Horell

The Haverford School and at Lehigh University's Zoellner Arts Center, which was generously sponsored by Victoria Eckert Zoellner. Members of AVA's Young Professionals program enjoyed a night that included a performance of the opera with a post-performance champagne reception with the Resident Artists, an evening sponsored by Charlotte Watts.



The Opera Theatre season began with a black-tie Opening Night Celebration, which featured a performance of Giuseppe Verdi's *La traviata*, conducted by Maestro Christofer Macatsoris and directed by Dorothy Danner. Opening Night guests enjoyed cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, dinner by Catering by Design and a post-performance champagne toast to celebrate the singers. The beautiful evening was co-chaired by R. Randolph Apgar and Allen D. Black. Performances of *La traviata* continued at AVA for a few weeks before additional performances took place at Centennial Hall at

Our winter production of Gaetano Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* featured four performances in AVA's Helen Corning Warden Theater that sent our audiences back to mid-60s South Philadelphia. The production was fully staged by AVA alumnus Richard Troxell. The opera was conducted by Richard A. Raub with the AVA Opera Orchestra. The production was sponsored by The Gray Charitable Trust.

The Opera Season came to a close with a production of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Performances took place at AVA's Helen Corning Warden Theater, Centennial Hall at The Haverford School, and at Central Bucks South High School. Maestros Christofer Macatsoris and Robert Kahn led the AVA Opera Orchestra with Jeffrey Buchman's stage direction and Rosa Mercedes' choreography. This production of



From *Don Pasquale*:

Left: Kevin Godínez as Dr. Malatesta

and Cumhur Görgün as Don Pasquale

Above: Ethel Trujillo as Norina

Photo credit: Morgan Horell



From *Don Giovanni*:

Above: Monique Galvão as Donna Elvira and Cumhur Görgün as Leporello

Photo credit: Morgan Horell

Don Giovanni was generously sponsored by Judith Broudy. Like our production of *La traviata*, Young Professionals were invited back for their own performance with a post-performance champagne reception with the Resident Artists.

The annual Giargiari Bel Canto Competition took place at the Perelman Theater on the Kimmel Cultural Campus. The 2022 First Prize winner was soprano Lydia Grindatto, who impressed the judges with her renditions of "Donde lieta usci" from Giacomo Puccini's *La bohème* and "Robert, toi que j'aime" from Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Robert le diable*. Baritone Benjamin Dickerson won Second Prize with "Nemico della patria" from Umberto Giordano's *Andrea Chénier* and "Mein Sehnen, mein Wähnen" (Pierrot's Tanzlied) from Erich Wolfgang Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*. Tenor Angel Gómez received the Audience Favorite Award. Master Vocal Coach and Music Director Danielle Orlando accompanied all participating Resident Artists.

AVA's recital series began in the fall with a New Artists Recital. The six new Resident Artists, Jenny Anne Flory (mezzo-soprano), Alla Yarosh (mezzo-soprano), Matthew Goodheart (tenor), Cumhur Görgün (bass-baritone), Dylan Gregg (bass-baritone), and Yue Wu (bass-baritone) performed in AVA's Helen Corning Warden Theater, accompanied by Music Director and Vocal Coach José Meléndez.

The Fall Recital featured excerpts from Janáček's *Kát'a Kabanová*, Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, and Marschner's *Der Vampyr*. Accompanied by Master Vocal Coach and Music Director Luke Housner,

From Winter Recital – *Mémoires dramatiques*

Mezzo-soprano Alla Yarosh, accompanied by Vocal Coach and Music Director Audrey Saint-Gil

Photo credit: Morgan Horell



our Resident Artists performed these excerpts semi-staged in AVA's Helen Corning Warden Theater.

The Winter Recital, *Mémoires dramatiques*, featured art songs by French composers: Bizet, Massenet, Gounod, and Offenbach. Resident Artists performed in AVA's Helen Corning Warden Theater and were accompanied by Vocal Coach and Music Director Audrey Saint-Gil.

Performances of *Jubilate!* A Concert of Sacred Music took place at the Church of the Redeemer in Bryn Mawr and the Church of the Holy Trinity in Rittenhouse Square. The annual concert of sacred vocal music featured time-honored favorites from different cultures, faiths, and periods, with AVA's Resident Artists performing selections by C.P.E. Bach, Mozart, J.S. Bach, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Rossini, Boulanger, Saint-Saëns, Wagner, Vaughan Williams, Massenet, and Allitsen, with Master Vocal Coach David Antony Lofton leading the AVA Opera Orchestra. The AVA Orchestra was generously sponsored by the David A. and Helen P. Horn Charitable Trust.

Viva la Voce!, AVA's annual gala, was held in Center City's ONE North Broad at the Masonic Temple. This event celebrated

AVA's 88 successful years of opera training, and its proceeds helped support our renowned tuition-free program. Led by event chairs Peter G. Gould and Robin Potter, the evening included an elegant dinner by Catering by Design, with arias and ensembles performed by our talented Resident Artists. The AVA Board of Director's Outstanding Service Award was presented to Corey Smith, and the AVA Distinguished Achievement in the Arts Award was presented to Denyce Graves. The popular live auction was led by guest auctioneer Alasdair Nichol, Chairman of Freeman's Auction House.

The season wrapped up with our annual Farewell Recital held at The Church of the Holy Trinity in Rittenhouse Square with performances by our graduates Yihan Duan (soprano), Zachary Rioux (tenor), Sahel Salam (tenor), Titus Muzi (baritone), and Peter Barber (bass-baritone).

From *Jubilate!*

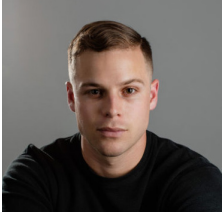
Below: Emily Margevich, soprano, singing with the AVA Opera Orchestra conducted by David Antony Lofton

Photo credit: Morgan Horell



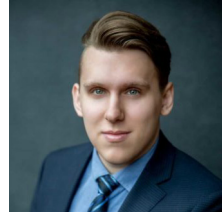
CLASS OF 2023

AVA bid a fond farewell to five Resident Artists this year. Our graduates sang at the annual Graduation Recital, which took place at the Church of the Holy Trinity in Rittenhouse Square. We will miss these talented singers, and we look forward to following their promising careers around the world.



PETER BARBER, BASS-BARITONE

Memorable AVA roles: Gremin, *Eugene Onegin*; Schaunard, *La bohème*; Barone Duphol, *La traviata*; Carlino, *Don Pasquale*; Don Giovanni, *Don Giovanni*



ZACHARY RIOUX, TENOR

Memorable AVA roles: Basilio, *Le nozze di Figaro*; A lord, *La favorite*; Lensky, *Eugene Onegin*; Rodolfo, *La bohème*



YIHAN DUAN, SOPRANO

Memorable AVA roles: Suor Lucilla, *Suor Angelica*; Anna, *Le Villi*; Mimì, *La bohème*; Donna Anna, *Don Giovanni*



SAHEL SALAM, TENOR

Memorable AVA roles: Don Curzio, *Le nozze di Figaro*; Fernand, *La favorite*; Rodolfo, *La bohème*; Ernesto, *Don Pasquale*



TITUS MUZI, BARITONE

Memorable AVA roles: Eugene Onegin, *Eugene Onegin*; Dr. Malatesta, *Don Pasquale*



Collage Photo Credit: Don Valentino and Morgan Horell

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS



Above: Young Professionals striking a pose at the Young Professionals performance of *La traviata*

Photo credit: Natalia Pérez Rodríguez

AVA Young Professionals is a community of professionals under the age of 45 based in the Greater Philadelphia area who celebrate a mutual love of music through networking and social gatherings, exclusive receptions, and cultural events. AVA Young Professionals receive invitations to all Young Professionals events, including exclusive cocktail parties, previews, receptions, opportunities to meet and mingle with AVA's Resident Artists, and get email updates and reminders about opera productions and additional events. Supporting AVA's Young Professionals shows our ongoing effort to introduce new, younger audiences to opera and to make this art form more accessible.

Special events for Young Professionals this year included performances of *La traviata* and *Don Giovanni*, which offered discounted prices and an after-performance champagne reception with the Resident Artists. AVA Young Professionals members also attended AVA's *Viva la Voce!* Gala and a champagne and dessert reception following AVA's Opening Night Celebration.

OPERA OUTREACH

The 2022-2023 Opera Outreach Program reached over 1,000 students from twenty public, private, charter schools, and eleven home school groups across the Greater Philadelphia region. Two student matinee performances, *La traviata* and *Don Giovanni*, were presented at The Haverford School's Centennial Hall. A Study Guide for each opera offered an opportunity for teachers and students to prepare for what they would see and hear. Question & Answer sessions followed the performances. Resident Artists were asked how they began singing, how they learn and memorize a role, singing in foreign languages, the physical requirements of performing, and more.

Additionally, thanks to generous grant funding from the Ethel Sargeant Clark Smith Memorial Fund, Giving Voice to Delaware County, a free, half-day program for students interested in singing, was created and implemented. Over 100 students from four Delaware County high schools met with three industry professionals at the The Media Theatre on May 8th for an immersive program of small-group roundtable discussions and workshops that focused on the world of voice use.

AVA Board member and internationally acclaimed tenor, Richard Troxell ('92) demonstrated how voice training allows a singer to perform repertoire from opera to musical theater to classic rock & roll and coached each group on style and expression. Marco Cammarota ('18), now a voice-over artist and video game music YouTuber, shared how his career as an operatic singer led him to using his voice in other ways. Michelle Horman Eugene, actress, dramatic coach, and voice therapist offered sessions on how to care for the singing and speaking voices. The morning culminated with selected students performing for all of the participants in a masterclass held on the theatre's main stage and received coaching and feedback from all three presenters.



Above: Alumnus Marco Cammarota ('18) talking to students about using his experience as an opera singer for other voice related careers.

Left: Photo courtesy of Rebecca Carr

Photo credit: Rebecca Carr



OUR AVA FAMILY

Please join us in welcoming our new AVA Board and Staff Members!

NEW AVA BOARD MEMBERS



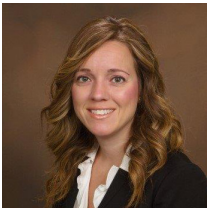
LILY FERRY is a graduate of Yale University where she received bachelor's degrees in Economics and East Asian Studies. She is also a graduate of Hong Kong University with a diploma from the School of Education. She has taken on positions as a Business Analyst for McKinsey and Company and as teachers at both the Seisen International School in Tokyo and the Hong Kong Academy. Lily has acted as the Book Club President for the Yale Club in Singapore and as an ESL Program Volunteer for the International Baptist Church Singapore. Recently, she has become a Women's Group Volunteer at the Tenth Presbyterian Church and serves on the Board of Directors at The Rosenbach in Philadelphia.



DOUGLAS J. MANION, MD, FRCP (C), has served as Aclaris' Chief Executive Officer and President, and as a Director, since January 2023. He joined Aclaris in August 2022 as President and Chief Operating Officer. Doug brings over 25 years of pharmaceutical industry experience in both large and small companies. Doug received a B.A.Sc in Civil Engineering followed by an M.D. from the University of Ottawa in Canada. He is Board Certified in Internal Medicine, completed an Infectious Diseases Clinical Fellowship from the University of Ottawa and completed a post-doctoral research fellowship at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School. Doug serves on the Board of Directors of the private biopharmaceutical company Lakewood-Amedex, Inc.

NEW AVA STAFF AND FACULTY

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER



CONSTANTINA CHRISTOU comes to AVA with over 24 years of accounting experience. She spent 18 years of her career in accounting and auditing for a regional and national public accounting firm. While she served a diverse range of clients, she specialized in managing audits of not-for-profit entities and Single Audits in accordance with Uniform Guidance audit requirements. Dina spent the last six years in private industry in key financial executive roles managing accounting and finance operations with responsibilities that included budgeting, cash management, fiscal forecasting, and financial reporting.

Dina holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Temple University. She is a member of the Pennsylvania Institute of Certified Public Accountants and is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA).

DIRECTOR OF INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT



JASON WARD is a classically trained French Horn player. He began his career as an arts administrator as an intern for the Winston-Salem Symphony and Front-of-House Manager at the Interlochen Arts Camp. His love for opera began performing in the pit orchestra during college and grew immensely when he worked in the MET Opera Gift Shop, and he has attended many performances in Philadelphia since relocating in 2015. Before joining AVA, Jason worked with WHYY, the Curtis Institute of Music, The Philly POPS, and the League of American Orchestras. Jason attended the UNC School of the Arts and lives in the Society Hill neighborhood of Philadelphia with his partner and their dog. He loves to travel, cook, and practice yoga in his free time.

DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS COORDINATOR



STEPHEN J. EDWARDS-TRGYAR served as AVA's Administrative Associate since September 2019. In February, Stephen was promoted to the position of Development and Alumni Relations Coordinator, overseeing the Development Department's day-to-day operations and reestablishing AVA's Alumni Relations.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSOCIATE



LAURA AVELINO graduated from the University of Maryland in 2022 with her bachelor's in psychology and criminology. Despite her academic background, Laura is passionate about the arts, having a long-time love for theatre, literature, and more. She is very excited to be working with AVA, and to familiarize herself further with opera. When she's not at AVA, Laura is an avid digital and makeup artist.

IN MEMORIAM



Together we remember those who greatly supported AVA, its Resident Artists, and the future of opera.

- KENNETH E. AHL, ESQ.**
- ANTHONY P. JANNETTA**
- JIM MCCLELLAND**
- JAMES PACCIORETTI**
- MARGARET MACLAREN ULRICH**
- FRANCA C. WARDEN**

AVA AROUND THE WORLD



André Courville ('17) performing in Afternoons at AVA as part of Opera Philadelphia's O22 Festival, accompanied by Michael Lewis.

ALUMNI RELATIONS

Talented singers throughout the world have sought out AVA since 1934, with eighty percent of our graduates maintaining successful performing careers. Alumni regularly take the stages at the Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera House, and other opera houses around the world.

AVA began to ramp up its Alumni Relations initiative in February, utilizing the *AVARound the World* platform. Under the *AVARound the World* umbrella, alumni news will begin appearing in more articles on the blog, social media posts, and in a new semi-annual periodical.

AVA is so proud of all our alumni, and we look forward to watching their careers grow.

PATRON TRIPS

AVA patrons will travel far and wide to support alumni! In February, AVA provided a bus trip to hear AVA alumna Joyce DiDonato ('95) perform in her multi-faceted initiative EDEN. With the generous help of our patrons, AVA was able to send current Resident Artists to attend the performance as well.

After the performance, Joyce graciously held a meet-and-greet with both Resident Artists and patrons.

Plans for future trips are being made and will be announced in the upcoming months. We look forward to seeing you on our next trip!



Left: From left to right: Danielle Orlando, Latonia Moore ('04), Alice Chung ('22), Titus Muzi ('23), and Ethel Trujillo performing at The Greene Space at WNYC/WQXR in conjunction with the Gerda Lissner Foundation in March 2023.

Above: Joyce DiDonato ('95) with the 2022–2023 Resident Artists during a Meet & Greet after her 2023 performance of EDEN in Princeton.

SUPPORTING AVA



Support from donors like you is critical to the continued success of the Academy of Vocal Arts' mission. A gift to the Academy is a wonderful way to invest in the future of the operatic art form and the gifted singers who are its future. Your contribution also helps to underwrite the costs of producing AVA's highly acclaimed operas and concerts.

There are several ways that you can make an impact by supporting the AVA Resident Artists and the future of opera.

Photo credit: Don Valentino

AVA'S 2023-2024 ANNUAL FUND

The Annual Fund provides the working capital to support the daily functions of the institution. A gift to AVA through the Annual Fund makes an immediate and powerful impact. Support the Annual Fund to gain access to special events with our Resident Artists and meet other opera lovers!

MATCHING GIFTS

Your employer may match your gift to AVA. This may double or even triple the benefit of your gift! Please 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.

JOIN THE LOYALTY AND LEGACY SOCIETY

When you include AVA in your estate plan, your generosity transforms the future of AVA for generations to come. Gifts may come in the form of charitable remainder trusts, charitable lead trusts, charitable gift annuities, life insurance, retirement plan designations, and bequests. Have you included AVA in your plans? Please reach out to the Development Office.

RESIDENT ARTIST FELLOWSHIPS

AVA is the only tuition-free school in the world devoted exclusively to operatic training. We offer additional fellowships to assist Resident Artists with the rising non-tuition-related living costs in Philadelphia during their intensive training. Resident Artist Fellowships can be endowed or funded on an annual basis. Your support removes financial barriers to success for the inspirational voices of tomorrow!

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS AND PERFORMANCE UNDERWRITING

AVA provides high-visibility underwriting and sponsorship opportunities for 3 annual opera productions, Resident Artist recitals, *Jubilate!* concerts, and more! The Development department can tailor your sponsorship package to meet your philanthropic priorities: costume, wig, and makeup sponsors, underwriting the AVA Opera Orchestra, and even supporting the creation of a new production to name a few.

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.

For a discussion about your philanthropic support of AVA and our Resident Artists, don't hesitate to contact Jason Ward, Director of Institutional Advancement, at jward@avaopera.org or 215.735.1685.

To make a gift, you can mail a check made out to the Academy of Vocal Arts, Attn: Development Office, to 1920 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103 or online by visiting www.avaopera.org and clicking "Donate Now".



Above: From left to right: Dr. Claire Boasi, Karl Fong, Yihan Duan ('23), Alice Chase, and Neal Krouse at the 2022 Main Line Opera Association Gala

Right: 2022 Holiday Party at the College of Physicians.

Photo credit: Don Valentino

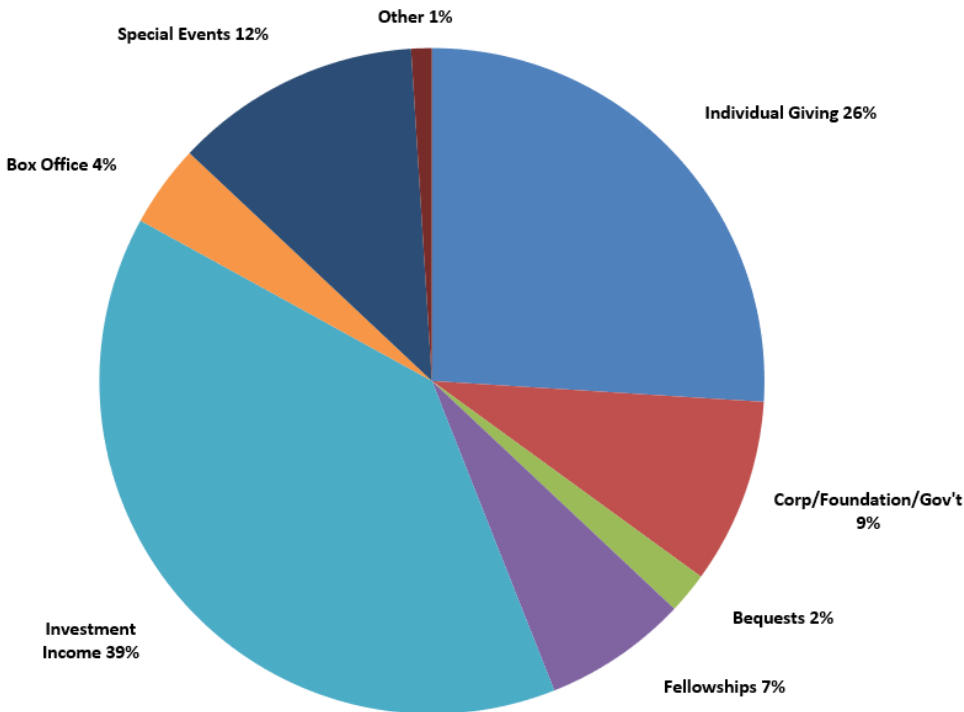


FINANCIALS

OPERATING INCOME

\$4,642,022

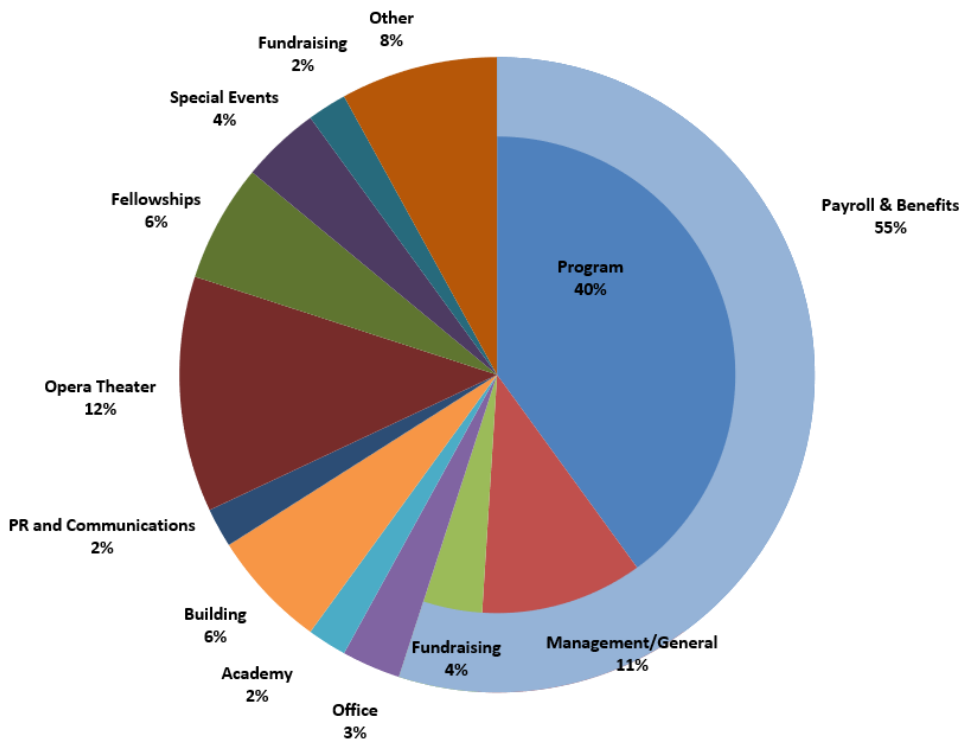
Operating income consists of revenue from a variety of sources. Like many schools, the largest single revenue source for AVA is the investment income from its endowment. Unlike other schools or conservatories, AVA receives no income from tuition, and therefore must rely on support from our loyal patrons. Individual and foundation contributions, ticket sales, and special events, including the annual Gala, provide most of the remainder of our budget. In recent years, planned gifts and bequests have been an increasingly significant source of revenue support. Thank you to all who share our love for opera and want to help us train the voices for opera's future!



UNRESTRICTED OPERATING EXPENSES

\$4,607,741

The two largest expenditures in AVA's budget, program payroll and benefits, along with opera theatre expenses, are directly related to the training program. Other costs are associated with recitals, concerts, and piano productions.



A SPECIAL THANK YOU

We would like to extend our thanks to all our donors and contributors. No matter the size of your 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 2022-2023 leading supporters.

2022-23 SEASON SPONSORS

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Bel Canto Competition

Victoria Eckert Zoellner and Charlotte Watts

Sponsors of *La traviata*

The Gray Charitable Trust

Sponsor of *Don Pasquale*

David A. and Helen P. Horn Charitable Trust

Sponsor of *Jubilate!*

A Concert of Sacred Music

Judith Broudy

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Sandy Leopold

and Dr. Mia Marcovici

Carol and Howard Lidz

Charlotte and Mackie MacLean

Joseph W. McGuire

and Wilma Rossi

Dhun Mehta

Mr. and Mrs. C. George Milner

Christel Nyheim

Tom and Jody O'Rourke

Dr. Elias Packman

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Harold F. (Rick) Pitcairn II

Merle Raab

Suzanne Root

Dr. Ivan Rudolph

Drs. Ruth and Steven Ryave

Carolyn Seidle and James Goff

Yoshiko Cecilia Segawa-Seigle

Jacob and Meghan Smith

Jonne and Corey Smith

Drs. Richard and Rhonda Soricelli

Walter and Alice Strine, Esquires

Barbara A. Teichert

Mr. and Mrs. Gordon M. Wase, Esq.

Charlotte Watts

Helen S. Weary

Victoria Eckert Zoellner

*In memoriam



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