
HIGH NOTES

THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ACADEMY OF VOCAL ARTS

2020/2021 SEASON



Chelsea Laggan sings in the 2020 Giargiari Bel Canto Competition, accompanied by Master Coach Danielle Orlando, recorded in the Helen Corning Warden Theater at AVA. *Photo credit: Weston Sound (performance screenshot)*

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, fewer than 10 are accepted into the four-year program.

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Dear Friends,

It is our pleasure to present High Notes, the annual report of the Academy of Vocal Arts. This report covers our most recent fiscal year, from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. It is safe to say that this past year was unlike any other in AVA's history as we responded to the COVID-19 pandemic while maintaining our mission of training the next generation of great opera singers. We implemented strict health protocols in order to allow as many in-person voice lessons and coachings as possible. Those in-person offerings were augmented by remote learning, utilizing a platform that nearly eliminated all latency. Our faculty members were working with Resident Artists from their homes here in Philadelphia to as far away as China. While nothing can replace in-person teaching, both the faculty and Resident Artists found the experience rewarding.



We all so missed our typical live performances, another integral part of the outstanding AVA training our Resident Artists receive. The past season brought AVA fully into the digital age as we presented seven virtual programs and recitals. From the comfort and safety of your own homes, you still were able to experience the beautiful voices of our Resident Artists in a variety of repertoire. This new platform allowed many more people from around the country and the world to become acquainted with AVA and marked the highest viewership on YouTube that we have had to date!

Our final program of the season featured our two graduates this year, mezzo-soprano Pascale Spinney and baritone Daniel Gallegos. We presented them with their artist diplomas at the conclusion of the filming of that recital. It has been a pleasure to watch them grow over the years and we wish them both much success on their operatic journeys.

Our plans for the 2021-22 season include a return to live performances and in-person teaching on a regular basis. None of this would be possible without the generosity of our board members, patrons, and donors who ensure that AVA remains tuition-free! Thank you for your dedication to AVA and we look forward to welcoming you back this season.

Warmly,

K. James McDowell
President and Artistic Director

Scott Guzielek
Vice President and General Manager

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

THE 2020/21 SEASON

For the first time in AVA's history, the Opera Theater season was presented virtually due to COVID-19 concerns. Resident Artists recorded their performances at AVA with extensive safety protocols in place, thanks to exceptional technical assistance from Weston Sound. Audiences tuned into broadcasts from all over the world.

The 42nd annual Giargiari Bel Canto Competition opened the 2020-21 season. Soprano Kara Mulder earned the James Parkinson Opera Foundation First Prize with her rendition of "Marietta's Lied" from Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*. Mezzo-soprano Anne Ma-rie Stanley won the Cecile K. Dalton Second Place Prize with a dynamic performance of "O mon Fernand" from Donizetti's *La favorite*. Bass Eric Delagrangé's impassioned rendition of "Abietta zingara" from Verdi's *Il trovatore* earned him the Special Judges' Award and the Audience Favorite Award. Music Director and Master Vocal Coach Danielle Orlando accompanied all singers at the piano.

Behind the scenes during the Giargiari Competition recording session
Photo credit: Camille Mola



The season continued with a series of recitals. The New Artists Recital, prepared and accompanied by José Meléndez, showcased seven new Resident Artists. Our singers came to AVA from across the United States, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Sweden. The late Ghenady Meirson led AVA's annual Russian Romances recital as Music Director and pianist. Eight singers presented Russian-language art songs under Meirson's expert guidance and mentorship. Sadly, this was Mr. Meirson's last performance at AVA before his passing.



The new year began with *A Celebration of American Composers*, which included works by Copland, Menotti, Barber, Ives, and more, under the musical direction of Luke Housner. The annual *Jubilate!* concert of sacred music returned triumphantly after its cancellation in 2020. This year's performance was dedicated in memory of Lucinda S. Landreth, a beloved friend of AVA and longtime Board member. The concert found a new home at the Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral. Resident Artists were joined in person by members of the AVA Orchestra for the only time in the 20-21 season under the baton of Maestro David Antony Lofton.



1. Kevin Godínez sings in the New Artists Recital, accompanied by José Meléndez
Photo credit: Weston Sound (screenshot)
2. Eric Delagrangé in a virtual coaching session
Photo credit: Camille Mola
3. Benjamin Dickerson sings in the Russian Romances recital
Photo credit: Weston Sound (screenshot)
4. Shawn Roth and Alice Chung sing a duet in *Jubilate!*
Photo credit: Weston Sound (screenshot)
5. Aubry Ballaró and Pascale Spinney perform in *Verlaine, Le Voyage Humain*
Photo credit: Weston Sound (screenshot)
6. Renée Richardson sings with the AVA Orchestra in *Jubilate!*
Photo credit: Weston Sound (screenshot)
7. Kara Mulder works with Luke Housner in a socially-distant coaching
Photo credit: Camille Mola

THE 2020/21 SEASON

The spring French Recital, *Verlaine, Le Voyage Humain*, invited audiences into the mind of poet Paul Verlaine with music by Chausson, Delius, Déodat de Séverac, and others. Vocal Coach Audrey Saint-Gil musically prepared four Resident Artists and accompanied them on piano. Pascale Spinney made her directorial debut, partnering with Ms. Saint Gil to create this musical experience. The Giargiari Bel Canto Competition and *Verlaine, Le Voyage Humain* were broadcast on Opera Philadelphia's channel as part of an ongoing partnership that

continues to help expand the reach of AVA to new audiences.

AVA's Class of 2021, mezzo-soprano Pascale Spinney and baritone Daniel Gallegos, closed the season with the Farewell Recital under the direction of José Meléndez. Spinney and Gallegos performed a diverse array of arias and art songs before convening for two duets: "En mi tierra extremeña" from Torroba's *Luisa Fernanda* and the much-beloved "Là ci darem la mano" from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.



Daniel Gallegos and Pascale Spinney celebrate after the Farewell Recital
Photo credit: Camille Mola

AVA YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Over 50 Young Professionals attended AVA's three virtual events for opera enthusiasts ages 45 and under. Tenor Bryan Hymel, AVA's Vice President, Global and Artistic Outreach, led two "Opera 101" sessions that explored beloved operas *La bohème* and *La traviata*. Bryan offered fascinating insights into the context and history behind the operas, examined their influence on pop culture, and shared some personal anecdotes. He designed the sessions to engage opera lovers of all knowledge and experience levels. Attendee Elizabeth Livingston commented that Bryan's "ability to speak to those of us who are novices, and give us some reference points in order to make opera accessible, was really wonderful."

In February, AVA alumna and recent Grammy winner Latonia Moore led the Young Professionals in a conversation about her career, including



Latonia Moore speaks during the Young Professionals Zoom event
Photo credit: Camille Mola (screenshot)

her role in the Metropolitan Opera's recent production of *Porgy and Bess*. She shared her perspective on a range of topics, including diversity and equity in opera casting, singers' health, emotional conviction in performances and the importance of trusting in oneself.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

THE CLASS OF 2021

AVA bid a fond farewell to two Resident Artists this year. Our graduates presented a virtual Farewell Recital, which our patrons were able to enjoy from their homes. We will miss these talented singers, and we look forward to following their promising careers around the world.



DANIEL GALLEGOS, BARITONE

Memorable AVA Roles: Alphonse XI, *La favorite*; Mercutio/Grégoire – *Roméo et Juliette*; Guglielmo, *Le Villi*; Giuseppe, *La traviata*; Harlequin and Lackey, *Ariadne auf Naxos*; Donner, *Das Rheingold*; Guglielmo, *Così fan tutte* (Cover)



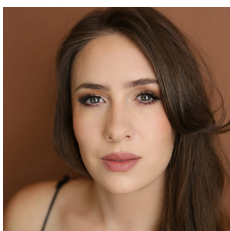
PASCALLE SPINNEY, MEZZO-SOPRANO

Memorable AVA Roles: Léonor, *La favorite*; Cherubino, *Le nozze di Figaro*; Dorabella, *Così fan tutte*; Turnspit, *Rusalka*; Suora Infermiera, *Suor Angelica*; Flora, *La traviata*; Flosshilde, *Das Rheingold*; Ines, *Il trovatore*



MEET THE NEW RESIDENT ARTISTS

AVA welcomes three new Resident Artists in the 21-22 season, all of whom excelled in a competitive year for auditions



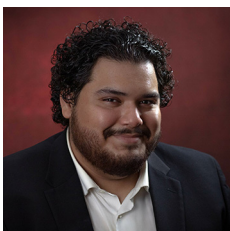
LYDIA GRINDATTO, SOPRANO

Hometown: Albuquerque, NM
Education: University of New Mexico
Prior to AVA: First Place in the Vocal Artistry Art Song Festival Competition; title role in *Tosca* (cover) and Violetta in *La traviata* (cover) with Opera Southwest; Adele, *Die Fledermaus* and Madame Silberklang, *Die Schauspieldirektor* at University of New Mexico



LUKE NORVELL, TENOR

Hometown: Tacoma, WA
Education: The Master's University in Santa Clarita, California
Prior to AVA: Eisenstein, *Die Fledermaus* with Clyde Opera Group and Independent Opera Company; Alfredo, *La traviata* (cover) with Landmark Opera; King Kaspar, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*; Prince Charming, *Cinderella* with Lyric Opera of Orange County



ANGEL GOMEZ, TENOR

Hometown: Mc Allen, TX
Education: University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Prior to AVA: Gulf Coast Regional Finalist for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions; Princess Altamira, *The Ugly Princess* and Don José, *Carmen* with UTRGV Opera Theater

Collage: All photos by Don Valentino and Paul Sirochman

IN MEMORIAM



GHENADY MEIRSON

The AVA family mourns the loss of Ghenady Meirson, a fixture of the Philadelphia classical music community who passed away in 2021. For the past 30 years, Ghena was AVA's incredible Russian Repertoire Vocal Coach. He inspired countless Resident Artists with his immense musicianship and his commitment to their development, and he was a friend to all. Born in Odessa, Ukraine, Ghenady Meirson graduated from the Santa Cecilia Conservatory in Rome and the Curtis Institute of Music. In 1982, he wrote a singer's handbook entitled *Do Sing in Russian* and began to focus on Russian vocal repertoire. He prepared many artists for opera, oratorio, recitals, and recordings, and worked with organizations including The Philadelphia Orchestra, Opera Philadelphia, The Philadelphia Singers and the Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia. In 1996, Ghena founded PrivateLessons.com, a membership-based network for independent music teachers that is now a leader in its niche. In 2011, he founded the Russian Opera Workshop, a top-tier independent summer program based in Philadelphia that attracts aspiring opera singers and professionals from around the world. Ghena was a faculty member of both the Academy of Vocal Arts and Curtis Institute of Music.

AVA's President and Artistic Director Kevin McDowell said, "Ghena brought joy to every room he entered, and AVA will never be the same without him. He was a masterful artist, and inspired so many young artists on their journey while introducing them to the vast Russian repertoire of both songs and operas." Words cannot express how much he is missed.



Cindy (left) with the late Ann Stephenson sharing a good laugh over wearing the same outfit to an AVA Gala

LUCINDA S. LANDRETH

The AVA family remembers our friend, patron, and longtime Board member Lucinda S. Landreth, who passed away in 2021. Cindy joined AVA's Board of Directors in 2008. She served on various committees and became Vice Chair in 2013. She was passionately committed to the fiscal health of AVA and extending the reach of AVA to key locations outside of the greater Philadelphia area. She and her husband, Charlie, were a fixture at performances, recitals, galas, and other AVA events. In 2019, the AVA Board of Directors bestowed on her the Outstanding Service Award.

Cindy was a highly accomplished investment banker at PNC Bank and Wentworth Capital Partners. Her devotion to the cultural life of Philadelphia extended well beyond AVA. She was a Trustee and President of the Presser Foundation, was deeply involved with numerous Philadelphia cultural institutions, and was an active parishioner of the historic Christ Church.

A generous bequest from Cindy's estate established the Lucinda S. Landreth Comprehensive Scholarship Fund, which will fund tuition and living stipends for deserving Resident Artists. Additionally, the 2021 performance and broadcast of *Jubilate!* was dedicated to Cindy's memory. Everyone at AVA will miss Cindy's quick wit, sense of humor, and true love of opera and our Resident Artists, past and present.



Cindy receiving the Outstanding Service Award flanked by AVA Board Chairman Emeritus Mackie MacLean, her husband Charlie, AVA President Kevin McDowell, and current AVA Board Chairman Rick Pitcairn



Ghenady Meirson performs on the AVA stage

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- Ghenady Meirson
- John A. Nyheim
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- Dr. Ruth S. Rappaport
- Robert A. Watts

A CONVERSATION WITH THE WINNERS

Over the past 40 years, winners of AVA's annual Giargiari Bel Canto Competition have gone on to launch incredible careers in opera. We sat down with the 2020 winners to hear their perspective on participating in this historic competition in an all-new virtual format.

Soprano Kara Mulder won the James Parkinson Opera Foundation First Prize with "Marietta's Lied" from Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*. Mezzo-soprano Anne Marie Stanley won the Cecile K. Dalton Second Place Prize for her performance of "O mon Fernand" from Donizetti's *La favorite*, and Bass Eric Delagrangé earned the Special Judges' Award and Audience Favorite Award with "Abbietta zingara" from Verdi's *Il trovatore*.

Anne Marie, Eric, and Kara, congratulations on your stunning Giargiari Competition performances! Your aria selections were perfectly suited to you and your voices. How and why did you choose to compete with this particular aria? What about it captivates you?

Kara: I have to give my mentors Danielle Orlando and Luis Ledesma full credit for my repertoire choice. They heard my voice in "Marietta's Lied," and they were spot on. I loved singing it, and I got to show a lot of my personality and just be myself. The interesting thing about the aria is that it's originally a duet, so some of the lines that I sing are supposed to be sung by someone else. In competition contexts, the soprano sings the whole aria, and it feels like a conversation with yourself.

Eric: Well, I just love it. It's as simple as that! When it comes to auditions, basses never use "Abbietta zingara" – it's one of the hardest arias out there. Not only is it technically difficult, but you must be a great storyteller to pull it off. You're talking about somebody who's literally on fire: it's a very realistic, graphic story and you have to be fully committed to it.

Anne Marie: In my first year at AVA, I sang the role of Léonor in *La favorite*. At the time of the competition, "O mon Fernand" was the perfect aria to showcase everything I had learned up until that point. I felt that I could continue using it for other competitions to build upon everything I'd learned. On top of that, after spending all that

time with the character of Léonor, I feel a deep connection to her story, her journey, and what she has to say in the opera. It was an absolute pleasure to delve into that character and then perform the aria once again.

Kara, how did you approach the dialogue and conversation in "Marietta's Lied" as one vocalist?

Kara: The nature of that aria is such that the conversation and the back-and-forth really allows you to genuinely switch between different modes: one person is asking a question, and another person is answering. For me, this became a sort of internal dialogue. As opposed to someone else asking, you are asking yourself, and you are answering your own question..

Anne Marie, you've now spent over a year with "O mon Fernand" and the role of Léonor. Has your approach to this aria developed and changed over time?

Anne Marie: Yes, but I think it changed the most after Giargiari! Some of these realizations take longer than a given timeline. It wasn't until the Metropolitan Opera competition that I started to feel a stronger connection to Léonor than ever. The cool thing with opera, arias, and performing is that your relationship to the characters in the story ages like a fine wine. As time goes on, you realize things that you wouldn't have noticed your first time around, and it means so much more to you.

Eric, you shone as a storyteller in your performance. How did you connect with the terrifying story in Verdi's libretto and step into that role so convincingly?

Eric: Luckily, we were working with Danielle Orlando, who can break every sentence apart. There is so much word painting, and the music speaks for itself when the text talks about crying, screaming, and being burned in half. It's a very graphic story, and the music reflects that.

As a performer, you have to pretend that you're frustrated with these half-awake soldiers around you, because they aren't staying up. You have to believe it and put yourself there, and you can't overanalyze it – you just have to go for it. The librettist and the composer do most of the work. Do what the music says and commit yourself to it, and that's it!

The 2020 Giargiari Competition was AVA's first remote production. What was it like to prepare and film a virtual AVA performance for the first time?

Eric: Danielle Orlando is an amazing coach. She is so specific and gives great feedback. We covered language, style, meaning, character development... everything! We worked with her so much before the recording took place that when the day came, we were all very prepared. It was strange to record without an audience, but I really enjoyed singing into the camera. It was my first time performing since before the pandemic,

OF THE 2020 GIARGIARI COMPETITION

and without an audience it was especially odd. We all just made the best out of it and went with it. It felt like the birth of the virtual era!

Anne Marie: I adore singing in person. I love the alchemy of people joining together in the back room when everyone is nervous, but excited. Those giddy, magical pre-performance feelings go all the way back to my childhood: I'm from a big family, and we used to do musical theater productions for fun. I missed that dearly! While filming for Giargiari, I learned that I am a little camera-shy. It was kind of scary: I was in my quarantine bubble for six months, and despite preparing as best I could to sing in front of a camera, the act of actually walking into the room and recording was a different animal. A driving force for me was that I ultimately wanted to tell the story, and I wanted to be Léonor as much as I possibly could. I was able to flow with the nervousness, to let my body do what it needed to do, while keeping that intention and that focus on the character and the story.

Kara: I am so grateful to have had

the opportunity to compete during a global pandemic, let alone win. That being said, it was definitely different! The competition day almost felt like a recording session, and it didn't feel as intense as the live setting. For me, I don't love recording and I much prefer singing to a live audience. While that day was strange, the preparation process before the competition was similar to how it would have normally been. And we still had a lot of fun! Danielle made sure that we enjoyed ourselves and that the experience was special for everyone.

Amid a difficult year for artists, what did this win mean to you?

Kara: That win was one of the things that helped me get up every morning, practice, and sing. The truth is, when you don't have anything to look forward to, it's hard to be motivated. When things were uncertain and there were no auditions or seasons, the win was a reminder of why I do what I do: you love it, you're good at it, and you can't let the uncertainty of the times sway that feeling. The win meant a lot, more than I can express

with words.

Eric: The thing is, anybody could have gotten any award, because everyone is so talented here! I'm very grateful. It felt amazing, especially given it was the first time I had performed the aria in public and given the judges that we had. Angela Meade, Corrado Rovaris, and Christina Scheppelmann are incredibly established. They were very supportive and gave great feedback afterwards. I really appreciated that, especially with the uncertainty back then about the state of the world and our field.

Anne Marie: It meant so much to me. The pandemic has kind of felt like walking through a dark tunnel. I don't like being in the dark, and I especially don't like having to continue moving forward in the dark! The fact that we had no idea what was going to happen, given the ebb and flow of pandemic restrictions and severity, was very scary. Despite that feeling, knowing that I could still create something and be acknowledged for it meant the world to me.

Left to right: Anne Marie Stanley, Kara Mulder, and Eric Delagrange.
Photo credit: Weston Sound



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Anne Marie Stanley and Joanna Latini perform in the 2021 *Jubilate!* concert with the AVA Orchestra, under the direction of Maestro David Antony Lofton
Photo credit: José Meléndez

SAVE THE DATE FOR VIVA LA VOCE!

AVA's annual Gala Celebration
Saturday, March 26, 2022
at the Curtis Building Atrium
Neal Krouse, Gala Chair



RESIDENT ARTIST REFLECTIONS

REFLECTING

“The 2020 - 2021 year was empowering in a unique way. It challenged me to become even more self-reliant in my artistic process. Thanks to meticulous scheduling, we were able to coach and perform while ensuring everyone was safe.”

– Griffen Hogan Tracy

“I learned more about the different uses of technology, which is something all singers are facing in the changing operatic industry. The ability to use no-latency technology through AVA was and is an incredibly privileged experience for Resident Artists, given that so many institutions did not have this technology. The AVA faculty went above and beyond in their commitment to our artistic growth, and I felt cared for and nourished in a time when the world considered art to be nonessential.”

– Alice Chung

“I grew as an artist last year by challenging myself to see how authentic I can truly be in my repertoire. As it turns out, I surprised myself with how much I grew vocally, dramatically, and artistically. The profound fulfillment I experienced through a newfound process this past year has been essential in my desire to keep moving forward and continue pushing past fear, doubt, and limitations.”

– Anne Marie Stanley

“Last year gave me such a good chunk of time to work on myself as an artist. Usually, throughout the year, our schedule is so chaotic: you’re jumping from rehearsal to rehearsal, and sometimes you don’t have a chance to really work on your own repertoire unless you’re in a voice lesson. I worked on my audition materials, learned a ton of new repertoire, and learned a lot about my voice and what it can do. It was great to look through that lens without managing so many other things. Yes, I missed singing shows and being there in person with patrons and that energy, but I personally gained a lot from the year!”

– Eric Delagrangé



The 2020/21 First Year Resident Artists gather in the AVA courtyard.

Photos courtesy of Camille Mola

STAYING CONNECTED

“The Resident Artists stayed connected virtually through Jitsi, Zoom, FaceTime, Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok — needless to say, social media proved to be paramount in our ability to communicate and stay in the loop with one another!”

– Anne Marie Stanley

“We had several Zoom calls and check-ins as Resident Artists. And thankfully, in our virtual coachings, you can see other people on the call!”

– Renée Richardson

LOOKING AHEAD

“As most of our learning was one-on-one or virtual during the last season, I am greatly looking forward to singing with my colleagues again. The faculty are so incredibly skilled, and it will be a joy to feed off the energy of other singers in their presence. It’s that spark of energy between performers that really makes the magic happen, and where monumental learning can occur.”

– Cody Müller

“I look forward to being in a rehearsal. I look forward to hearing the insights and ideas of conductors, directors,

and my fellow colleagues. I am longing to collaborate and build upon everything we individually worked on this past year together.”

– Anne Marie Stanley

“I’m super pumped about the season and the bread-and-butter roles for basses. It’s kind of crazy that this is my last year already: I still feel like I’m in my second year since Covid hit! I love my class of colleagues so it’ll be a sentimental year, but a good year.”

– Eric Delagrangé

“Oh, I am looking forward to being in operas, to being in ANYTHING – to getting back to making music among colleagues, hearing other people’s voices, and singing together!”

– Renée Richardson

“I could not be more thankful to have had the artistic and financial security to continue pursuing my operatic career over the last year. I truly cannot imagine my life during the pandemic and beyond if it were not for my supportive teacher, coaches, and the entire dedicated AVA family who were steadfastly taking care of us young artists. Thank you all, forever!”

– Emily Margevich

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.

Opportunities to impact the institution and the future of premier opera singers include:

AVA'S 2021-2022 ANNUAL FUND

The Annual Fund provides AVA with the working capital to support the daily functions of the institution and helps us meet the expenses of our operating budget. A gift to AVA through the Annual Fund makes an immediate and powerful impact.

FELLOWSHIPS

AVA is the only tuition-free school in the world devoted exclusively to operatic training. While the program has always been tuition-free, AVA now also offers fellowships to assist Resident Artists with the non-tuition related costs of living in Philadelphia during their AVA training. Resident Artist fellowships can be endowed or funded on an annual basis.

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOLARSHIPS

These provide both a monthly fellowship to assist with living expenses and tuition support for one Resident Artist annually. They may be endowed in perpetuity with a contribution of \$350,000 or more.

PLANNED GIVING THROUGH THE HELEN CORNING WARDEN SOCIETY

The Helen Corning Warden Society recognizes patrons who have made a bequest or other deferred planned gift arrangement for AVA in their estate planning. There are a number of ways in which your legacy gift can transform the future of AVA for generations to come. 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

AVA provides a number of opportunities that provide corporations high visibility opportunities through AVA opera and concert sponsorships, including our annual gala. The AVA Development department will partner with you to meet the philanthropic and marketing objectives of your business.

MATCHING GIFTS

Your employer may match your gift to AVA, partially or in its entirety. In some instances, this may double or even triple the benefit of your gift to the Academy of Vocal Arts and its Resident Artists! 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.

THE UNITED WAY

AVA's Opera Outreach program is eligible to receive individual contributions made through the United Way Specific Care Program. Simply 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 the Academy of Vocal Arts and its Resident Artists, please contact Helen Kim. To make a gift to AVA's Annual Fund, you may also mail your donation to 1920 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103 or make a gift online by visiting www.avaopera.org and clicking on the "Donate Now" link.



After 33 years of dedicated service as Director of Institutional Advancement, Robert Lyon has transitioned his work to focus solely on planned giving until his retirement in December 2021.

As of July 1, 2021, the Academy of Vocal Arts welcomed Helen Kim as our new Director of Institutional Advancement. Helen has a comprehensive background in fundraising and the performing arts. She began her career at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center before joining Columbia Artists Management. As a fundraiser she has raised support in the nonprofit and education sectors. A trained cellist, Helen is a graduate of the Juilliard School of Music.

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 2020-2021 leading supporters.

2020-2021 SEASON SPONSORS:

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Esquires
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Competition and *Russian Romances*

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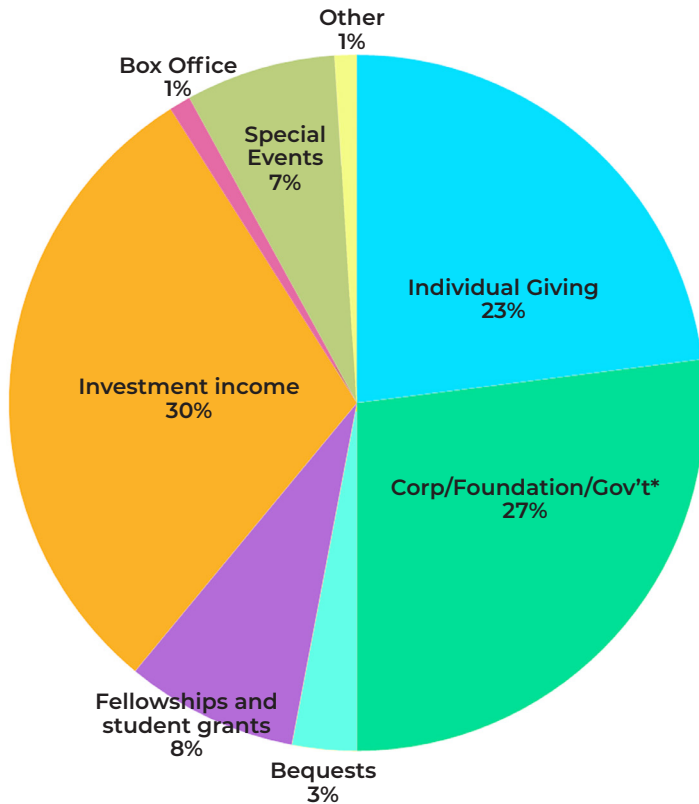
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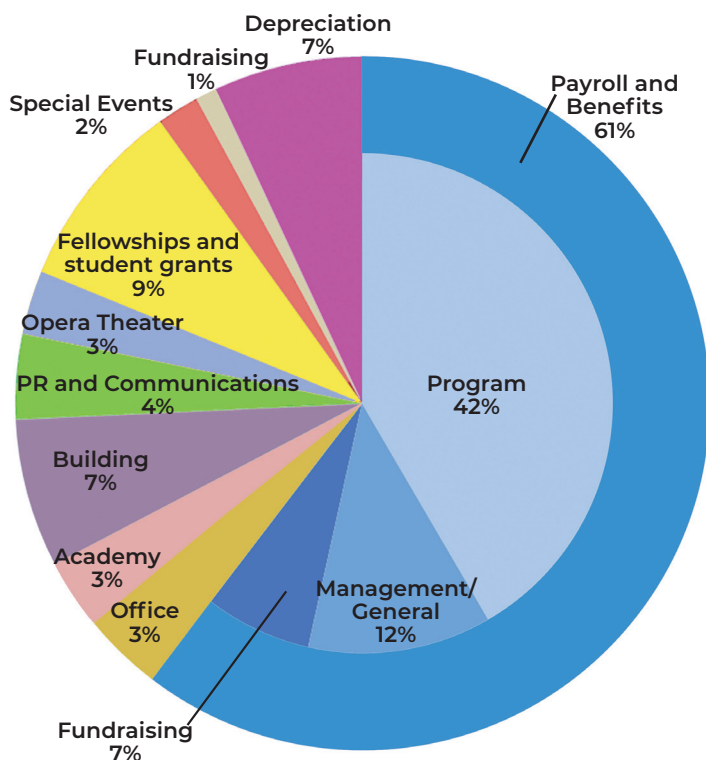
OPERATING INCOME

\$3,948,099



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 provide most of the remainder of our budget. In recent years, planned gifts and bequests have become 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!

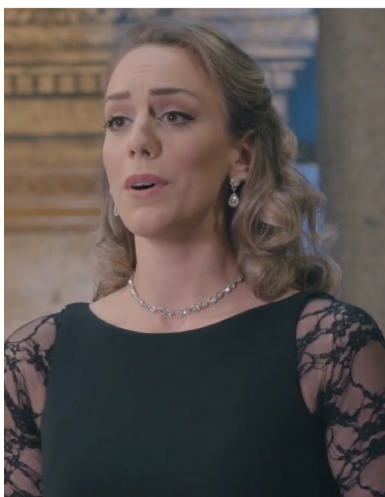
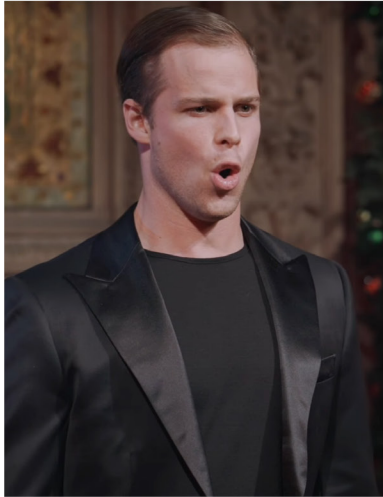
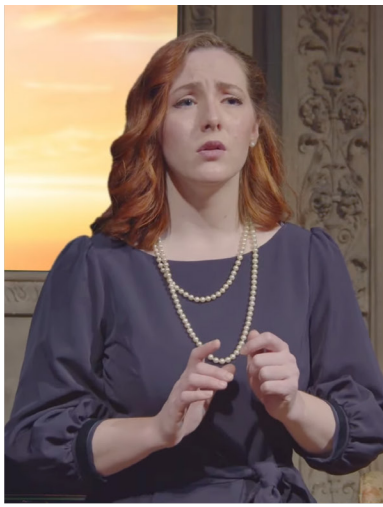
*This year, support from the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and the Employee Retention Credit (ERC) greatly increased the level of governmental giving due to the pandemic.



UNRESTRICTED OPERATING EXPENSES

\$3,659,841

Normally, the two largest expenditures in AVA's budget are program payroll and benefits, along with opera theater expenses. Because the pandemic precluded live productions with orchestra, opera theater expenses were significantly reduced. The remaining costs are associated with recording and filming technology, as well as personal protective equipment to ensure the safety of the AVA community.



All screenshot photos from AVA's 2020/21 virtual season courtesy of Weston Sound