

City Voices



A community-centered music education program.

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue 3 - Spring 2014

Rewind

Read about what we have been up to this winter and spring - and about some true student successes!

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Napoleon Douglas

City Voices Teaching Artist makes plans to advance his career.

Page 3

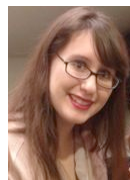


ACT-SO

Three City Voices students participated in the annual NAACP Scholarship program - find out how they did, and where they are off to next!

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Amanda Lowe



Read about Teaching Artist Amanda Lowe
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Grant Awarded

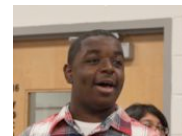
A generous grant from the Iowa Arts Council will help support the City Voices Summer program. Read all about it!

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Kameron James

Read about North sophomore Kameron James, and his big plans for a singing career!

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YOU'RE INVITED!

City Voices will present their Spring Recital on **Thursday, May 8** at 6:30 p.m. in the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 4114 Allison Avenue in Des Moines. Students from North, Hoover and Roosevelt High Schools will present music from the Classical, Contemporary and Music Theatre repertoires. There will be a short reception following the program, when you can meet and greet students and teaching artists. Make plans now to attend!

City Voices Des Moines Presents...

A Spring Recital



Featuring Students from North HS, Hoover HS and Roosevelt HS

Thursday, May 8th 2014 - 6:30 P.M.
Westminster Presbyterian Church
4114 Allison Ave
Des Moines, Iowa 50310

~ A short reception will follow immediately after the program ~

COMING ATTRACTIONS:

CITY VOICES GOES SOCIAL!

City Voices is teaming up with the Des Moines Social Club-based group Opera Eight to present a musical Salon on Tuesday, April 29 at 7:00 p.m. Working with adult mentors, students are planning and presenting a program entitled "Love Lost: love me...love me not..." All of the songs will reflect this theme, and the casual event will feature a student emcee and trivia contests throughout the night. Please join us in the brand new Social Club for a night of great kids and great music!

For more details:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/689593031103999/>

AND DON'T FORGET...

The City Voices Summer Music Academy starts Monday, June 9 at Des Moines Onstage, 2124 Grand Avenue. Individual lessons plus enrichment classes in A Cappella, Music Theatre, Music Theory, and Contemporary/Jazz Studio - contact Mary Anne Sims at 515-681-6234, or maryanne@cityvoicesdesmoines.org for more details. Check our website at cityvoicesdesmoines.org!!

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

When I started teaching lessons to kids with promise, desire but few financial resources in the fall of 2013, I knew that I could only do so much - it was going to take a lot of "help from my friends." And that has been exactly what has happened - the number of people who have stepped in to offer their resources and/or ideas has been truly remarkable. From the donation of free tickets to a community choir to a local university opening their doors to a dress rehearsal and recital space; from a local voice teacher offering a scholarship to a deserving young singer to an opera company offering the opportunity of a young lifetime in a chorus; and most assuredly including all of my former Roosevelt "kids" and "parents" who have offered their kind words, materials and physical labor to help make this program work - all of it reminds me how incredibly blessed I have been, and how supportive the Des Moines community can be. Students, too, feel blessed - more than one has commented on the great opportunities that they have had during this year. It does indeed take a village - and I am thankful that all of you are in ours.

Mary Anne Sims

Executive Director



REWIND

City Voices had a fabulous winter/early spring season! Students represented their schools and our program all over the city, and gained valuable performing experience doing it!

City Voices wows the Civic Center!

City Voices students were the opening act for the February SmartTalk Connected Conversations event featuring Vy Higgenson, pioneer, producer and publisher, and CEO of the Mاما Foundation for the Arts in Harlem. This foundation is dedicated to presenting, preserving, and promoting the history of African-American history and Gospel music. In keeping with this goal, City Voices students sang four traditional spirituals to a very enthusiastic packed house! One standing ovation later, students were still excited about their experience, which included the added thrill of meeting Ruth Ann Gaines, former East High Drama Director and current state representative from the 32nd District. Thanks to Brooke Benschoter and Des Moines Performing Arts for this fabulous opportunity!

A big thank you to the Des Moines Intentional Eucharistic Community

The Des Moines Intentional Eucharistic Community puts their faith in action - with a regular program of donating one Sunday's offering to various non-profits throughout the metro, City Voices was pleased to be included in their February service. Kameron James (10, North), Sameeah Muhammed (9, North) and Integrity Narcisse (12, Roosevelt) sang during the service and enjoyed a wonderful brunch meal afterward! We are so very grateful for your generous donation, your positive comments and your warm hospitality!

State IHSSA Contest lets students express themselves

Many City Voices students participated in the Iowa High School Speech Association's Large Group and Individual Events Contests. Participating from North High School were: Rebekah Ostermann (11), Mayte Gomez-Cruz (10), Mahalel Hill (9), Duncan Vivanh (9), Hebelin Sanchez (9), Mercedes Castillo (9), Marcos Hernandez (10), and Michael Xayavong (11). Participating from Hoover was Jenni Martin (12). Roosevelt was also well represented, with many students singing in the Musical Theatre Division. The group earned a lot of Superior Ratings, and Hebelin Sanchez advanced to the All-State Festival in Cedar Falls on March 31, 2014. Congratulations to all!

State Solo Contest earns high marks

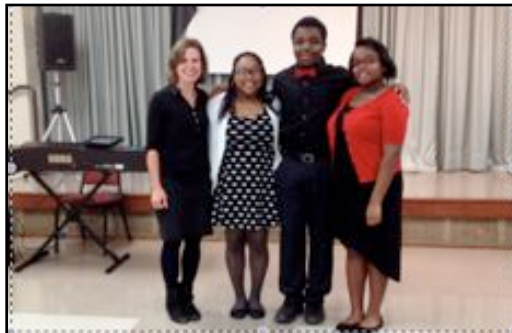
City Voices was well represented at the Iowa High School Music Association's State Solo/Small Ensemble Contest on April 12, 2014. North was represented by contestants Monika Moore (11), Daniela Ortiz (10), Rebekah Ostermann (11), Michael Xayavong (11), Mayte Gomez-Cruz (10), Kameron James (10), Hebelin Sanchez (9), Sameeah Muhammed (9), Duncan Vivanh (9), Mercedes Castillo (9), Destiny Foster (12), Leslie Vasquez (11), Shauna Tyler (12), Jatayla Williams (9), Michael Colon-Ramos (11) and Zoe Hike (9). Hoover was represented by students Megan Slade (10) and Jennifer Martin (12). Everyone performed very well and received many positive comments from their judges. Special congratulations to Destiny Foster, Rebekah Ostermann, Michael Xayavong, Mayte Gomez-Cruz and Kameron James for their Division I "Superior" ratings!

Master Class at North

Opera Eight Czar Allison Lingren and volunteer clinician Beth Deutmeyer provided City Voices students with a fabulous opportunity on April 23, 2014, leading a master class with several singers. Four singers presented songs that they will perform at the Social Club Salon on April 29, and received some wonderful suggestions about how to really grab the audience's attention! Thank you for your great advice - we look forward to performing!

OUR MISSION:

City Voices is a nonprofit organization that provides high quality, individualized voice instruction to underserved students in the Des Moines Public Schools. It is our belief that helping students build these skills allows them to more effectively participate in vocal music opportunities around them, including their school and community programs. We also believe that, in doing so, we are mitigating inequalities, allowing students access to experiences that are frequently out of reach due to a lack of financial resources.



City Voices Earns Iowa Arts Council Project Grant for Summer Program

City Voices is pleased to announce that it has received a Project Grant from the Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. Grant funds will support the Summer Music Academy Session I.

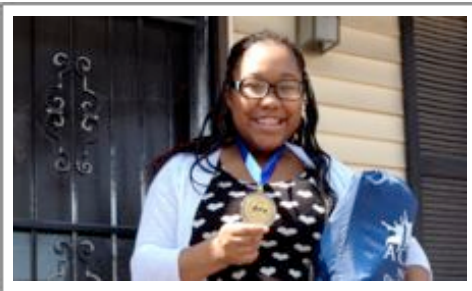
The Project Grant supports our expanded summer 2014 program, making it possible for us to continue to serve students who would not otherwise have access to this kind of higher level music study during a traditionally under-used time of year, the summer vacation. Des Moines Public School students will be able to continue their individual thirty-minute lessons, as well as take advantage of an expanded curriculum that includes A Cappella Group, Music Theory, Music Theatre, and Contemporary Studio. All classes and lessons will be free of charge for eligible students, and will be held at Des Moines Onstage, 2124 Grand Avenue in Des Moines. Read more about it on page 4! And if you know a student that might be interested, visit our website to find out how to get involved!

The Iowa Arts Council is committed to enriching the quality of life for Iowans through support of the arts. Funding for the Iowa Arts Council is provided by the state of Iowa and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

What Happens in Vegas? City Voices!

ACT-SO – the Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics, is a youth program under the administrative aegis of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Founded by Vernon Jarrett of Chicago, the renowned author, civil rights activist and journalist in 1977, ACT-SO is a yearlong enrichment program designed to encourage high academic and cultural achievement among underserved minority high school students. It includes 26 categories of competition in the sciences, humanities, business, and performing and visual arts. More than 260,000 young people have participated from the program since its inception.

City Voices was well represented at the Des Moines NAACP Branch competition on April 5, 2014. Destiny Foster (12, North), Kameron James (10, North) and Sameeah Muhammed (9, North) all participated in Vocal Music categories, and did very well: Sameeah earned a 4th place finish, Kameron a 2nd place, and Destiny was declared the winner of the Classical Music competition, singing "Che fiero costume" by LeGrenzi. By virtue of her win, Destiny will go on to compete at the National Competition July 18 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Kameron and Sameeah will also attend as observers. We are very proud of our singers!



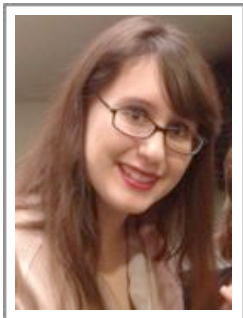
Destiny Foster (12, North) shows off her first-place medal from the Des Moines ACT-SO competition.

City Voices Teaching Artist Napoleon Douglas Prepares for his Next Move - and More Rehearsals

It's been a very busy four years for Teaching Artist Napoleon Douglas at Drake University. And he is about to get much busier - he will receive his Bachelor of Arts in Music Theatre May 18th at 10:00 a.m. (give or take an hour!), and at 12:00 he will get in his car and drive to Memphis, Tennessee, where he has been hired as a Guest Artist for the summer production of "Hairspray" at the Playhouse on the Square, starring as Seaweed Stubbs. In August he will then relocate once more to Ft. Collins, Colorado, where he has a year-long internship with Midtown Arts Center as a resident company member. Here he will work on five MainStage shows, and has already earned lead roles in "Miss Saigon" and "Sweeney Todd." He will also be teaching theatre-focused classes to students weekly, working in the Administrative offices 25 hours a week, performing as lead characters and working on the production team for touring children's shows, assisting with summer camps, and serving and bartending in the dinner theatre. Featured in the fall '13 newsletter, Napoleon is a shining real-life example of what access to voice lessons and higher level music study can do for ANYONE. Rehearsing to prepare a role? Necessary. Getting paid to go to rehearsal? Priceless!!



Napoleon Douglas, teaching artist, instructs Michael Colon-Ramos (11, North).



"Music is a Necessity"

Meet Amanda Lowe, next in a series of "Meet Our Teaching Artists" interviews.

Amanda Lowe started voice lessons early - when her choir teacher at Meredith Middle School in Des Moines pulled her aside with a friend to work on Italian pieces after school. Now she is carrying on that charter by teaching individual lessons - including Italian pieces as well as many other

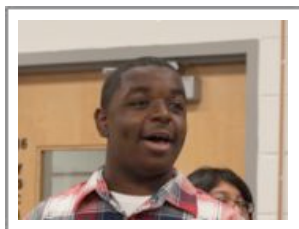
languages - to students with City Voices.

Amanda graduated from Roosevelt High School in Des Moines in 2008, and went on to attend Augsburg College in Minneapolis, MN, where she studied music therapy and graduated in 2009, having earned a full-ride scholarship her senior year. She was very active as a musician in college, volunteering for Children's Lighthouse, performing in small chamber ensembles and choir, and singing for private recitals and convocations. She credits one of her voice teachers, Janet Fried, with helping her find her true teaching style, saying, "She gave me valuable tools to understand not only my voice, but other individuals' [voices] as well."

Her students have been the beneficiaries of these tools; Duncan Vivanh (9, North) says of their lessons, "I like Amanda's teaching because not only is she really serious about it but she makes it fun and takes her teaching at my rate of progression." Amanda is also a gifted guitar player, a talent that has been well used in her lessons - it is not unusual to find her accompanying her students on contemporary songs, such as the North High School Sweetheart Show earlier this year. She has a special knack, in fact, for matching songs to students' interests and backgrounds - one student even studied a German song in honor of her grandparents' heritage.

No matter the genre of song, more than one student says that she "builds really good relationships with us." In fact, Amanda emphasizes that her favorite part about teaching is "the special bond that is created when the transference of knowledge and understanding from teacher to student takes place." She specifically points out the "evolution of confidence within each student and the joy they show when they accomplish a song or a new technique." In fact, Amanda notes the "pride" and lessons learned from these accomplishments that spills over into everyday life as well; she says "I truly love watching my students sing at a recital knowing that their hard work has allowed them to conquer stage fright, sing in a foreign language, or to express themselves in an extremely healthy and cathartic way."

In addition to teaching with City Voices, Amanda is currently working part-time at Ann Taylor Loft and is also a mentor/teacher for basic guitar and voice lessons for the non-profit ArtForce Iowa, as well as at the Ankeny School of Music and Dance. Eventually, she would like to obtain her master's degree in either music education or vocal performance, but she wants to continue teaching vocal and instrumental music to others. She stays active performing because, as she says, "it is a necessity in my life. I am always searching for new music opportunities." Her students will undoubtedly follow in the same footsteps!



"My Goal is to Make a Career Out of Singing!"

Meet Kameron Davis, North High School sophomore, ACT-SO Award winner, Netflix afficionado....and budding opera singer!!

Kameron Davis is like many other 15-year old boys - he likes spending time with his friends, eating, watching Netflix, and "enjoying life." But this summer, he will be doing something a bit more unusual - he will be a member of the Des Moines Metro Opera's production of "Dead Man Walking." Having auditioned for and been chosen as a member of the chorus, Kameron will be observing and spending time with rising stars within the opera world, who have been described as "some of the best and brightest talents in America." And it is his experience with voice lessons in City Voices that has helped open this world to him.

When Kameron signed up for summer voice lessons in June 2013, he simply wanted to "get better at singing." He says he knew it would be fun experience, and he hoped to expand his vocal range. He expanded more than just his range, however, quickly becoming involved in many musical opportunities within his school - he participated in North High School's production of "Urinetown," several solo recitals, and was very successful at the Iowa High School Music Association's Solo Contest, earning a highly coveted Division I rating in April.

Kameron also began participating in community music opportunities - in addition to his opera audition, he was a second-place winner in the Classical Music category of Des Moines ACT-SO (Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics) program, sponsored by the NAACP, and will be attending the National Competition in Las Vegas in July. He says that things "get a little busy," but that he doesn't mind because "singing is my passion." In fact, Kameron has really enjoyed all of the recitals this year, especially singing "at new venues and around different people." He says he's learned a lot, and has most enjoyed singing "Come dal ciel precipita," an aria from the Verdi opera Macbeth - his place-winning entry in ACT-SO - because "it's probably the most powerful song I've done yet and it's so beautiful with the different dynamics and sound it's really just an amazing piece."

Studying with teaching artist Napoleon Douglas has been amazing as well - Kameron says that "honestly without [Napoleon] I wouldn't be where I am today. He never lost faith in me and pushed me harder to be the best. I give him a lot of credit for everything." Kameron hopes to continue to sing for a long time, as well as give something back, saying "My goal is to make a career out of my singing and help other people who love to sing learn if they're not able to." For now, though, he is firmly focused on this summer, saying "not a lot of fifteen-year-olds can say they've been in the opera. I thank God for my voice and all the good things and opportunities I've been getting with music lately." And then, he allows himself a small window into the future, saying, "My voice has changed in a big way and it's a lot better now; I just can't wait to see what I sound like when I'm a senior!"





SUMMER IN THE CITY

Join us for a summer full of music! City Voices presents the Summer Music Academy!

Beginning June 9 and continuing through August 1, students will be able to participate in two month-long sessions featuring an expanded program: in addition to private lessons, classes will be offered in Music Theory, Contemporary Music Studio, and A Cappella Group. There will also be two week-long Intensive Music Theatre Camps, June 23-27, and July 28-August 1. All classes will be taught by City Voices Teaching Artists, and are free to interested students - students may register for as many enrichment classes as they wish, in addition to a regular weekly private lesson. Classes and lessons will be scheduled between the hours of 1 and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday - students and teachers will find a mutually agreeable time during that time for a private lesson. Enrichment classes will be held from 2:30-3:30 p.m. daily, each day featuring a different class.

Students must register in advance. All classes will be held at Des Moines Onstage, 2124 Grand Avenue in Des Moines. There is plenty of parking available, and the bus stops one block away. If you are interested, or know a student who might be interested, please pick up a registration form from your vocal music teacher or call Mrs. Sims at 515-681-6234, or email her at maryanne@cityvoicesdesmoines.org.

For information about registering for the City Voices summer program, please call Mary Anne Sims at 515-681-6234 or visit our website at www.cityvoicesdesmoines.org.

PHOTOS



Leslie Vasquez (11, North), sings "What It Means to Be a Friend" from the musical "Thirteen."

OPERA EIGHT MASTER CLASS

April 24, 2014, North High School



Rebekah Ostermann (11, North) sings Apres un reve, by Gabriel Faure.



Michael Xayavong (11, North) sings "When I Think Upon the Maidens."

Civic Center Smart Talk Connected Conversations Event featuring Vy Higginson.



Kameron James (10, North) and Sameeah Muhammed (9, North) try out the Civic Center mirrors.



Warming up on the Civic Center stage before the Vy Higginson event February, 2014.



City Voices Executive Director Mary Anne Sims and Teaching Artist Amanda Lowe.



Group selfie in the Civic Center dressing room mirrors!

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"I did it! I went out there and I sung my heart out! People I don't even know are congratulating me. People know me in the the community. It feels so good to be a voice (literally) for my community!"

-Destiny Foster (12, North), reflecting on her first-place performance in Classical Music in the Des Moines ACT-SO Competition, April 5, 2014. Destiny sang "Che fiero costume" by LeGrenzi.

IN APPRECIATION

CITY VOICES IS A 501(C)(3) TAX-EXEMPT CORPORATION. WE SINCERELY THANK THE FOLLOWING DONORS FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT - WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!

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Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs
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HOW YOU CAN HELP:

Contributions can be mailed to:

City Voices
924 45th Street
Des Moines, IA 50312

OR: Use the PayPal button at:

www.cityvoicesdesmoines.org

**YOUR DONATION IS 100%
TAX DEDUCTIBLE!**

THANK YOU:

- Dina Else
- Lori Glawe
- Ryan Williamson & Kathie Danielsen
- Vanessa Brady & Alex Fitzgerald
- Charlotte Chae
- Leanne Freeman-Miller
- Alexandra Jennetten

CITY VOICES

Mary Anne Sims, Executive Director
Napoleon Douglas, Teaching Artist
Amanda Lowe, Teaching Artist
Katy Merriman, Teaching Artist
Corey Wedeking, Teaching Artist

Join Us this Summer at the City Voices Summer Music Academy!

Classes and lessons start June 9, 2014 at Des Moines Onstage, 2124 Grand Ave.

For more information, see our website at www.cityvoicesdesmoines.org

OR call 515-681-6234.

