

City Voices



A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue 1 - Fall 2013

Musical time!

City Voices students are involved in musicals at three different high schools this fall - read about one North High School student's journey to the spotlight!

Page 3



Fall registration is a success

Nearly fifty students have enrolled in City Voices this fall - following a successful summer pilot program at North High School last summer!

Page 2



Meet our teaching artists

Napoleon Douglas is a very busy young man, but between his classes and leadership roles at Drake University, he finds time to help guide students.

Page 2



Mission Statement:

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.



Summer Singing

City Voices piloted its community-based music education program this summer at North High School in Des Moines. Twenty-one intrepid students braved the hot, humid weather to take a weekly forty-five minute lesson - thirty minutes of individual instruction and fifteen minutes of group learning. Instructors were Mary Anne Sims, Executive Director of City Voices, Napoleon Douglas, Teaching Artist with City Voices, and Vanessa Brady, North High School Vocal Music Teacher.

On their applications, students wrote reasons for wanting to participate - one girl wrote, "I want people to hear my voice." Others looked to the future, writing, "I want to be a music teacher," and "I want to sing in college." By all accounts the program was a success - student comments ranged from "I had a ton of fun" to "I'm becoming more confident in my voice." Most of the students had never had private voice lessons before, so the idea of a solo recital was new as well. Not knowing what to expect, students prepared and delivered an awesome performance that was attended by over ninety people.

"I Am a Real-Life Example."

When Napoleon Douglas (Des Moines Roosevelt '10, Drake '14) was in high school, he loved choir. But without access to private voice lessons, a career that involved singing seemed out of reach. Now, he is a Musical Theatre Arts Major at Drake University, involved in six productions, singing in the Drake Choir and the "The Brocol Chords" a cappella group, Music Chair for his fraternity (FIJI), founder of the band "SAMPOL," and "sings in the shower very loud on a daily basis."

His journey followed the same path of many students that he currently teaches in City Voices - unable to afford private lessons, he never knew about these kinds of opportunities. Receiving a scholarship to study voice as a high school student, however, opened his eyes, as well as a world of possibility. He won a voice scholarship to Drake, where he immersed himself in music-making of all kinds. When asked to join City Voices as a teaching artist, he jumped at the chance to help other students the same way. As he says now, "I didn't decide to teach to birth opera stars - I teach because I want to show kids they can be an opera star if they want, as long as they are willing to do the work it takes to get them there."

Napoleon knows the benefits of City Voices firsthand. "This program has helped me understand love makes the world go round, and as long as I care for others, I will reap the benefits as well." That love may just inspire an opera star after all.

City Voices Expands

Following its successful pilot program at North High School in Des Moines, City Voices is in three high schools this fall. Five teaching artists are working with nearly fifty students at North, Roosevelt and Hoover high schools, all in Des Moines.

These students will have many special opportunities this year along with their regular recitals. They have been invited to appear on February 11, 2014, with Vy Higginson, a producer and publisher from New York City who serves as CEO of "The Mama Foundation for the Arts" in Harlem, as part of Des Moines Performing Arts "Smart Talk" series. Selected students will also be participating in a recital at the Des Moines Social Club in April 2014 - this performance will also give students the opportunity to be mentored by Social Club performers as they help organize, plan, and publicize this event. And of course, make plans to attend our winter recital on December 19, 2013, location to be announced. Mark your calendars - City Voices students are on the move!



Napoleon said that he had a "phenomenal experience" teaching high schoolers this summer. He also found unanticipated benefits in building relationships with his students, saying, "When you get to know them on a personal level you truly become inspired by their drive, and they push your motivation to perfect your own craft, which is something I never expected." Students have embraced Napoleon as well; one of his students says, "He is a really awesome teacher." It's not surprising, then, that Napoleon's favorite part of the lesson is "The five-minute conversation that has to happen with each student before you make a sound. 'How are you? What did you do this week? How's school? And your family?' That's what makes teaching real. A relationship."

First in a series of profiles of City Voices students:

Finding Her Destiny

Destiny Foster, a senior at North High School in Des Moines, knew she loved to sing - but also knew that she wanted more.

Destiny Foster ('14) was interested when Vanessa Brady, the vocal music director at North High School in Des Moines, announced to her students an opportunity for summer voice lessons. Destiny said in May, "I know I have a voice - I just need to get it out." So she applied and was accepted for the City Voices pilot program, taking private voice lessons for eight weeks in a hot practice room at North. On July 31, 2013, she wowed a packed recital audience with her rendition of "Amazing Grace." And she knew that she had started to "get out" her voice.

The North High School year started with a flurry - auditions for the musical "Urinetown" were held the first week of school, so students had to be ready in a hurry. And based on her hard work and success over the summer, Mrs. Brady encouraged Destiny to audition. Destiny wasn't expecting much - after all, she had only had a chorus part in the spring production of "Annie."

So when she found out that not only had she made the cast, but that she had been selected for one of the lead roles in the show, Penelope Pennywise, she was incredibly excited. As she said, "I surprised myself and many others."

Three weeks into rehearsals, Destiny is having a great time with her role. She especially likes "The Cop Song," with its rapping section. And having more responsibility with a lead role hasn't daunted her: "I like that I get to be in charge and be in a leadership position." There is one down side, however; she says, "I don't like that I have to be the mean lady in the play. I'm so bubbly and cheery that it is hard sometimes to make a switch of character and be mean."

With a lead role under her belt, Destiny is excited about the year to come. And voice lessons with City Voices is definitely on her schedule. "I surprise myself every time I sing now. When I sing, I'm like, 'Whoa, where did that voice come from?' I didn't know I had that in me. My junior year of high school I sang like a mouse. No one could get a peep out of me. Now my voice is huge and I can sing ANYTHING."

Destiny thinks that lessons will help not only in choir and on stage, but in her academic classes as well, helping her focus. "Yes, there is the fun part of singing, but there is also learning how to

manage your time when you are involved in different extra-curricular activities. Which is a great life skill for when I become an adult." And next year? Destiny wants to go to college and major in Journalism and Mass Communication and minor in English. But she knows singing will always be a part of her life, saying, "Singing is like therapy to me. It can calm me when I'm feeling sad or mad. It's like an escape from the world for three minutes or however long the song lasts."



You can see Destiny in North High School's production of "Urinetown," on October 17, 18 and 19 at 7:30 p.m., and October 20 at 2:00 p.m. All performances are held in the school auditorium, at 501 Holcomb Ave., in Des Moines. Call 515-242-7200 for more details.

In Appreciation

City Voices is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation. We gratefully acknowledge and thank the following for their generous support of City Voices. We can't do it without you!

\$1,000 and above

Catherine Gayle Williams
(Sponsor of the Catherine Gayle Williams Scholarships)
Lisa Kamphius ARNP
Jeff Couch
Robert & Mary Anne Sims

Sarah & Jay Gold
John Armstrong (American Music Literacy Association)
Sue Breen Held
Amy Christensen
Susan Hemminger

\$500 - \$999

Mark Movic
Sharon & Phil Walsh

Volunteer Support

Vanessa Brady
Alexander Fitzgerald
Lori Glawe
Alexandra Tatge-Jennetten

\$100 - \$499

Edward & Gloria Kottick
Molly House
Patricia Davis
Bill & Marcia Gilmer
Mike Woody
Susan & Carl Voss

Also

Matt Smith
Linda Shivvers
Charlotte Chae
Lila Stone
Leanne Freeman-Miller
Dina Else

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

Contributions can be mailed to:

City Voices
924 45th Street
Des Moines, IA 50312

OR

Make a PayPal donation at:

www.cityvoicesdesmoines.org

Leveling the Playing Field

Thirty minutes. It seems like no time at all - it is the length of a television sitcom, or the amount of time it takes to whip up a "fast" dinner at the end of a long day. Whether the thirty minutes is well spent probably depends on whether or not you enjoy the sitcom or the dinner. But for students in City Voices, thirty minutes is something more - it's a chance for them to "level the playing field."

Every student enrolled in the City Voices program receives a thirty-minute individual voice lesson FREE OF CHARGE. We hope that this begins to address the research that finds that urban students are increasingly denied access to this valuable part of their musical development. Bates wrote in 2012, "Without specific interventions, ... students in poverty will not be able to participate in school music as successfully or completely as middle-class or affluent students. The markers for success in music education -- participation in select ensembles, first-chair placements, leading roles, high scores at festival -- will be reserved for middle-class and affluent students." These markers can "significantly increase the likelihood of success in the music program." Palmer (2011) found that private instruction is necessary for students wishing to audition for college music programs, but noted that "students..from urban areas typically do not have the financial resources and are therefore seriously disadvantaged."



Thirty minutes is not much time. But at City Voices, it may be the link between simple participation and real achievement - or even high school and college. Our teaching artists are already seeing great things. Access to private instruction is helping our students begin to overcome barriers. And that makes thirty minutes well spent, indeed.

Board of Directors

Mary Anne Sims, City Voices
Ryan Williamson, Roosevelt High School
Kathie Danielson, Heartland Area Education Agency

Teaching Artists:

Napoleon Douglas, BFA (Music Theatre) Drake '14, Roosevelt '10

Katy P. Merriman, B.M. (Vocal Performance) Butler University '11

Amanda Lowe, B.S. Music Therapy, Augsburg (MN) '12, Roosevelt '08

Corey Wedeking, B.M. (Voice) McNally-Smith '10, Roosevelt '06

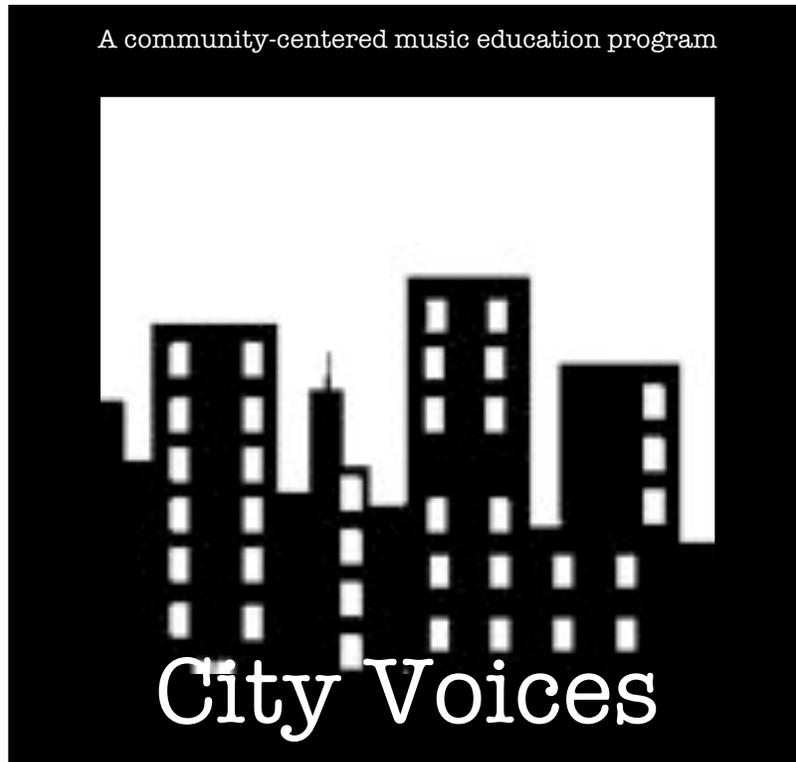
Mary Anne Sims, M.A. (Music Education) Ohio State '12, B.M. University of Iowa '83

Contact Us:

Mary Anne Sims at 515-681-6234 OR

maryanne@cityvoicesdesmoines.org OR

City Voices
924 45th Street
Des Moines, IA 50312



SUPPORT CITY VOICES:

- \$25 will buy a package of recordable CDs and CD covers to aid student learning.
- \$50 will buy two songbooks that many students can use.
- \$100 will sponsor a student for a summer.
- \$200 will sponsor a student for a semester.
- \$400 will sponsor a student for the entire academic year.
- \$500 will sponsor a teaching artist for an entire month - and reach approximately 8-10 students.

Send donations to: City Voices, 924 45th Street, Des Moines, IA 50312

OR

Use the PayPal button on our site www.cityvoicesdesmoines.org. Your donation is 100% tax-deductible!

Mark Your Calendar:

OCTOBER 17-20, 2013 : *Urinetown*, North High School Auditorium, 501 Holcomb, Des Moines, IA

NOVEMBER 7-9, 2013 : *Pippin*, 7:30 p.m. Roosevelt High School Auditorium, 4419 Center, Des Moines, IA

DECEMBER 19, 2013 : *City Voices Recital*, 7:00 p.m., Location TBA

FEBRUARY 11, 2014 : *City Voices* students appear with Vy Higginson as part of the Des Moines Performing Arts "Smart Talk" Series, Civic Center, Des Moines, IA. More details to come!

APRIL 2014 (TBD) : *City Voices* students collaborate with the Des Moines Social Club to plan and perform a recital, "Music Tells a Story."

Also.....Support your local high school's vocal music program! Attend a concert!



City Voices

924 45th Street
Des Moines, IA 50312