

# cityvoices

QUARTER  
NOTES

OPUS 2  
NUMBER 1  
FALL 2014



City Voices student Mercedes Castillo and Teaching Artist Amanda Lowe enjoy the Des Moines Symphony's November 16 concert.

## New school year, new digs, new opportunities, same mission!

City Voices students begin a second year with even more opportunities but the same commitment to high quality private instruction!

After a summer which saw over fifty students participating in our program, and which saw the addition of popular enrichment classes, City Voices is continuing to fulfill its commitment to offer high quality, individual voice instruction to underserved but dedicated singers.

With students from five different Des Moines area secondary schools, we are proud to see the level of achievement rising ever higher - students have auditioned for

honor ensembles and school musicals in greater numbers, and they are succeeding - you can read about some of them on page 3.

In addition, we have revived two of our most popular classes from the summer program, Music Theory and A Cappella - students are now able to "doobie-doo" notes and "do theory" notes. (See a recap of our summer program on page 2!)

That's not all we have up our sleeve, as we continue to add even more opportunities for our students - read about what's new with us on p. 2! We will always, however, keep the core of our program intact - the FREE, individual thirty-minute lesson - because we believe that's what drives our students' success. And given what our students have already accomplished, we can't wait to see what they do next!

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## YOU ARE INVITED!



Presenting the City Voices Winter Recital  
Monday, December 15, 7:00 p.m.

Luther Memorial Church, 1201 Grandview Ave., Des Moines  
FREE - Donations will be accepted  
Call 515-681-6234 for more details



## Finishing With a Great Note

Matt Hawkins, Roosevelt High School senior, knew that he liked to sing, but, in typical fashion for the ambitious young man who currently has all A's and has already been accepted to two universities, he knew "I could be better." So he signed up for voice lessons with City Voices - and now he is seriously thinking about making it a career.

Matt has been a singer his whole life, and going into his senior year he was signed up for three choirs, Gospel Choir (where he was a section leader), Chamber Choir, and Varsity Show Choir. With a job at Dahl's and the typical senior class load, this would be plenty. But he wanted to expand into the solo world - and with no experience with private lessons, he didn't have access to songs or the kind of individual training that this kind of intensive study involves. It was a hit. After just a few lessons, he decided to enter the Roosevelt Variety Show, where he won first place for his solo performance. Next up was the end of the year choir performance, where he branched into the musical theater repertoire, bringing the house down with "All That's Known" from "Spring Awakening." (See his performance at our website, [cityvoicesdesmoines.org](http://cityvoicesdesmoines.org).) This experience with musical theater coincided with his developing interest in drama, and he was also officially inducted into the Roosevelt High School Thespian troupe.

After a summer spent in lessons, as well as experience in the newly-formed City Voices a cappella group, Matt set his sights on the biggest challenge yet - a solo role in the upcoming Roosevelt production of "Hairspray" - in particular, the challenging but show-stopping role of "Seaweed." One audition later, the role was his; and the first weekend in November 2014 was his official debut as a solo musical theater star!

His membership in Thespians allowed him another opportunity as well - the chance to compete in the Musical Theater Solo competition at the State Thespian Festival at the University of Northern Iowa. Drawing on the confidence that his voice study had given him, Matt decided to enter the contest with what he calls his favorite song studied so far, "Seeing You There" from the Adam Gwon show "Ordinary Days" about New York City following 9/11. It was a good choice - Matt

received a perfect ballot and 2nd place in his center, and he qualified for the International Festival, to be held in Lincoln, NE in June 2015. (He will also compete in the Musical Theater Duet division.)

Clearly, Matt has come a long way - and his voice lessons have helped him along that path. He says that the biggest improvement he sees is in the "quality, comfort and tonality" of his voice. He likes the moments in his lessons when "Mrs. Sims is off in crazy land" and even tolerates his least favorite part of lessons: "when she makes me sight read because she knows I hate it" because now he has his sights set on even loftier goals - that is to be a vocal performance major in college.

He is considering many schools, including the UNI and the University of Iowa, where he has a January audition. This will be a challenge; as with most college music departments, his audition must include classical pieces in both English and another language - not literature that he was familiar with before he began lessons. But it's just another challenge to be conquered for Matt Hawkins - who spends his rare down time "hanging out with my friends or bragging about Roosevelt." He says that he wants to "finish off my high school career with a great note and prepare for whatever the future holds." And considering the distance he has already come, it is not hard to imagine even greater things in his future!

SEE MATT AND ALEXIS SING THEIR AWARD-WINNING SONGS "SEEING YOU THERE" AND "ALWAYS STARTING OVER" AT THE DECEMBER 12 RECITAL!



## "I'm Never Not Singing!"

Alexis Cole (Roosevelt, 12), is doing what many high school seniors are doing right now - she is stressing about finishing her college applications. With a part-time job working as a Target Team-Member as well as a Starbucks barista, voice lessons, school work, a volunteer position teaching piano to

Burmese immigrants, and a love for writing and performing poetry, it is understandable that she finds herself very busy! But that is a typical state for this busy senior, and she is making the most of her last high school year!

Alexis got involved with City Voices in the summer of 2013. She had achieved a lot as a singer, and was a member of three choirs in her school. But she wanted to push her achievement level even higher; as she said, "I knew that I was a good singer, but I wanted to be a great singer with a technique that would allow me to continue singing for the rest of my life." She had briefly experience private lessons as a child, and had worked with her high school director to prepare for contest, but now she dived into study anew. And after a year of work, she is reaping the benefits: she has participated in her school musical (Hairspray) as well as two community shows (Fiddler on the Roof and Shrek) and in November won 2nd place singing "Always Starting Over" from If/Then in the Solo Musical Theater Division of the Iowa Thespian Festival, qualifying for the International event.

Alexis has noticed the growth in her voice, saying that "my belting range has grown, which is a huge improvement, and my head voice is easier to reach and control." She also intends to continue improving, saying that this "still is a major thing: knowing and controlling the difference between my head and chest voice." But she loves it when during a voice lesson "there is a 'moment' when I take my teacher's advice and I can hear the difference in my voice or tone quality. It's exciting to literally hear my improvement!" Her award-winning song, "Always Starting Over," is her favorite song studied so far - she says that "it's really challenging and at the end of the song each time I feel exhausted which is an indication that I put every drop of my soul into that song."

She has also broadened her exposure to vocal music literature, and although "I don't always like the classical pieces Sims makes me sing," she has prepared several that have served her well - in fact, she has just been accepted to Manhattan Marymount University, and while she has not made a decision on whether or not to attend, she is certainly on her way. In fact, her ultimate goal is to earn an MFA in Directing from a college on the East Coast and then use her knowledge to start a performing arts high school in the Midwest for students like her who want to go on to college. But for now, it is back to college applications, and scheduling auditions. She is finding time to spend time with friends, however, mentioning that she loves skating and video games. And, she emphasizes, "I'm never not singing!"

# APPLAUSE

Our City Voices students use the skills they are learning to help their school programs - they also are trying out for and participating in honors ensembles and opportunities. Many Roosevelt and North students tried out for the Iowa All-State Choir in the end of October, and many participated in their school's musicals (The Addams Family at North, Hairspray at Roosevelt, and Once On This Island at Hoover). In addition, several Hoover students auditioned for the Iowa State University Honors Choir. Research says that increasing access and building skills motivates young singers to seek higher achievement levels - we are living proof!

## WHO



## WHAT

Rebekah Ostermann, (North, 12) was selected for the Iowa All-State Chorus, one of only two students from the Des Moines Public Schools. The concert was held at Hilton Coliseum November 22.

Matthew Hawkins and Alexis Cole (Roosevelt, 12) both competed at the Iowa Thespian Festival at UNI on November 14, and both were awarded second place in their centers for solo Musical Theater, and will be advancing to the International Festival in June. Matthew received a perfect ballot.

## THANK YOU

to the cities that help support City Voices through the BRAVO Cultural Enrichment Grant for the Fiscal Year 2015! Cultural Enrichment Grants are funded through hotel/motel tax revenue received from partner local governments that have current 28E agreements with Bravo, including Altoona, Ankeny, Carlisle, Bondurant, Clive, Des Moines, Grimes, Indianola, Johnston, Norwalk, Polk City, Polk County, Urbandale, Waukee, West Des Moines, and Windsor Heights. Bravo Greater Des Moines is a nonprofit committed to increasing cultural awareness, advocacy and funding, as well as fostering collaboration among arts, culture and heritage organizations.

**Principal**<sup>®</sup>

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Group*

Thanks to the Principal Financial Group for their generous grant in support of our operations! We love partnering with companies within our community, and we especially appreciate your support of arts for everyone!

**THANK  
YOU**



## On The Move

Thanks to generous partners, City Voices students have had lots of opportunities to attend cultural events throughout Des Moines for FREE!

\* IN OCTOBER, students attended the Salisbury House Music Series event featuring Leanne Freeman-Miller, soprano, singing selections from Broadway and Light Opera.

\* IN NOVEMBER, students attended the Des Moines Symphony's Educational Concert "Fate Knocks" featuring Beethoven's famous Fifth Symphony and a multi-media presentation.

\* IN DECEMBER, students were able to meet and talk with singer/songwriter Stephen Kellogg at the sound check for his sold-out concert at the Flying Mango.

\* IN DECEMBER, students will attend the popular holiday concert given by Tonic SolFa at Hoyt Sherman Place.

Thank you to all of these wonderful cultural organizations in the Des Moines area - by increasing access for our students, they are truly helping to build the arts audience of the future!

## AND STAY TUNED...

The Civic Music Association has graciously arranged for our students to participate in a workshop with 6-time Grammy-nominated Jazz Singer Nnennah Freelon on Saturday, February 15, before her Des Moines performance. We look forward to this fabulous opportunity!



Jelena Bragg (North, 10) laughs during a lesson with Teaching Artist Amanda Lowe in the new City Voices space at 3009 Merle Hay Rd, Ste. 5



Daniela Ortiz (North, 11) uses the mirror to check mouth shape during a lesson in the new City Voices teaching studio.

## City Voices begins its second year in a new space!

Walk by 3009 Merle Hay Avenue, Suite 5, and you may be treated to a serenade - this office space at the intersection of Merle Hay Road and Urbandale Avenue is the new home of the City Voices teaching studios! Students have been making beautiful music since September!

With close access to a bus stop (less than 100 yards away), three teaching studios and enough room for popular a cappella and theory classes (or an excellent place to hold a pizza party,) the studios are a hit with students: Meressa Moriarty (Hoover, 10), said, "The new City Voices office is very convenient for me since it's only ten minutes away." Megan Marie Slade, (Hoover, 11) pointed out that it was easier to make new friends from other schools, adding, "It also allows you to easily meet other City Voices students and communicate with everyone." Duncan Vivanh (North, 10) agreed, explaining that "We can...connect together as one big City Voices family."

The decor is a hit as well - Michael Colon-Ramos (North, 12) said, "I love the feel of the place when you walk in." Mayte Gomez-Cruz (North, 11) also likes "seeing the walls decorated with everything that represents who we really are and not just rehearsing in a place that doesn't mean anything to us." Sameeah Muhammed (North, 10) seconded that opinion, saying "I like the new office because we don't have to to to someone else's practice space, we have our own." and that "there are tons of things on the wall that make me feel at home." Rose Rocha-Crandell (Roosevelt, 10) said, "The new office has a homey feel. I love the couch!"

One of the most popular decorations, however, is the real working stop light that sits in the corner. Gomez-Cruz said "I really enjoy being able to walk in, turn on the green stoplight, and say, 'It's Mayte time!'" Stop in anytime - if we are teaching, you can have a front row seat!

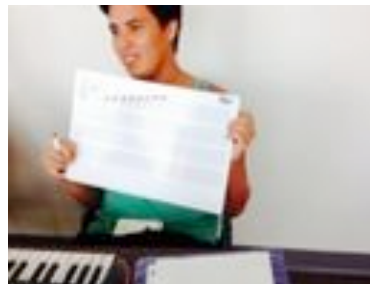


The stoplight is Green - it's time for lessons at the new City Voices Studios at 3009 Merle Hay Road, Suite 5.

City Voices students enjoyed a variety of classes this summer, including a popular Master Class with Lynne Rothrock.



Taught by Teaching Artist Amanda Lowe, Music Theory was a popular Enrichment Class.



## REWIND

### How We Spent Our Summer Vacation

Thanks to a generous grant from the Iowa Arts Council and the hospitality of Des Moines Onstage, City Voices welcomed record numbers of Des Moines secondary students to our programs and lessons! Our classes were held at the beautiful DMO building that also houses the Des Moines Young Artist's Theater, and students loved being in such a creative environment. Lots of students took advantage of our inaugural Summer Music Academy Enrichment Classes (supported in part by an Iowa Arts Council Grant), which allowed our Teaching Artists to go more in-depth into their particular areas of expertise. Teaching Artist Amanda Lowe developed a Music Theory class that included instruction on mini-keyboards and lots of practice actually writing notes. Teaching Artist Katy Merriman led the Music Theater Intensive Camp, which instructed students on topics such as successful audition practices and songs, and choreography basics. Teaching Artist Corey Wedeking led the Contemporary Music Studio, in which students were able to use microphones and sing with guitar accompaniment, and Guest Teaching Artist Larry Moore assisted Executive Director Mary Anne Sims in leading the newly christened "Diver-City Voices" A Cappella group.

And when DMO needed their space to mount a production, a standing ovation for Roosevelt Drama Director Lori Glawe for allowing us to "crash your pad" during July. Thanks to her generosity, we were able to hold a two-day Master Class with the fabulous Lynne Rothrock, and Eastern Iowa and Nashville-based music educator and clinician. Students learned a lot - and we hope to make Lynne's workshop a regular occurrence!

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

### Catching Up With Some Of Our 2014 Graduates!

#### Jenni Martin (Hoover)

Jenni is attending Waldorf College on a Vocal Performance and Music Theater Scholarship. Her college performance experience started early: she was in a show her first week on campus!

#### Destiny Foster (North)

After competing in the ACT=SO National Classical Vocal Contest in Las Vegas in July, Destiny began her freshman year at the University of Iowa. But she missed singing - and she has now joined the U of I Gospel Choir!

#### Integrity Narcisse (Roosevelt)

A Theater major, Integrity has already appeared in two shows (one as a lead) and has auditioned for several musicals at the University of Northern Iowa. She is a member of the Women's Chorus, after never singing in a high school ensemble!

## BERKLEE CITY MUSIC NETWORK CONFERENCE 2014

Executive Director Mary Anne Sims attended the Berklee City Music Network Conference in sunny Los Angeles, CA in October. Great connections were made and conversations had - check out [www.berklee-citymusic.org](http://www.berklee-citymusic.org) to learn more about the program!



Berklee City Music Network Sites - we have a star!



Bobby Colomby (Original Blood, Sweat & Tears drummer) and Bill Withers ("Lean On Me")



Ricky Minor, Gladys Knight and Bobby Colomby

# IN APPRECIATION

WE ARE A 501(C)(3) TAX-EXEMPT ORGANIZATION AND, AS SUCH, ARE RELIANT UPON DONATIONS FOR OUR LIVELIHOOD. WE WISH TO THANK THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTORS.

## PUBLIC FUNDING & GRANTS

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AND THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS FOR YOUR GIFTS OF SPACE, TICKETS, & EDUCATION  
Des Moines Onstage  
Des Moines Symphony  
Hoyt Sherman Place  
Des Moines Civic Music

Thank you to the  
wonderful people  
who make City  
Voices work:

Mary Anne Sims  
B.Music, Education  
M.A, Music Education  
Executive Director

Amanda Lowe  
B.S. Music Therapy  
Teaching Artist

Caitlin Teters  
B.Music, Voice  
B.F.A., Acting  
Teaching Artist

Katy Merriman  
B.Music, Voice  
Teaching Artist

Corey Wedeking  
B.Music, Voice  
Teaching Artist

Larry Moore  
Teaching Artist

Dang Felton  
Teaching Artist

Ryan Williamson  
Board Member

Kathie Danielsen  
Board Member

### 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.

## 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.

YOU MAY DONATE USING  
PAYPAL AT:  
CITYVOICESDESMOINES.ORG  
OR SEND YOUR DONATION TO:

924 45TH STREET  
DES MOINES, IA 50312

## What's New?

Plenty - and City Voices students have more opportunity than ever!

### The return of Theory and A Cappella

Back by popular demand, students are able to continue study of these two important and fun arts!

### Online Theory

For those students that can't get enough...our affiliation as a member of the Berklee College of Music's City Music Network allows us access to online music theory videos and exercises based in American popular music.

## AND COMING IN JANUARY...

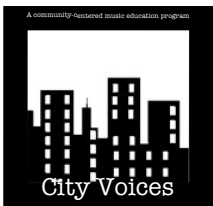
Guitar lessons! Students will be able to study with experience guitar teacher Dang Felton, a product of the Des Moines Public Schools. Interested? Contact Mrs. Sims for details.

**KEEP UP WITH WHAT'S HAPPENING AT CITY VOICES AT OUR WEBSITE:**

[WWW.CITYVOICESDESMOINES.ORG](http://WWW.CITYVOICESDESMOINES.ORG)

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MORE WATER!



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