

Wesley Diener

Miller Art Scholars

Artist Minigrant Outcome Report

Professional Materials for Young Artist Programs

Thanks to the funding from the Miller Art Scholars Artist Minigrant, I was able to apply and audition for various summer young artist programs. These programs, ranging in duration, location, and curriculum, are integral to the development of a young opera performance career. The support from this minigrant alleviated the financial burdens of the audition season, which are numerous including application fees, travel, and training needs. After a successful audition season, I have confirmed my plans for the summer and am grateful to have had the opportunity to commit to two different summer performance programs: the Bethesda Summer Music Festival and Bel Canto in Tuscany.

Although these were not the initial programs I had pursued in my minigrant application, I was fortunate enough to be granted a live audition in New York City for the Aspen Music Festival. This incredibly competitive program, especially for young singers such as myself, holds an equally selective audition process, and I found that my audition provided excellent practice and experience for future auditions. As new opportunities developed, I elected not to audition for the Brevard Music Center but rather pointed my intentions towards a more performance-based domestic program as well as an international alternative in order to acquire the language and cultural skills that are so vital to opera performance.

The funding from the minigrant supported all of the materials that assisted me in successfully auditioning for both of these programs: the Bethesda Music Festival and Bel Canto in Tuscany. I am so grateful for the opportunity to attend both of these highly regarded summer

programs. At the Bethesda Music Festival, I will have the opportunity to perform full roles in fully-staged productions of Mozart's *Magic Flute* and Sondheim's *Sweeny Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, which are central works in the contemporary opera and musical theatre repertory. Afterwards, I will focus on more specific skills of Italian language and interpretation from highly-esteemed faculty hailing from the Metropolitan Opera, Manhattan School of Music, Washington National Opera, and Caramoor International Music Festival. I am most eager to steep myself in the tradition of Bel Canto singing, literally meaning "beautiful singing", which forms the roots of operatic technique in a healthy and robust performer.

I thank the Miller Art Scholars for their financial support that allowed myself the opportunity to apply and audition for all of these opera summer young artist programs. Thank you to the all of the supporters of the Miller Arts Scholars program, with a special thanks to Sandy and Vinie Miller and Evie and Stephen Colbert.