

WHAT CURRENT AND FORMER STUDENTS SAY ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE IN THE VOCAL PERFORMANCE / OPERA PROGRAM AT ALABAMA . . .

What amazes me is the passion that my professors and colleagues have for their art, and the excellence that they commit themselves to every single day. This fact is what bonds us all in the voice and opera programs, making us less like a "department" and more like a close-knit family. From undergrads, to masters students, to DMA students, everyone can find their place. Here, opportunity is based on much more than age. Hard work, leadership, and taking initiative prove to be the most valuable qualities one can possess; preparing us for not only our college careers, but the professional world as well.

Abigayle Williams
BM in Vocal Performance, Class of 2020
First Place winner, NATS, Freshmen Women
Alabama NATS, 2017



Abigayle as Grace in Jordan Jenkins' *The Blind Date* with the UA Opera Theatre.

I am so grateful for my time in the undergraduate vocal performance program at the University of Alabama because of all the opportunities and growth it provided me. This degree program is such a gem because I obtained excellent vocal training, performed in major choral works, and fully-staged roles with orchestra throughout my undergraduate career while surrounded by a continually supportive voice and opera faculty. I was constantly pushed to be a better, more prepared, more well-rounded artist than I was the day before.

Zyda Culpepper-Baldwin
BM in Vocal Performance, Class of 2017
Member, Maryland Opera Studio
University of Maryland



Zyda as Caroline in the world premiere of Amir Zaheri's *Freedom and Fire! A Civil War Story*.



Die Lustigen Weibern von Windsor, Spring 2017

Attending the University of Alabama and being a part of the UA Opera Theatre has been an incredible experience and has shaped my future as a performer. Before becoming a part of our productions, I had no experience or knowledge about opera at all, but now I am fully immersed and have invested myself in the art. The opportunities I have had with roles and classes will stay with me through the rest of my career.

Tyler Koch
BM in Vocal Performance, Class of 2019



Tyler as Dr. Cajus in *Die Lusitegn Weiber von Windsor*.

Coming to the University of Alabama School of Music for my undergraduate degree has been the best decision I could have made. The faculty has been incredibly generous and the opera program here has also prepared me more than I could have imagined for the outside performance world. The experience I have gained in my Pedagogy, Diction, and Song Literature classes has been tremendously helpful and practical as well. I feel truly ready for what comes next thanks to the voice program at Alabama.

Chance Anderson
BM in Vocal Performance, Class of 2019
Director, UA Resonance Show Choir



Chance as Spärlich in *Die Lusitegn Weiber von Windsor*.

I chose the University of Alabama School of Music because the faculty was clearly caring and knowledgeable and had each student's best interest at heart. During my time here, the music building has fostered a network of support around me and every student I know, and I could not have made a better decision about where to make my home for the next four years.

Kirkland Schuler
BM in Vocal Performance, Class of 2019



Kirkland as Petra in *A Little Night Music* with Nicholas Szoeki (MM, 2016) as Henrik. Nick is now a member of Actor's Equity and appearing in leading roles with the San Antonio playhouse, Utah Festival Opera, and other musical theater venues across the U.S.

My experience at UA was invaluable. The program at Alabama focuses on the artist as a whole and because of the individual care the faculty took in my career preparation, more diverse opportunities were open to me upon leaving school. The opera program is especially unique at UA. It not only helps prepare young artists for what they will encounter beyond the university setting, but it gives the more mature students the opportunity to teach and direct and administer a successful opera program.

Amy Prickett, DMA, 2017
Assistant Director and Vocal Music Specialist
Church Music Institute, Dallas, Texas



Amy as Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*.



An all-undergraduate cast of Jenkins' *The Blind Date*. Pictured are a freshman, sophomore, junior and senior young artist.

My time at Alabama thus far has allowed for me to grow tremendously as a young artist. The curriculum, faculty and students provide such a positive environment for me to work my craft and take risks as a singer. We train and work as a professional company and this is such a wonderful thing because it sets us up for "real world" experiences. I have never felt more confident in my abilities as a young artist while being here at UA.

Garrett Torbert
DMA Candidate, Class of 2019



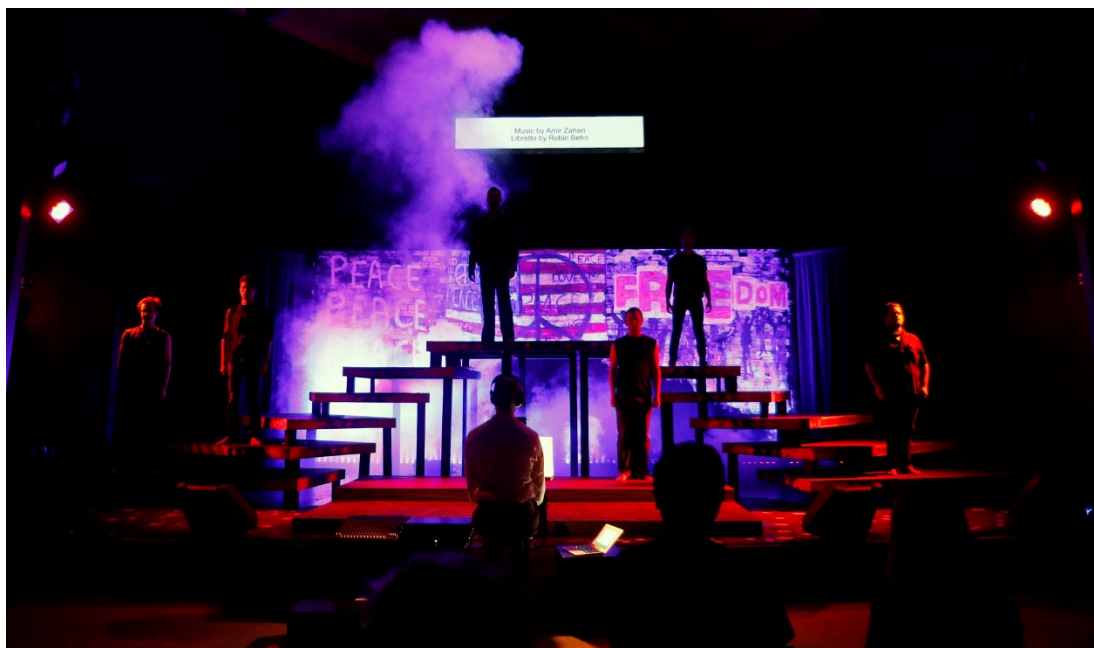
Garrett as Fenton in *Die Lustigen Weiber von Windsor*.

Thus far, my time at Alabama has been filled with many performance opportunities and positive learning experiences. I enjoy being a part of a close-knit community of talented and supportive young artists here at UA, and each member of the UA voice faculty is unique and willing to answer questions at any time. Overall, UA is a great place to perform and grow vocally.

Marie Smithwick
MM Candidate, Class of 2019



Marie as Vanessa in Jeremy Gill's
Letters from Quebec to Providence in the Rain.



Freedom and Fire! A Civil War Story, Fall 2015

My degree experience at UA made me a well-rounded voice teacher and musician, but the best part of my experience at UA is that it hasn't ended! I am still working with many of my professors in professional organizations such as the National Opera Association and NATS as a singer, stage director, and administrator. These professors still encourage me in my professional life, and it means the world to me to continue to have the support of my UA music professors well after I have graduated!

Dawn Wells Neely, DMA, 2014
Assistant Professor of Voice and Opera
University of West Georgia
Member, National Opera Association
Board of Directors
NOA Southeastern Regional Governor



Dawn as Gilda in a scene from *Rigoletto*
with Perry Harper, MM, 2012.
Perry is currently a full-time featured performer in
the theater scene in Branson, Missouri.

My time at Alabama was a wonderful experience, and I cannot overstate how important the things I learned in my time there, as well as the connections I made, have been to my career since graduation. The bond formed between students in UA's Opera Theatre is lasting - since leaving Alabama, I have invited several of my UAOT colleagues to my college to present masterclasses and recitals, we've worked together in professional opera productions, and we've collaborated on panel sessions for the National Opera Association's annual conference. A degree from Alabama is so much more than a piece of paper and rote knowledge; it is a strong network of friends, colleagues, and mentors to guide and support you on your professional journey long after you leave Tuscaloosa.

Jen Stephenson, DMA, 2016
Assistant Professor of Music, Director of
Vocal Studies, and Director of Opera
Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas



Jen as Magda in *The Consul*.



The cast of *The Consul* (Spring 2014) included undergraduates, as well as masters and doctoral students.