

# Opera host families gain behind the scenes perspective

Wearing sequined costumes, appearing in the spotlight, attending cast parties and traveling from city to city – the life of an opera performer might seem glamorous.

However, it's hard work, say Annapolis Opera host families.

They should know. Hosts get a behind the scenes look at what a performer's life is like during the three to four weeks the performers stay with them.

"It's a very demanding career," said **Sunny DeVese**, an Eastport resident who has hosted performers the past three years. "They rehearse many hours, and those hours can be strange."

Hosts like DeVese are a Godsend to the opera performers, who often spend weeks, if not months away from their homes.

"Staying with a host is like a home away from home," said **Shannon Jennings**, a soprano who plays Marguerite in the upcoming Annapolis Opera "Faust" performance. "It's more intimate [than a hotel] and you get a firsthand experience of the location; you get to know the area."

The host program has been in existence for 42 years, said Annapolis Opera General Manager **Kathy Swekel**.

"It's a very personal and unique connection between the community and the opera and its performers. Some of the hosts and performers stay in touch for years afterward. The hosts also support the performers by attending their concerts and operas all over the country."

"The other benefit [of the host program] to the opera is a financial one," Swekel said. "Housing a large number of performers for several weeks would be so cost prohibitive that the opera could not afford it. By being able to bring in the best talent from across the nation we provide the community a world-class production."

According to Swekel, it costs about \$65,000 to \$80,000 per opera performance for a company like the Annapolis Opera. One production can have up to three



BY RENEE HOUSTON ZEMANSKI, CORRESPONDENT  
Tom DeKornfeld, left, and Nina Fisher meet opera performer Joshua Dennis, center, at the Annapolis Opera's cast party. Dennis is staying with the couple while performing the lead role in the opera "Faust."

performances. This is because it requires all of the performing and visual arts, including the symphony orchestra, singers/performers in lead roles, chorus members and other singing and acting roles, dancers, special stunt or acrobatic roles, set design and construction, costume design and construction, lighting and audio design.

"And that is not all that is needed," Swekel said. "My usual line is that it takes 30 people backstage to get one performer on the stage. It is the most expensive art form because it requires all the art forms."

Combining all of the art forms makes opera "the complete entertainment," said longtime opera supporter **Mary Ann Elliott**, who has hosted performers for six years.

"When you host, you feel the great passion that these performers have. Success is a glimmer for them, so they have to be passionate," said Elliott who has attended opera classes for years at the Annapolis Senior Center.

Elliott once hosted a performer, **Michael Wade Lee**, and his wife, and tells of a time when Lee sang in her kitchen for her neighbor: "He sang 'Nessun Dorma,' written by Puccini, and I'm telling you, Michael Lee's voice in my kitchen... my husband had pots and pans hanging and I swear they [the pans] were swinging."

Another host, Annapolis resident and opera board vice president, **Tom DeKornfeld**, knows a bit more about the hard work of an opera performer. DeKornfeld once participated in the opera, *Rigoletto*, as a "super," a non-singing, non-speaking opera role.

"You really gain an appreciation for both their professionalism and the energy it takes to sing and rehearse day after day," he said.

DeKornfeld and wife, **Nina Fisher**, have hosted performers for four years. This time, they are hosting **Joshua Dennis**, the lead role of "Faust."

Dennis said he learns something new

from each host.

"They open your mind to new ideas and experiences and that can be really wonderful," he said. "Once I stayed with an artist who taught me about prints, and that was fascinating. Tom and Nina are huge runners and I hate running, but now I feel like I should give it another chance."

DeKornfeld says he learns something new from the performers, too.

"It's a great way to get some insight into the life of a professional musician; a behind the scenes of the opera," DeKornfeld said. "Sometimes we can hear them warming up and practicing in their rooms."

Like DeKornfeld, DeVese enjoys hosting performers, but some of her guests have been four-legged. DeVese, who doesn't own a dog, has welcomed performers and their dogs with open arms.

Soprano **Megan Marie Hart** was one of those performers.

"Not only did Sunny open her house to me, she also generously allowed me to borrow her car and welcomed my dog and later, my entire family," said Hart, now the lead soprano in an opera house in Germany.

"Sunny goes far above and beyond in her hostess duties. We keep in touch all the time, and I am so grateful I got to know her through Annapolis Opera. Always traveling and being in new cities can be hard on singers when nothing seems familiar, but supportive and caring opera lovers like Sunny really make what we do worth it."

Hart, has had good and bad experiences with hosts. She counts her times in Annapolis as one of the best.

"My experience both times in Annapolis were amazing. I would always come back to sing at Annapolis Opera if I had the chance, but if I don't have the chance, anytime I am near the city, I will visit Sunny."

If you are interested in hosting or volunteering, visit [www.annapolisopera.org](http://www.annapolisopera.org) and click on Volunteer or call 410-267-8135.

"Faust" has two performances – March 18 and March 20 at Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts. For tickets and information, visit <http://annapolisopera.org/operas-events/faust/>

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## HONOR ROLLS

### Annapolis Middle School

The following students were named to the principal's honor roll for the second marking period at Annapolis Middle School:

**SIXTH GRADE:** Charlene Ayitevie, Tyson Brennan, Amelia Bridges, LaKira Brooks, John Chase Bruns, Mario Buchkov, Payton Buchner, Sean Cain, April Claggett, Luke Coffin, Ryan Cooper, Jack Cratty, Mia DiBerardinis, Ryan Fennelly, Erin Fischer, Paige Franco, John Gonsalves, Anna Graic, Jenna Higgins, Aiden Jones, Angeles Juárez-Ruiz, August Keohan, Zainub Kokan, Devin Landry, Briana Lichtenberg, Emma Lopes, Rachel Martin, Alexandra Martinez, Sara McNulty, Gavin Sienkiewicz, Grayson Smith, Keimani Smith, Ryan Smith, Braden Snidow, Levi Snuggerud, Megha Thomas, Preston Valentine, Audrey Walters, Matthew Wichmann and Ruby Zegowitz.

**SEVENTH GRADE:** Simela Arnold, Ashley Bowan, Samuel Bridgeman, Josiah Chase, Savannah Cooper, Clare Corley, Tiffany Dioko, Simon Durland, Daniel Fitzpatrick, Colin Gillespie, Chase Gordon, Jessica Gorski, Kennedy Hall, Connor Harris, Rachel Hiesener, Nicolette Hood, Brian Kinzhuber, Autumn Langlois, Eoin Lenham, Leah Marcus, Kelly May, Owen McCandless, Anna Patterson, Briggs Phillips, Makenna Quigley, Mahee Rathod, Anelae Relyua, Madison Roper, Addi Sevinsky, Erick Siguenza-Melgar, Shyen Sirder, Bailey Sweitzer, Anthony Velasquez, Garrett Youngblood and Jehimi Zuniga-Umana.

**EIGHTH GRADE:** Rida Alvi, Avery Anderson, Maguire Ballard, Megan Barry, Ana Boyd, McCormick Buchner, Maria Chacona, Meghan Cooper, Amelia Farrell, Kendall Fennelly, Thomas Fischer, Emily Gibbons, Henry Goldstein, Tyler Grove, Natalie Hardin, Ashley Higgins, Emma Horning, John Kadala, Courtney Lenox, Dulcinea Metro, Sophia Michalski-Cooper, Elisabeth Moser, Luke Mueller, Molly Parrish, Jordan Ray, Alexa Schuette, Ashlen Seebachan, Solomon Snuggerud, Demetrius Tasker, Uma Tikekar and Gerald Zhdanovych.

The following students were named to the honor roll:

**SIXTH GRADE:** Vivianne Alvarez, Pamela Angel-Aguilar, Katherine Avalos-Serpas, Kimora Barrow, Ka'Nasia Bias, Yerlyn Borjas-Cruz, Terrance Brooks, De'Shauna Brown, John Brown, Thomas Brozek, John Buell, Emily Cabrera-Guevara, Brenton Carroll, Isabella Chase, Austin Clark, Charles Clifton, Austin Clow, Ma'Kaiya Collins, Elizabeth Connerton, Anthony Costa, Kayla Cullum, Jennifer Eisinger, Kathya Estrada, Jazprina Fallerrandes, Kevin Fernandez, Victoria Flores, Riley Gerrish, William Godfrey, Elder Gutierrez-Rodriguez, Khalil Hawkins, Jessica Herring, Jonathan Holtzman, Andrew Horning, Deanna Huidobro, Jermaine Hunt, Jaden Johnson, William Jones, John Kammeier, Alleayah Kidwell, Gillian McCubbin, Ashley McNulty, Taleah Medley, Anna Meeck, Lauren Miller, Abriella

Mitchell, Beth Morgan, Mackenzie Myles, Taaja Nguyen, Autumn O'Wiley, Russell Parrish, Eva Parry, Halczia Pokorski, Steven Posey, Ahvian Powell, Sarah Ramallosa, Simona Richard, Mackenzie Rivers, Calvin Robinson, Brian Rodriguez, David Ruiz de Castilla, Andrew Ryan, Alexander Salinas, Mia Salinas, Ceili Schuster, Alexandros Seebachan, Hannah Semos, Samantha Seth, William Smith, Mikhail Tamong, Parris Thompson, Makira Tooles, Dakieran Turner, Sophia Vandergrift-Robinson, Anett Ventura, Kevin Volland, Amari Wafer-Brewer, Andrew Wasielewski, Romalice Wilson, Todd Womack, De Andre Wooten and Amelia Youngkin.

**SEVENTH GRADE:** Ariel Aguilar, Edlyn Aguilar, Clinton Albrecht, Kirsten Mae Alwendia, Frank Antonelli, Jonathan Arriola-Murcia, Kayla Atkins, Sheather Ayitevie, Anna Barber, John Beann, Arnold Beck, Tibet Bedingfield, Khedar Bennett, Dylan Booth, Carter Brianas, Katerina Brown, Ryan Bucciero, Emily Carrigan, Paola Castillo Batres, Gabrielle Coleman, Gia Crowner, Jimena Diaz, Olivia DiGuardo, Aaron Edwards, Daniella Escobar, Caitlin Gillespie, Henry Guckes, Noah Heimann, Jada Herring, Joseph Humphries, Adam Hurt, Kaylee Johnson, D'Asia Jones, Llerlyn Juarez-Ramirez, Joanna Justo, Lucas Kasprow, John Kauffman, Marin Klein, Jalen Lamkin, Rachel Leonovich, Matthew Lewis, Amy Lopez, Nathan Lynch, A'Naja Makell, Brandon Martinez-Llamas, Lucy McKenzie, Skylar Meiser, Ivan Michels, John Middleton, Ella Miller, Andrea Morales, Areonna Mullins, Andrew

Nicolini, Jason Palma-Reyes, Isabella Paleonti, Peter Papanicolaou, Sabrina Penn, Glenda Pleitez-Guillen, Riley Saylor, Hannah Scholley, Sarah Scholley, Logan Schulstad, Sydney Scott, Caitlyn Sellers, Garrett Senko, Alejandra Serrano, Elsa Skinner, Micah Stevens, Gregory Thayer, Arden Tierney, La'Ren Turner, Jon Rowel Untivero, Jaylin Vasquez, Connor Walter, Saylor Whitaker, Brianna Woodward, Brian Zagalsky and Muhammad Zahid.

**EIGHTH GRADE:** Kyra Aberin, Jessli Aguilar-Contreras, Benjamin Baron, Yamarko Brown, Niyah Cherry-Bey, Mariyah Clark, Ethan Click, Natalie Davis, Grace DiBerardinis, Cora Downey, Miranda Franco, Kelly Frazier, Reece Gamble, Mayra Garcia-Rivera, Emily Gomez, John Hair, Breanna Haneke, Amelia Hantske, Jayla Henderson, Jordan Herring, William Holtzman, Deon Hunt, Garrett Jenkins, Daijah Johnson, Kayla Johnson, Damisi Jones, Emily Jones, Connor Kavle, Tanner Keck, Anna King, Julia Landis, Jason Lazo, Emma Levett, Molly Lewis, Alexa Lichtenberg, Maximilian Lucas, Noah McCullers, Benjamin Miller, Zuri Mosley, Erin Murphy, Riley Nolan, Carter O'Neill, John Placido, Denver Pugh, Armani Queen, Stephanie Reyes, Ella Riddle, Alisha Rodriguez-Ayala, Daniel Ruiz de Castilla, Dylan Russell-Papavasiliou, Bernadette Schuster, Christian Smith, Grace Smith, Gretchen Stock, Teresa Sweeney, Owen Taylor, Dylan Thomas, Ian Thomas, Georgia Tolman, Edwin Torres, Yenifer Treminio-Benitez, Miguel Vasquez, Brianna Walker, Hadlee Walker and John Waters.

### Bates Middle School

The following students were named to the principal's honor roll for the second marking period at Bates Middle School:

**SIXTH GRADE:** Peyton Baldwin, Hugo Bowers, Barbara Bradshaw, Joshua Bradshaw, Pacey Connor, Nolan Corson, Nicholas Cuviello, Natalie Dixon, Francesca Ducker, Sophia Edillon, Amelia Edwards, Hannah Ellenbogen, Allura Harley, Haven Hitchcock, Alexandra Marek, Isabel Messina, Karleigh Milio, Brooke Miller, Elizabeth Moore, Leslie Murphy, Asha Myers, Rachel Neumann, Kaylee Ostrye, Karla Pineda Arias, Zoe Price, Mary Kate Ralph, Ingrid Schrecker, Camden Shultz, Priscilla Thompson, Madison Tucker, Lily von Rosvinge, Ella Yerby and Morgan Zivkovich.

**SEVENTH GRADE:** Benjamin Blakey, Nathaniel Blyden, Madeline Bunker, Georgia Burroughs, Taylor Chunn, Azalea Clickenger, Meghan Farrell, Kira Fink, Aidan Finkler, Carlena Hall, Megan Hare, Kathryn Herbert, Katherine Hernandez-Marroquin, Mia Jocic, Sean Johanson, Abigail Kerr, Naomi Lebowitz, Julie Lightner, Gracie Nurnane, Nicholas Puma-MacMillan, Maliyah Reyes, Emma Robertson, Kate Ryan, Andrew Sharpe, Nathan Teal, Andrea Torzone, Hayley Trapp, Gabriela Wikar, Cora Williams, Emma Wilson and Adam Zgol.

**EIGHTH GRADE:** Grace Allen, Victoria Auld, Neha Bhanot, Snowden Cortright, Jennifer Crutchley, Lydia Doughty, Sabrina Gleitz, Kirsten Gottlieb, Miranda Handy,

Schuyler Hertel, Zoe Kehs, Sydney Lawrence, Kathrine Loiselle, Gretchen Lutz, Joseph Macris, Devon McMahon, Rachel O'Neill, Gabriela Perez, Eileen Ralph, Alexandra Redford, William Redford, Kennedy Smith, Victoria Swank, Peyton Wilder, Maegan Wood and Lindsay Wooster.

The following students were named to the honor roll:

**SIXTH GRADE:** Kristopher Alders, Katherine Ardon Zuleta, Kelvin Avelar, Kenya Benitez-Blanco, Matthew Bonsignore, Cole Canuel, Matthew Carelock, Zoe Ciboroski, Zefram Cochrane, Naomi Cohen, Mariah Colon, Luca Cook, TayShaun Covington, Ashley DeLeon, Avery Dillard, Nieshia Downs, Julian Dumayas, Danil England, Jeremiah Erwin, Justin Fellers, Adison Finkler, Owen Fleming, Lizbeth Flores-Lopez, Nichole Gibson, Kayla Golder, Gina Gross, Lauren Grove, Jerome Harris, Brandon Hawkins, Brayden Herr, Katherine Herrera-Ayala, Louis Hickman, Gio Paolo Jon Hidalgo, Keira Hofeling, Samantha Hooper, Megan Hruby, Paige Hruby, Jason Johanson, Laura Jolalpa, Alisha Jones, Jeweliana Karditzas, Cassandra Karnbach, Lesly Lopez, Bianca Luna, Stewart MacNaughton, Joy Macris, Damani Maddox, Aileen Mancia, Ian Mathieu, Logan McFarland, Daniel McGrath, Kristian McLeod, Lillian Megan, Seni Minns, Karol Moreno, Aidan Neely, Isabella Nudelman, Juwayriah Okedeyi, Ashley Paz-Lopez, Sydney Peret, Laci Reid, Mia Roberts, Alexis Rooney, Daniel Serrano-

Reyes, Sovanna Shelko, Keely Sigler, Juber Sorto-Lovo, Grace Toepper, Alexander Tolman, Olivia Unger, Emily Veal, Karen Velasquez-Flores, Lillian Wallace, Aubrey White, Sarah Wilansky, Avery Wilder and Devin Zepeda.

**SEVENTH GRADE:** Olivia Adams, Gaetano Ailiff, Caimen Alascio, Madeleine Avila, Karim Bass, Manav Bhanot, Claire Bourne, Jessica Brodt, Naiya Brown, Danilo Buan, Ayanna Calhoun, Emmett Caswey, Odali Cruz, Tyler Day, Liam DeCoursey, Christopher DeJesus, Oscar DeWalle, Rebecca Farrar, Sidney Finkler, Ruby Fisher, Miles Forrest, Damira Fowlkes, Maggie Frentos, Sophia Fuchs, Jonathan Fugate, Amina Gai, Daisi Garcia, Janee Garner, Cassandra Gayvert, Eli Gibboney, Grace Goff, Remy Gryszko, Aidan Heim, Ariyanna Hill, Alyssa Huff, Kieran Jackson, Elizabeth Jarboe, Mehkhi Johnson, Saint Johnson, Connor Klemann, Jaden Lambert, Nina Larkins, Kendyl Laumann, Noe Lemuz, Dae'Vionna Leonard, Alexander Marroquin, Amanda McClaeb, Ava McClaeb, Nicholas Nguyen, Amy Nunez, Luke Nunar, Arden O'Dell, Joshua Okparaocha, Rowan Pilarski, Diana Pineda, Ana Ramirez, Stella Reshetiloff, Brianna Rice, Abigail Roth, Abigail Ruiz, Reine Saint Amour, Harry Salmoran, Marlainna Sapientza, Jonathan Segovia-Flores, Carlos Serrano, Obed Serrano, Zainab Sheikh, Grace Smallbone, Francesca Smith, Taylor Smith, Sarah Sparhawk, Sean Talbot, Margot Titgemeyer, Isabel Torres, Yesly Valladares, Kayla Vaughn, Rafael Villalta, Christopher Warner, Amaya Weston, Anna Williams, Jabrea Williams, Ava Wishnow and Audra

Zumwalt.

**EIGHTH GRADE:** Jenifer Amaya-Velasquez, Zoe Argabright, Lara Janine Avante, Karen Avelar, Chloe Banua, Deja Barnett, Luke Bedard, Jennifer Benjamin, David Bentov-Lagman, Jane Bodor, Laurel Bollinger, Michael Bonsignore, Tanner Bradshaw, Kilmer Campos, Shakera Chapman, Emily Chen, Stephanie Cholula, Jackson Clifton, Kennedi Cornish, Ja'Nyia Cromwell, Sharon Cruz-Reyes, Abigail Cuviello, Hayley Danesi, Reilly Davis, Zane Davis, William Del Cid-Baires, Camille Duplechain, Kathleen Ericson, Craig Erwin, Mark Joseph Eustaquio, Madeline Falk, Isabelle Fields, Analeigh Flieger, Jane Ford, Moses Fuentes, Chase Galey, Angela Gelfand, Benjamin Hertel, Angel Hidalgo, Joshua Himmer, Callista Hofeling, Calvin Hruby, Ava Johnson, Megan Kearns, Caroline King, Kayla Kopf, Kylie Kruk, Justin Lauer, Sarah Leizear, Caleigh Littin, Alexandra Marston, Christopher Mateer, Joseph McDonald, Sheridan McFall, Brynne McLaughlin, Astrid Olivares-Aguilar, Daphne O'Malley, Kerlin Orellana-Palencia, Claire Paalman, Chase Packer, Cinthia Penalzoa, Michael Pineda-Requeno, Avery Poffenberger, Denaye Pritchett, Claire Province, Abigail Reno, Emely Requeno, Kristin Rozylowicz, Zurisadai Salinas-Garcia, Isabella Santoboni, Dimitri Sfakiyanudis, Georgienne Shuey, Allen Smith, Daquan Smith, Megan Sparhawk, Hudson Stramanak, Ty Strawbridge, Loren Stroup, Yenifer Treminio-Benitez, Jerica Vargas, William Wallace, Marlo Wenig, Ezekiel West- Johnson and Isabel Witten.