

Wesley Diener

Miller Art Scholars

Artist Minigrant Outcome Report

NATS Mid-Atlantic Regional Competition

Thanks to the funding from the Miller Art Scholars Artist Minigrant, I was able to attend the NATS Mid-Atlantic Regional Competition and workshops in Charleston, South Carolina. This competition, featuring talented singers and teachers from Virginia, Maryland, DC, North Carolina, and South Carolina, yielded even more exciting results than I could have predicted.

On Friday, I participated in the musical theatre category, singing a broad range of repertoire from the musical theatre standard genre, including works by Bernstein, Jason Robert Brown, and Mel Brooks. I earned Honors in this category, meaning the judges rated my audition as excellent, and earning myself eligibility to audition for the National competition in Chicago, Illinois.

I also attended a masterclass centered on American Art Song and French Melodie, led by internationally-renowned baritone Kurt Ollman. Although I was an alternate for this masterclass, I had the opportunity to interact with Kurt before the class began and he included time in the schedule for me to sing in this class. In addition to the numerous tidbits of expertise I was able to glean from his interactions with the other singers, I acquired a valuable new perspective on my singing from working with him. I sang Aurore by Gabriel Faure, a song that I presented in my recital with fellow Art Scholar, Rachel Mink, last semester. He specifically worked on my French diction, connection to the breath, and technical approach to the higher tessitura. It was extremely valuable to work so closely with a singer who performs the roles that I aspire to

eventually take on, especially considering the impressive performance experiences that Kurt boasts.

Finally, I competed in my classical category on Saturday morning, which is extremely competitive at the NATS Competitions. I sang pieces in three different languages, by Mozart, Vaughan Williams, and Faure. Shortly after offering a successful audition, I received second place in my category, receiving Honors and eligibility for the national competition. It is an exciting honor to have placed so high at this competitive stage.

I thank the Miller Art Scholars for their financial support that afforded both Josephine and myself the opportunity to attend this event and learn so much about our craft in a very short period of time. 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.