

# bravoalex!

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SPRING 2016

## Lexington's taste of Broadway

*Grand Night* just  
getting better at 24

Big. Bold. Exciting. A Lexington tradition. All this and more can describe University of Kentucky Opera Theatre's annual presentation of *It's A Grand Night For Singing*. Now in its 24th

### *It's a Grand Night for Singing!*

**Where:** Singletary Center  
for the Arts, UK campus

**When:** June 10,11,17,18  
at 7:30 p.m.

June 12,19 at 2 p.m.

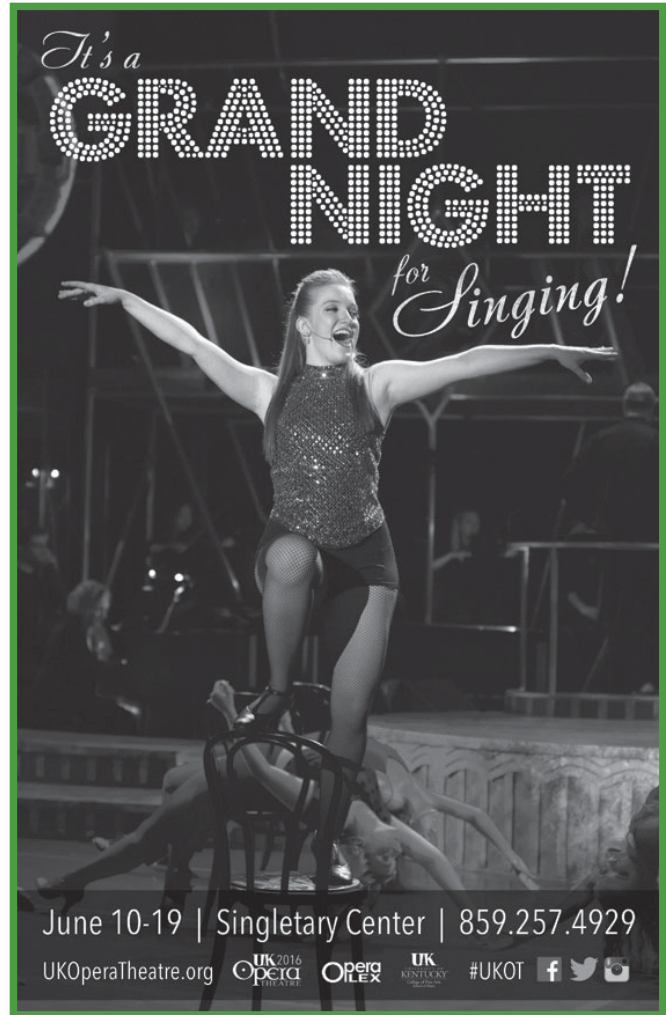
**Tickets:** Call 859.257.4929  
or visit  
ukoperatheatre.org

year, it is bigger and better than ever.

Dr. Everett McCorvey says that he and colleague Jim Rodgers started *Grand Night* as a way to give students an idea of what it's like to prepare a Broadway show.

That process is complicated,

intricate and moves quickly. "I wanted students to experience the fast-paced preparation and performance of a Broadway show." In the early years of *Grand Night*, they allowed four weeks to rehearse; now pushed up to five. The extra week became necessary when, several years in, they



added high level choreography to the musical numbers. More dancing is added each year. A few years ago, professional Broadway choreographers Jeromy Smith and Lyndy Franklin Smith joined the production team, increasing the complexity and quality of the dancing.

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**Opera**  
**LEX**



Pam Miller and big bidder Ben Kaufman.



Jenna Day was a poised mistress of ceremonies.

# Having fun, raising money

*Encore!* crowd wowed  
by food, wine, music

OperaLex President Pam Miller offered this account of the annual fundraising gala, *Encore!*

"That was the best fund-raising party I have ever been to in Lexington," said Gloria Rie, who attended our OperaLex *Encore!* Saturday, May 14 at Keeneland. "The music, the wine, the food were all superb, and the atmosphere was warm and happy," said one of the sponsors. Enthusiastic music lovers pushed the auction bids higher and higher and made the event financially successful as well.

Thank you, thank you, one and all: the gorgeous singers who stirred our emotions, the donors, the table sponsors, the volunteers, and all those who attended. And we could not have achieved this without the generosity of our major sponsors, who are Keeneland, Liquor Barn, and Bryant's Rent-All.

After Keeneland provided delicious hors d'oeuvres and wine tastings, Gregory Turay started off the dinner part of the evening with a moving aria from Halévy's *La Juive*. This was followed by the auctioning of a Turay-Tedrin Lindsay concert in your home. The bid was won by Ben Kaufmann for over \$3,800. That set the stage, and we



Cathy Jacobs, Everett McCorvey and Beverly Fortune enjoy a laugh together.

were off and running with more music, wine, and bidding.

An additional excitement was the series of donations made to the Tom Getchell scholarship fund in honor of our late president. The scholarships go each year to graduate students who have exhausted their funds and need a grant to finish their master's and doctoral degrees. Dr. Marilyn Getchell, Tom's widow, was overwhelmed to see more than \$15,000 donated for this important purpose.

Jenna Day, a former Miss Kentucky and a vocal student at UK Opera Theatre, was a charming and skilled mistress of ceremonies and kept the program flowing with perfect timing and aplomb.

An event like *Encore!* requires that a thousand details be handled with tact, speed, and efficiency. This takes an organized event planner who is calm, detail-oriented, and imaginative. We had that person in Laura Newsome. Many, many thanks, Laura.

**BRAVOLEX!**



Mary Catherine Wright and Melvin Bozeman in *A Bride from Pluto*, which UKOT set in the 1960s.

# Menotti triumph for undergrads

*Short operas drew full houses, ovations*

The UKOT Undergraduate Studio performed two short operas by Gian Carlo Menotti to packed houses at UK's new St. Claire Studios on March 30 and 31.

The operas - *The Old Maid and the Thief* and *A Bride from Pluto* - were directed by Janet P. Scott, who joined UKOT in 2014 following a long career as an actor, writer and director in Lexington and New York.

"I felt one of the real achievements in both pieces was that each of the singers succeeded in presenting complex characters that allowed them to perform together as a very strong ensemble and present original interpretations," Scott said. "The performers were marvelous; they sang beautifully and acted with authenticity and nuance."

*The Old Maid and the Thief*, written for NBC Radio in 1939 when Menotti was 28, is credited with launching his career in the U.S.

In her director's notes, Scott explained the context of the piece, which was written after he visited West Chester,

Pennsylvania, "the family home of his life partner, Samuel Barber. In a time when homosexuality was was crime punishable by law, Menotti saw in this historic American town a web of deceit and wrote a tale of moral hypocrisy that famously features the line, 'The devil can't do what a woman can - make a thief out of an honest man.'"

In 1983 Menotti wrote the children's opera *A Bride from Pluto*, the story of a spoiled young boy who is offered riches by a queen from Pluto who lands in his back yard. The only hitch is that he must exchange his heart and soul for an electronic gadget. Scott set the piece in the present, inspired by a quote from theoretical physicist and cosmologist Stephen Hawking: "Computers will overtake humans with AI [artificial intelligence] at some point within the next 100 years. When that happens, we need to make sure the computers have goals aligned with ours."

Scott said she thoroughly enjoyed her Lexington directing debut. "We were thrilled by the audience's enthusiastic response and ovations." And working with faculty and students was gratifying, she said. "My colleagues at UK were brilliant and accomplished, and our young artists were extraordinary."



# Alums and students on the move

UKOT alum **Evan Johnson** is finishing his second year in St. Louis, where he is singing the role of Malcolm in *Macbeth* and covering Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Opera Theater of St. Louis. Following that, he will return for a third summer at Chautauqua in New York, where he will perform Tamino in the Music Festival's production of *The Magic Flute*. Next, he will head to Oslo, Norway, to make his European debut singing the tenor solo in a staged production of Britten's *War Requiem* with the National Norwegian Opera. In the fall he returns to Philadelphia to attend another year at the Curtis Institute of Music. Future engagements include the role of Don Jose in Oldenburg, Germany, next spring followed by Narraboth in *Salome* in Zurich next September.



Johnson



Morris

Spring graduate **Chris Kenney** is headed to Central City Opera in Central City, CO, to be a studio artist in the summer program. He'll perform in the chorus of *Tosca*, *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, participate in short works, and finish out as Cabral in *Later the Same Evening* by John Musto. After that he's off to Philadelphia to begin his training at the Academy of Vocal Arts.



Kenney

**Zackery Morris** will perform in *It's a Grand Night for Singing* and as a young artist with PORTopera in Portland, ME, performing the role of Tobias in Menotti's *The Medium*, covering Remendado in Bizet's *Carmen* and singing in the chorus.

**Michael Pandolfo**, National Society of Arts and Letters national first place winner, will give a classical voice recital in Phoenix for the NSAL convention. He will also be at the Seagle Music Colony in New York this summer.

**Dani Riveria** is going to Prague for Prague Summer Nights Young Artists Music Festival, where she will perform the role of the Prima Conversa in Puccini's *Suor Angelica* and sing in the chorus of *Don Giovanni*. She will also participate in a variety of other performances including an art song recital, opera scenes, and a jazz cabaret night.

**Casey Schuler**, a student in Dr. Arnold's studio, will be working at Holiday World in Santa Claus, IN, singing as part of WOW Entertainment at the park.

**Emma Scott** is staying in Lexington in May and June to perform for the first time in *Grand Night* and then will visit family in Aubenas, France, for about three-and-a-half weeks. She also plans to use her summer researching and drafting an application to study abroad in vocal performance in Italy either next summer or in the following spring semester.

## Students learn to 'sell' a tune to the audience

### From Page 1

Student performers in *Grand Night* learn to "sell" a song, McCorvey says. "It's different from most opera experiences because you're singing English to native English speakers. The song isn't the same as an opera aria driving forward the plot of a show, but a stand-alone piece which you have to interpret and convey (or "sell") to the audience." He says that students who participate in *Grand Night* return to school in the fall as much better performers and communicators as a result of learning to engage the audience in a particular song.

Rehearsals are well underway for this year's *Grand Night* performances which will be June 10, 11, 12, 17, 18 and 19 at the Singletary Center. As always, the

producers seek a balance between traditional show tunes, ones well known to most audience members, and songs from more recent shows. McCorvey says that working with the students helps keep him current on more modern Broadway shows and melodies. Maintaining this balance and presenting entertainment at such a high quality level are what give *Grand Night* its enduring excitement and appeal.

And, as McCorvey says, people just love Broadway shows and music. That's what makes *It's A Grand Night For Singing* so popular. Each year, approximately 7,000 people attend *Grand Night*, many of whom come back year after year.

This year's production, in addition to the usual mixture of song and dance, will contain a preview of *Ragtime*, UKOT's Fall 2016 production.

With all this in one amazing evening of entertainment, tickets are going fast. Get yours today.

— Anne Taul

# *Promised Land* for students

## Learning while crafting premier of work based on Springsteen

This summer, a talented (and very fortunate) group of students will have the chance of a lifetime: UK Opera Theater is offering a course/workshop which will take them through the entire experience of putting on a new rock musical, from the first reading to performing the world premiere.

*Promised Land*, by die-hard Bruce Springsteen fans Adam Max and Alex Wyatt, tells the story of two blue-collar kids from New Jersey who take to heart Springsteen's lines, "I believe in the promised land" where they can "talk about a dream and try to make it real." But first, they must deal with all the things that tie them to their hometown: families, friends, the girls they love, everything that is familiar. With the exception of Ryan, the narrator, all of the characters are taken from Springsteen songs. This should offer a special interest for both Springsteen fans and for those who would enjoy an introduction to one of our musical icons.

*Promised Land* director Courtney Reed was instrumental in bringing this premier to Lexington. Max and Wyatt are childhood friends of hers and she attended the concert reading of it in Arkansas last March, shortly before moving to Kentucky and UKOT. "I knew it was something very special - groundbreaking, really," she said. Once settled here she began working to bring the premier to Lexington.

The project goes far beyond the production, though. Students in the workshop will experience all aspects of musical theater, from directing to marketing, design to choreography, acting to technical work (including digital sets), and music to filming a documentary about the process as it unfolds. Three College of Arts and Sciences departments are participating, involving many of the top people in the fields. Emphasis will be on learning how to work among widely different talents and interests to create a unified performance, and students will have input in shaping the final production.

Make no mistake; this experience is very rare in the academic world. Other than the concert reading Reed attended, *Promised Land* has never before been

performed. Rock musicals are very popular now, and there are opportunities for colleges and universities to get in on the ground floor. For a closer look at the opportunities, a good site is "The Producers Perspective," a great blog by Ken Davenport. He recommends building new bridges between universities and Broadway, giving several reasons: "You learn to work on your feet...fast;" "Broadway Producers will be your new best friend"; as production costs rise, a university is appealing as a first tryout; and "You never know where one might lead."

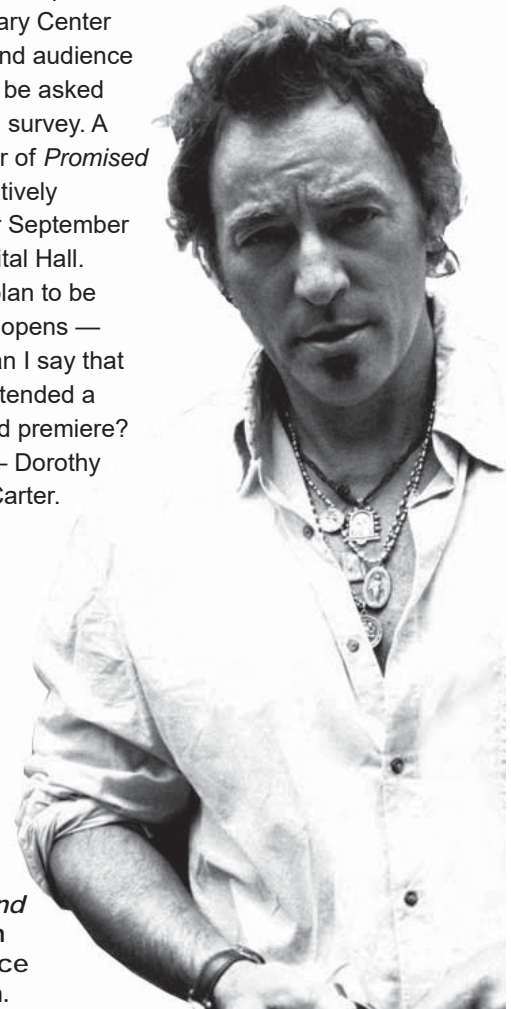
Some details: Reed (courtney.reed@uky.edu) is still looking for rock musicians and "a few good men" 50 or over for the cast. A free workshop performance will be held August 11 at 7:30 p.m.

in the Singletary Center Recital Hall and audience members will be asked to complete a survey. A public premier of *Promised Land* is tentatively scheduled for September 11 in the Recital Hall.

I certainly plan to be there when it opens — how often can I say that I just attended a world premiere?  
— Dorothy Carter.

Students in the workshop will experience all aspects of musical theater, from directing to marketing... to technical work ...

*Promised Land* is based on music by Bruce Springsteen.



# Happenings 2016-17



Natalie Minton, Taylor Comstock and Kelly Hamm  
in SOOP's 2015 production of *Billy Goats Gruff*.

## June

### *It's a Grand Night for Singing*

**Where:** Singletary Center.

**When:** June 10, 11, 17, 18 at 7:30 p.m. June 12, 19 at 2 p.m.

**Cost:** Ticketed event.

## August

### *The Promised Land*

**Where:** Singletary Center.

**When:** Aug. 11, 7:30 p.m.

**Cost:** To be determined

### *The Tortoise and the Hare*

*SOOP preview*

**When:** Aug. 27. Times and location to be announced.

**Cost:** Free and open to the public.

## October

### *Ragtime*

**Where:** Singletary Center.

**When:** Oct. 6, 7, 8, 9 at 7:30 p.m.; Oct. 8 at 2 p.m.  
Singletary Center

**Cost:** Ticketed event

### *UK Vocal Competition for Young Singers*

**Where:** Schmidt Vocal Arts Center

**When:** Oct. 8 at 10 a.m.

**Cost:** Free and open to the public

## November

### *Metropolitan Opera District Auditions*

**Where:** First Presbyterian Church

**When:** Nov. 12, time to be announced

**Cost:** Free and open to the public

### *Metropolitan Opera Master Class*

**Where:** First Presbyterian Church

**When:** Nov. 13, time to be announced

November 13, time to be announced  
First Presbyterian Church

**Cost:** Free and open to the public

## December

### *Alltech Holiday Celebration of Song*

**When:** Dec. 11, time and location to be announced

**Cost:** Free and open to the public.

## February

### *The Barber of Seville*

**Where:** Singletary Center

**When:** Feb. 24, 25 at 7:30; Feb. 25, 26 at 2 p.m.

**Cost:** Ticketed event.

## March

### *Alltech Vocal Scholarship Competition*

**Where:** Singletary Center

**When:** March 5, 2 p.m.

**Cost:** Free and open to the public.



# Berlin madcap rhythms, energy

By Tedrin Blair Lindsay, PhD

I have performed my *Irving Berlin Medley* for many occasions over the years, whenever a really huge, show-stopping number was called for. This year, I decided it was time to orchestrate it and do it for my *Grand Night* solo. I'm very excited because I love Irving Berlin, and I especially love the four songs in this medley.

First, a bit about Berlin himself. Born in Russia in 1888, he was active as a composer for Broadway, Hollywood, and Tin Pan Alley from 1907 to 1971 (he died in 1989). He was one of the most prolific and successful of all American songwriters in the first half of the 20th Century, with hundreds of well-known, even beloved, standards to his credit, from *There's No Business Like Show Business* to *God Bless America*. We can't even celebrate holidays without Irving Berlin, because he wrote both *White Christmas* and *Easter Parade!*

My medley begins with the Jazz Age anthem *Puttin' On the Ritz*, one of the Roaring '20s most iconic tunes. Then I proceed to the beautiful ballad *Blue Skies* and the dramatic *Let's Face the Music and Dance*, which is perhaps my favorite song title of all time. And what Irving Berlin medley would be complete without his first gigantic hit from 1911, *Alexander's Ragtime Band?* I'm gonna tear that piano up!!

For the purposes of this column, I thought it might be fun for you to know what recorded versions of these songs really appeal to me and have influenced my approach to them in the medley.

*Blue Skies*, written for Broadway in 1926, and *Let's Face the Music and Dance*, written for Hollywood in 1936 (it was introduced by Fred Astaire in *Follow the Fleet*) have been recorded memorably by scores of vocalists, but my favorite renditions of both songs are instrumental only! They are performed with suavity by John Mauceri conducting the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra in a 1995 recording *Heatwave* (Philips Classics D 108379), an all-Berlin concert with Patti LuPone, who is absolute dynamite on this album. The orchestration of *Let's Face the*



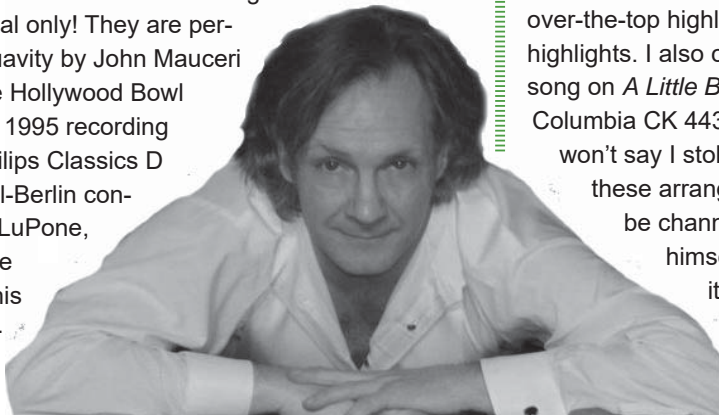
Irving Berlin: the man and his music.

*Music and Dance* is particularly resplendent: it is the original dance arrangement for a big ballet sequence in *Follow the Fleet*, which Mauceri discovered languishing in the old RKO vaults.

*Puttin' On the Ritz* is just a great tune. Its madcap rhythms and strutting energy were expressed with awesome intensity by Judy Garland in her legendary Carnegie Hall concert on 23 April 1961. That live performance of Judy at Carnegie Hall is available in its entirety on Capitol CDP 7-90013-2. I freely admit to having borrowed several ideas from that arrangement verbatim, sort of like Andrew Lloyd Webber appropriating morsels of Puccini.

Then there's *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, one of the most fun songs ever written: it started an international dance craze! I have two favorite renditions, and I would be hard-pressed to say which one has more dynamic verve. First there is Judy Garland's daughter Liza Minnelli following in her footsteps at Carnegie Hall (Telarc CD-85502). This 1987 performance is glorious from start to finish, with *Alexander's Ragtime Band* being one of the most over-the-top highlights in an entire evening of over-the-top highlights. I also cherish Julie Andrews' rendition of the song on *A Little Bit of Broadway* (a 1988 compilation on Columbia CK 44375), equal parts spunky and jubilant. I won't say I stole any precise moments from either of these arrangements for my own medley, but I will be channeling both ladies, and the composer himself, in my attempt to wow the crowd with it this year at *Grand Night*. See you right after intermission!

Dr. Tedrin Lindsay



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