It was 25 years ago that two University of Kentucky professors came up with a grand idea.

Everett McCorvey, the new director of the opera program wanted his students to learn how to sing and dance for musical theater, where he knew there were more jobs than in classical opera.

Jim Rodgers, chair of the theater department, knew how to put on a show and that his students could go farther if they could sing and dance.

So, they decided to celebrate early summer with a show tune extravaganza where students could learn to dance to center stage and beguile an audience with Broadway’s great tunes.

They figured it would lose money but be a great experience for the students. They scheduled one performance in June, settled on the title It’s a Grand Night for Singing from State Fair, opened auditions to the public as well as students, and began their great experiment.

The opening had to be held for 20 minutes as people lined up to buy tickets for the musical revue.

See Page 2
All seamless onstage

From Page 1

The rest is Kentucky musical history.

This June Grand Night will have a six-show run over two weekends. In the audience will be some who have attended every Grand Night and many who have been to a dozen or more. KET, the Kentucky public television network, will film and broadcast the show, expanding the audience.

Grand Night’s loyal followers come to enjoy the seamless show, where singers and dancers betray none of the effort behind putting on over two dozen numbers. The backstage hustle with costume changes and microphone exchanges, the need to shift from carefree to solemn numbers, to transition among musical styles and over decades all disappears onstage.

Even more remarkable, the show starts anew each year. There’s no script to follow or divert from. The production team must choose the music, map the arc of the show, block out dance routines and figure out how to costume 75 or more performers each year.

Far from losing money, Grand Night has become an economic stalwart of the UK opera program. The thousands who flock to the Singletary Center to get lost in show tunes old and new help underwrite UKOT’s opera season.

So, even if you’ve never been, support UK opera by joining this silver anniversary celebration of Grand Night.

Cincinnati’s summer season

Cincinnati Opera offers Central Kentucky opera lovers a live professional option close by throughout the summer.

This summer’s season includes Puccini’s La Bohème and Mozart’s The Magic Flute as well as Frida, an operatic biography of Mexican painter Frida Kahlo by Robert Xavier Rodriguez, and Song from the Uproar, by Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek based on the journals of Isabelle Eberhardt, a Swiss adventurer from the turn of the 20th century.

The season schedule runs from June 15-July 21.

Visit http://www.cincinnatiopera.org or call (513) 241-2742 for more information.

Save a trip, watch these opera films

Most of us can’t afford to fly to La Scala, or San Carlo or Lincoln Center. But we can expand opera in our lives through film. Here are a few of the best.

Many critics consider Ingmar Bergman’s 1975 The Magic Flute the gold standard of opera films. It begins as the camera pans the audience, focusing on the face of a young girl lost in the overture. As the opera unfolds, we are charmed ourselves. I was most struck by Birgit Nordin as the Queen of the Night, sometimes portrayed as an imposing harridan (as in Amadeus, where she represents Mozart’s horrible mother-in-law). Nordin is an elegant Queen, and she is believable as the former wife of Sarastro (one of the director’s libretto additions). I located the DVD on Amazon under the singer Josef Köstlinger, not Bergman.

For something lighter, I like the Die Fledermaus with Kiri Te Kanawa. Placido Domingo conducted, and it was filmed at Covent Garden. During Prince Orlofsky’s party, you can have fun spotting Charles Aznavour and other celebrities dancing.

I also like some films with operatic themes, adding superb music to the plot. One of my favorites is the French Diva, released in 1981. Characters include hit men, cops, singers and an unforgettable anti-hero, Gorodish, played by Richard Bohringer. You will not easily forget his soliloquy on the zen of buttering bread. The diva is portrayed by Wilhelmina Fernandez, an American singer who has lived in Lexington. Much of the score was created to feature her voice and her beauty. Diva brought more attention to her favorite aria “Ebben, n’andro lontana” from Catalani’s La Wally.

On the same level of excellence is Le Maître de musique (1988). A famous baritone, his voice failing, takes two pupils: a wealthy young woman and a boy of the streets. Opera plays a bigger role than any of the characters in this feast for the eyes and the ears.

The last recommendation comes with a caveat. Farinelli is a shocker, loosely based on the life of the castrato of that name. There is a marvelous moment when a Farinelli performance is set as if it were taking place at a rock concert. The voice is a computerized blend of men’s and women’s arias, probably fairly close to what the real castrati sounded like.

Dorothy Carter
Sizzling summer ahead

Each spring we celebrate UKOT students and graduates by sharing their summer plans. This year is no exception, and no disappointment. Here’s a sampling of what these talented young singers will be doing this summer.

**Matthew Pearce**
Matthew Pearce, who graduated this spring, will perform in *Grand Night*, and then be off to the Aspen Music Festival where he will perform roles in *La Traviata* and Ravel’s *L’enfant et les sortilèges*. Then to Juilliard in the fall!

**Maggie Malone**
Maggie Malone, rising junior, will study in the Opera Studio with the Musiktheater Bavaria in Germany.

**Willard Anderson**
Willard Anderson, rising fifth year working on degrees in science and music, will pursue scientific studies at the Harvard-Amgen Scholars Program in Cambridge, MA and will work and intern at Opera Theatre of St. Louis.

**Jeffrey Oakman**
Jeffrey Oakman, rising sophomore, will work at Peach State Summer Theatre in Georgia.

**Emily Evans**
Emily Evans, rising senior, will work with the Northern Lights Music Festival in upstate Minnesota.

**Ruthie Sangster**
Ruthie Sangster, rising sophomore, will be an administrative intern with the Kentucky Governor’s School for the Arts.

**Michael Pandolfo**
Michael Pandolfo, rising sophomore, will be a Young Artist at the Brevard Music Festival, singing the role of Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro*.

**Diane Clements**
Diane Clements, rising sophomore, will participate in the Prague Summer Nights Festival.

**Hunter Shaner**
Hunter Shaner, who graduated this spring, will play Miles in *Turn of the Screw* at Red River Lyric Opera.

**Elizabeth Massie**
Elizabeth Massie, rising sophomore, will participate in Songfest at the Colburn School in Los Angeles where she will work with composer Jack Heggie and teachers William McGraw and Susanne Mentzer.

**John Lannertone**
Jon Lannertone, AAD, music minor, rising senior, will be a development and marketing intern with Kentucky 4-H and general administrative intern with Lakeside Live in Lexington.

**Clark Davis**
Rising junior Clark Davis will travel to Europe and Tabor Opera House in Leadville, CO to study with Sherrill Milnes and coaches from the Czech National Opera Theatre. She will perform in Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* in Prague and in Salzburg as First Spirit and cover for Pamina. She will also sing at Prague’s Rudolfinum, at Oskara Nedbala Theater, and at the Liechtenstein Palace, and in the Reduta, Prague’s most celebrated jazz club.

**Jessica Bailey**
Jessica Bailey, rising junior, will perform in Bardstown where she will portray Lucy Lemoine in *The Stephen Foster Story* and Babette in *Beauty and the Beast*.

**Audrey Belle Adams**
Audrey Belle Adams, rising junior, will appear in *Grand Night* and in The Lex’s production of *Legally Blonde*.

**Jessica Bayne**
Jessica Bayne, a 2015 graduate, will perform in *Grand Night* and in *Legally Blonde*.

**Emily Redden**
Emily Redden, rising senior, will play Jane McDowell in matinees of *The Stephen Foster Story*, and will be in the ensemble for evening shows and *Beauty and the Beast*. She will also perform as an alumna at the Governor’s School for the Arts.
Mayor, yes, but what an opera fan!

Pam Miller is, of course, best known as Lexington’s mayor, a job she held for a decade beginning in 1993.

But Miller, who with her husband Ralph, is leaving Lexington for Boston after 47 years to be closer to family, contributed to the community in many other ways. Lexington Herald-Leader reporter Beth Musgrave noted her involvement with the arts.

“A gifted piano player, she has long championed the arts, pushing to save the Kentucky and State theaters after a fire in 1987. She helped start the Lexington Children’s Museum, oversaw the creation of the Downtown Arts Center and raised money for the University of Kentucky Opera program.”

The story went on:

“‘She’s not my hero. She’s my she-ro,’ said Everett McCorvey, the longtime director of UK’s opera program. Miller began working with what is now OperaLex, a nonprofit that raises money for UK Opera, shortly after she left public office in 2003.

“She transformed the OperaLex organization,’ McCorvey said. ‘She’s just so good with people. Not only does she know a lot of people, but she understands people. She is able to share her love of music with others. They want to be a part of it. They know of her commitment. She’s invested in the community, and people see that.’”

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BravoLex thanks, memories

“About 12 years ago I serendipitously sat next to Mayor Miller at an event featuring opera music. We began to chat, I knowing who she was and she having no idea who I was. Out of the blue, she said, ‘You seem to know a lot about opera. Would you consider being on the board of the Lexington Opera Society?’ Gulp.

I will be forever thankful to her for making this experience possible for me. Lexington is much the richer for her having served us so well.”

Sylvia C. Davis

“I was very fortunate to work closely on the executive committee of OperaLex with Pam for a number of years, where I learned that the secret to leadership is by example. I have always admired her energy and willingness to ‘roll up her sleeves’ and get to work.

OperaLex, the city of Lexington, and I will miss Pam’s enthusiasm and hard work.”

Michael J. Morrill

“Pam Miller accomplishes more in a 24-hour day than anyone I know. She makes time for OperaLex, the Pritchard Committee, the Council for Post Secondary Education and political involvements because her commitment to service is genuine. Pam’s presence on a committee makes a definable difference; her presence in an audience is an endorsement of a meaningful cultural event. Pam is so much more than a public figure, though. She is a true friend. The impact of her 47 years in our community is well documented. I am eager to learn the impact she will make in Boston.”

Louise Shouse

Mayor Pam Miller with Dr. Everett McCorvey and his daughter Julia at Encore!
Season tickets on sale
Plus basketball opera premiere this fall

Summer is upon us but another UKOT season will begin in only a few months.

For best seats and prices, get your season tickets now. The season package includes the three major productions: La Traviata, Show Boat and Grand Night 2018. To purchase or get more information contact the Singletary Center Box Office at 859-257-4929 or at SCFAtickets.com.

Save the date for an added bonus this fall: the world premiere of Bounce, the Basketball Opera, November 17, 18, 19, 2017.

Bounce is the story of Icarus retold through the lens of high school basketball.

It is the brainchild of Andrea Arts, a New York-based organization committed to producing "new works of music-theater and opera to entertain, challenge and inspire." UKOT’s Everett McCorvey was the producer/director and several UK students performed in the initial workshop performances in New York last summer.

Writing for New York’s WQXR’s Operavore site, Merrin Lazyan and Amanda Angel praised Bounce: “The diversity of both the cast and the creative team gave voice to a population that has been vastly under-represented in opera, and it provided a platform for addressing one of today’s most pressing social issues — gun violence.”

Stay tuned for details about this exciting premiere.
Happenings 2017

June

It’s a Grand Night for Singing!
Where: Singletary Center for the Arts, UK campus
When: June 9, 10, 16, 17 at 7:30 p.m.; June 11, 18 at 2 p.m.
Cost: Ticketed event

October

La Traviata
Where: Singletary Center
When: Oct. 6, 7, 8 at 7:30 p.m.; Oct. 8 at 2 p.m.
Cost: Ticketed event

UK Vocal Competition for Young Singers
Where: Schmidt Vocal Arts Center, UK Campus.
When: Oct. 7 at 10 a.m.
Cost: Free and open to the public

November

Metropolitan District Auditions and Master Class
Where: First Presbyterian Church
When: Auditions: Nov.11, time TBD
Master Class: Nov. 12, time TBD
Cost: Free and open to the public

Bounce: The Basketball Opera
World Premiere
Where: Time and location TBD
When: Nov. 17-19.
Cost: Ticketed event

December

Alltech Holiday Celebration of Song
Where: The Square, downtown Lexington
When: Dec. 10, 3 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.
Cost: Free and open to the public

Best Encore! ever - until next year

Many dreary, dank days of last winter were brightened a bit by hoping for a perfect spring day and evening in May at Keeneland and Encore!
And whatta ya know… It happened, just that way.
It was the best Encore! ever.
The crowd was bigger, the dinner was fine, the wines provided by Liquor Barn were perfect, and the music was world-class. Dr. Tedrin Lindsay, Greg Turay, Cynthia Lawrence, and a stunning roster of student singers took everyone back to Ragtime and Barber of Seville, and then gave us a glimpse of the future season with La Traviata and Showboat.
Yes, it was a fine party, but it also accomplished much.
Encore!’s real purpose is to raise funds to support the stage productions of UKOT (Showboat’s comin’ – we gotta build a bigger boat!) and to support the Tom Getchell Scholarship program for student singers nearing the completion of their degrees.
There have been 22 recipients of Getchell scholarships over the last four years. All have either achieved their degrees or are on schedule to do so next year. It’s a program that transforms the lives of young artists.
We don’t have final figures yet, but it looks as though Encore! significantly improved on its fundraising mission over 2016. It was the best Encore! ever.
Ever!… ‘til next year...

Roger Leasor
Talking with Tedrin

Cast albums to delight your ears

By Tedrin Blair Lindsay, PhD

With Grand Night just around the corner, I thought I would help you get in the mood for UK Opera’s annual showbiz extravaganza by recommending three Broadway cast albums spanning three decades. These are recordings I have just not been able to get enough of in the last many months, as I’ve been completely entranced with both the music and the plots. And not coincidentally, each of these shows won the Tony Award for Best Musical in their respective years – luscious music in service of profound themes.

Sondheim’s Passion

Stephen Sondheim was already a legendary creator of sophisticated Broadway musicals, with multiple Tony Awards and even a Pulitzer Prize to his credit, when he wrote my favorite of his scores, Passion, in 1994. What gorgeous music tells this story of obsessive love! The great Donna Murphy, whose voice sounds like the rich chalumeau register of a clarinet, also won a Tony Award for her portrayal of Fosca, a very sick woman ill-used by life who develops a searing, soul-absorbing passion for Giorgio, an Italian military officer, who himself is embroiled in a passionate love affair with a married woman named Clara. Jere Shea and the beautiful Marin Mazzie (of Ragtime fame) embody these roles with sincerity and sensuality. The original cast album (Angel CDQ 7243-5-55251-23) is superbly produced, including as it does much of the dialogue with musical underscoring, so that the listener can easily follow the plot as well as wallow in Sondheim’s most operatic score. I am completely captivated by this show.

The Light in the Piazza

In recent months, whenever I listen to Passion, I almost always follow it up with another musical set in Italy, Adam Guettel’s The Light in the Piazza (2005). This rapturous music tells the story of a mentally disabled American girl who falls in love with an Italian shop boy while sojourning in Florence with her mother. It is fascinating to know that Guettel’s grandfather was none other than Broadway’s ultimate melodist Richard Rodgers, and you can certainly hear that musical pedigree in the refinement and sheer ravishment of this score, which also aspires to the condition of opera, with several songs offering lyrics in Italian rather than English! Starring Kelli O’Hara, Victoria Clark and Matthew Morrison, this cast album (Nonesuch 79829-2) rewards repeated listening – it truly is one of the most gorgeous scores ever composed for Broadway.

Hamilton

Finally, I have fielded many questions from OperaLex people curious about Lin-Manuel Miranda’s phenomenal sensation Hamilton, which basically swept the 2016 Tony Awards. There is a hip-hop sensibility to this biographical musical about Alexander Hamilton, but it is not a “rap” musical per se. The score boasts a variety of musical styles, catchy tunes and opulent orchestrations. In short, the score fully deserved its Tony Award win, and in fact, the entire show more than lives up to its hype. Its insights about the Founding Fathers and the history they made happen are portrayed in lyrics equal parts profoundly literate and wittily entertaining, and again, in songs that are among the best written for Broadway so far this century. The luxuriantly produced original cast album (Atlantic 551093-2) is a two-disc set of the complete score, complete with a libretto so you can contemplate the history and the artistry that much more fully. Hamilton is not a mega-hit because of trendy treatment; it’s a mega-hit because it’s a brilliant, compelling work of musical theatre.

Dr. Tedrin Lindsay