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SPRING 2019

inside

ALL IN THE FAMILY

UKOT grads, and their daughter, thrive in NYC

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OH, THE PLACES THEY GO!

Students and graduates cross the continent and the sea to share their talents

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Grand Time!

Why Baldwin keeps coming back

“Returning to Lexington is always a highlight of my year.”

For 19 years Dr. Robert Baldwin, formerly of UK and now Director of Orchestras and of Graduate Studies at the University of Utah, and Music Director of the Salt Lake Symphony, has enthusiastically returned to lead the orchestra in *A Grand Night for Singing*. I recently asked him what makes it such a highlight.

“Make no mistake, this is a professional quality production. Many of Lexington’s most talented performers are involved with *Grand Night*. It is indicative of the depth of talent we have here. I would not hesitate to compare this show to most professional traveling Broadway shows. Talent is only one element, however.

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Grand Night for Singing

Where: Singletary Center for the Arts, UK campus

When: June 7, 8, 14, 15 at 7:30 p.m.

June 9, 16 at 2 p.m.

Tickets: Call 859.257.4929 or visit www.SCFATickets.com

UK family affair

UKOT grads taking
NYC by storm

Phumzile Sojola
and Angrea Jones-
Sojola



Andrea Jones-Sojola and Phumzile (“Puma”) Sojola, UKOT graduates, are both classically trained singers with strong backgrounds in opera, musical theater and spirituals. In 2012 they both made their Broadway debuts in the Tony Award-winning production of Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*, and in June 2014 they joined international stars in a concert in Carnegie Hall’s popular series *Musical Explorers*. More recently, in 2016 they were featured in *African American Gospel Music and Spirituals with Andrea and Puma*, a unit in the online services Open Educational Resources, singing the gospel standard “This Train is Bound for Glory.”

Andrea, a native of Louisville, has performed with the American Spiritual Ensemble and in concert halls and opera houses around the world. In late 2017 she sang with Kelli O’Hara in New York City Center’s *Brigadoon*. In New York’s Classic Stage Company’s revival of the musical *Carmen Jones* in 2018 Andrea sang the role of Sally, co-starring with Anika Noni Rose who voiced the first African-American Disney princess in the film *The Princess and the Frog*. Andrea was praised in The New Yorker’s July 2019 review of that show by Hilton Als as “[an] exceptional performer in a cast of exceptional performers.” In March 2019 she appeared in a limited run of *I Married an Angel*, Rodgers and Hart’s third major collaboration with choreographer George Balanchine, in the second Encores! production in the New York City Center’s 75th Anniversary Season, and also appeared in an Off-Off Broadway production of *Faust 2.0*, a “timely multimedia re-imagining” of Goethe’s *Faust, Part II* at the Mabou Mimes Theatre in NYC. In September she will join the Metropolitan Opera Chorus for *Porgy and Bess*. Andrea has been in television dramas such as *FBI* (CBS), *Mozart in the Jungle* (Amazon), *The Blacklist* (NBC) and in Tyler Perry’s film *For Colored Girls*.

Puma, a native of South Africa, has toured internationally with the review *Three Mo’ Tenors* and performs regularly on Broadway. *Variety* recognized him as one of “those thespians with outstanding voices” in the role of the loyal palace functionary Lord Pinkleton in *Cinderella on Broadway*. He is in his fourth year on tour with *Phantom of the Opera* in the role of Ubaldo Piangi. His international credits include performances at La Biennale di Venezia, Opera de Lyon and the Edinburgh International Festival.

The talent didn’t stop with their generation. Their daughter Zani Jones Mbayise has appeared as Kathy Johnson, the daughter of the NASA engineer Catherine Johnson in the film *Hidden Figures* and as Phoebe in *How To Be Single*. Zani has also done commercials for Disney and Maisonette. What an amazing family!



Zani
Jones Mbayise

Mary Powell

From *Porgy and Bess* to *Rusalka*

Summer gigs send singers across the country and beyond

Summer is here and that means UKOT students are on the move. Here's a sampling of their plans.

Jessica Bayne

Jessica Bayne will attend the American Vocal Arts Institute in New York City and join Opera Maine as a Studio Artist, performing Mabrouka in *Su-meida's Song* and covering Pamina in *The Magic Flute*.



Bayne

Kendra Beasley

Kendra Beasley will perform in the chorus for *Romeo et Juliette* and *Porgy and Bess* at the Cincinnati Opera.



Richardson

Kyle Burney

Kyle Burney will sing in the Bay View SOAKS program in Petoskey, Michigan.

Taylor Comstock

Taylor Comstock will be a Gerdine Young Artist at the Opera Theatre of St. Louis. He will cover Lucano in *The Coronation of Poppea* and sing in the chorus of *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Rigoletto*. He will also perform at the Center Stage Gala at the season's end.



Comstock

Cooper Fitch

Cooper Fitch will be joining the Entertainment Team at Dutch Wonderland Theme Park in Lancaster, PA.

Makeda Hampton

Makeda Hampton will begin chorus rehearsals for *Porgy and Bess* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City.

Parker Van Houten

Parker Van Houten will travel to Paris and Normandy, France with the UK Chorale. They will perform the world premiere of his composition *Kyrie*. He will also work as an RA with the 2019 Kentucky Governor's School for the Arts.

Evan Johnson

Evan Johnson will be singing the Prince in *Rusalka* at the Glyndebourne Festival in England, and Cassio in *Otello* in

Munich.

Elizabeth Massie

Elizabeth Massie will be doing musicological research at the Ashland Estate.

Marquita Richardson

Marquita Richardson will perform in *It's a Grand Night for Singing! 2019* and will be in the chorus for *Porgy and Bess* at the Cincinnati Opera.

Tanyaradzwa Tawengwa

Tanyaradzwa Tawengwa will join the company at Glimmerglass Opera in New York.



Preacely

Houston Tyrrell

Houston Tyrrell will attend the Bay View Music Festival, performing Tamino in *The Magic Flute* and Action in *West Side Story*. He will also be a part of Bay View's Spiritual Intensive directed by Dr. Everett McCorvey and in *Grand Night*.

Tevin Vincent

Tevin Vincent will sing in the chorus of *Porgy and Bess* at Cincinnati Opera.

Lloyd White V

Lloyd White V will attend the Bay View Music Festival, performing Tamino in *The Magic Flute* and covering Tony in *West Side Story*. He will also perform in *Grand Night*.

Jeffrey Oakman

After *Grand Night*, Jeffrey Oakman will be at Myers Dinner Theatre (Hillsboro, IN) where he will be playing Joseph in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, and King Louis/ensemble in *Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

Michael Preacely

Michael Preacely will sing with the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra: Independence Day Celebration. On July 20 he will sing the Bernstein *Mass* with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and perform as a soloist with the Street Chorus.



Lyric Opera of Chicago

UKOT grad Christopher Kenney as Master of Ceremonies in Lyric Opera's *Cendrillon*.

APPLAUSE!

Plenty to clap for!

Alltech winners

The 14th annual Alltech Vocal Scholarship Competition in March attracted 21 undergraduate and graduate students who competed for the chance to win scholarships, awards and prizes. Judges were Barbara Lynn Jamison, Kentucky Opera's Director; Susanne Marsee, acclaimed mezzo-soprano who sang with New York City Opera for over 20 years; and Dr. Thomas King, a renowned tenor and professor. Founded by Dr. Pearse Lyons, the 2019 competition awarded more than \$740,000 in prizes to these talented singers.

UNDERGRADUATE

First Place: Ann Weible, Louisville

Second Place: Williams Stone Atkinson, Lexington

Third Place: Lauren Maynus, Cincinnati

Barbara Rouse Kentucky Prize: Sierra Kidd, Louisville

Burchfield & Thomas Gail Robinson Performance Award: Mae Alice Harrell, Louisville

GRADUATE

First Place: Dawna Rae Warren, Princeton, Kentucky

Second Place: Emily Weaver, LaCrosse, Wisconsin

Third Place: Jeffery Todd, Salisbury, Maryland

TRANSFER

First Place: Devin Davis, Brandywine, Maryland

Transfer Student Encouragement Award:

Kellie Sherwood, Lexington

Kenney at Ryan Opera Center

A 2014 winner in the graduate division of the Alltech completion, UKOT graduate Christopher Kenney, is in his second year with the Ryan Opera Center in Chicago. The baritone was recently a member of the Washington National Opera's Domingo-Cafritz "Young Artist Program" and an apprentice artist with the Santa Fe Opera. In 2019-20 season, Kenney sings Fiorello in *The Barber of Seville*, Motorcycle Cop in *Dead Man Walking* and Registrar in *Madama Butterfly*.

Dewey in semifinals

UKOT graduate Monica Dewey advanced to the Metropolitan Opera Auditions semifinals in March after winning the Midwest Regional competition in February. Dewey made her European debut late last year as First Niece in *Peter Grimes* at Cologne Opera. Throughout the spring she sang with the Michigan Opera Theater and Sacramento Philharmonic. She is returning to the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis this summer to sing Susanna in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. She graduated from UK, where she studied with Dr. Everett McCorvey in 2012 and sang in UKOT's production of *Phantom of the Opera* that year as Christine.



Dewey

BRAVOLEX!



Happenings 2019-2020

June

It's a Grand Night for Singing

Where: Singletary Center

When: June 7, 8, 14, 15 at 7:30 p.m.; June 9, 16 at 2 p.m.

Cost: Ticketed event.

October

Gianni Schicchi/Suor Angelica

Where: Singletary Center

When: Oct. 11, 12 at 7:30 p.m., Oct. 13 at 2 p.m.

Cost: Ticketed event

UK Vocal Competition for Young Singers

Where: Schmidt Vocal Arts Center

When: Oct. 12 at 10 a.m.

Cost: Free and open to the public

November

Metropolitan District Auditions

Where: Singletary Center

When: Nov. 16, Time TBD

Cost: Free and open to the public

December

Alltech Holiday Celebration of Song

Where: The Square

When: Dec. 15 at 3 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

Cost: Free and open to the public

March 2020

Alltech Vocal Scholarship Competition

Where: Singletary Center

When: March 1 at 2 p.m.

Cost: Free and open to the public

April 2020

The Crucible

Where: Singletary Center

When: April 3, 4 at 7:30 p.m.

April 5 at 2 p.m.

Cost: Ticketed event

Electricity is amazing

From Page 1

It is also the experience that helps mold this into a polished product.”

Baldwin cites, often by first name, performers, designers and crew, making it clear *Grand Night* is the brainchild of a team that knows how to create a seamless experience. Asked about the glitches that any performance can suffer, he said the crew handles these so deftly the audience never knows about them.

Baldwin noted another reason for *Grand Night's* enduring appeal. “If one looks at the show over the years, we see Bob’s (Pickering) sets and Everett McCorvey’s vision evolving, ever changing. This is what keeps any show from getting stagnant, teamwork and vision.”

Some musicians have been part of *Grand Night* for as long as Baldwin, nurturing great teamwork. “Egos move aside for the good of the SHOW.” He credits their talent and McCorvey’s leadership style, but also something performers know is necessary to their best work: “Musicians also thrive on the energy of the performance, and *Grand Night's* electricity is amazing!”

What are Baldwin’s personal favorite experiences among so many *Grand Nights*?

“Each year has its own to remember. Tedrin’s (Lindsay) costumes for his Act Two opening number are often a highlight, as are the little interactions I have with some of the singers. Alicia McCorvey and I have been having a ball interacting over the years. But perhaps my favorite moment occurs during the grand finale, when the cast and audience are singing ‘It’s a Grand Night for Singing’ together. What most don’t realize is that the orchestra and backstage tech crew are also swaying and, when possible, singing right along with you. It’s truly a community sing-along!”

Baldwin ended with appreciation of the audiences.

“The audiences are fantastic. They are also dedicated. At the start of each show, we sit backstage and check the monitors to see how many people raise their hands when Dr. McCorvey asks, ‘How many are seeing *Grand Night* for the first time, fifth time, 10th time, 20th time, 26th time?’ The fact that we can present an artistic product with that sort of following is a testament to its relevance and the love the community has for *It’s a Grand Night for Singing.*”



Baldwin

Dorothy Carter

A great event for a great cause

Guests at this year's *Encore!* entered Keeneland's Entertainment Center to attend "a great event for a great cause," — University of Kentucky Opera Theatre — said Mayor Linda Gorton. Among the hors d'oeuvres was a Plum Wine Ginger Shooter, a reminder that the evening's Asian flair was a tribute to UKOT's last opera of the season, *Madama Butterfly*. Dr. Sanford Archer, president of OperaLex, a community group formed to support UKOT, said the event was a tribute to past, present and future board members.

The Asian theme continued as guests enjoyed dishes including Bulgogi Wood Fired Prime Skirt Steak and Yozu Honey Cake Trifle. Returning as Mistress of Ceremonies, Jenna Day, former Miss Kentucky, used her considerable charm and wit introducing singers and auctioneer Walt Robertson, who conducted the Live Auction and the call for donations to the Tom Getchell Scholarship Fund for graduate students, which raised more than \$30,000. Musical offerings ranged from "Un bel Di" from *Madama Butterfly* to "Minnie the Moocher," the latter rendered hilariously by Michael Preacely, a doctoral student who commented later that,

"It is great to be able to meet the people who come to performances and support us in so many ways."

Houston Tyrrell

"Your support is the foundation of success and for that we are grateful." The students' appreciation was reinforced by student Houston Tyrrell, who said, "It is great to be able to meet the people who come to performances and support us in so many ways." New this year was The Pearse Lyons Champion of the Voice Award, created to celebrate the work and legacy of Dr. Pearse Lyons. It will be presented annually to celebrate those who give back to the arts and help further the dreams of young singers. Lyons, founder of Alltech, so often said, "Do what makes your heart sing." This first award went to the Lyons family. Lyons' widow, Deirdre, and son Dr. Mark Lyons and his wife, Holly, accepted the award. Dean Mark Shanda of UK's College of Fine Arts put it well when he said, "The continuing community support is surpassed only by the talent the students bring to the stage."

Sylvia Davis

Leaving but never forgotten

Rue, Wigglesworth retiring

Joan Rue

When Joan Rue moved to Lexington in 2002 to take care of her aging parents, she had no idea that she and her husband, Marc Schlackman, would soon be working for Dr. Everett McCorvey, the director of UK Opera



Theatre. McCorvey hired Marc, an experienced professional stage manager, in 2003 as the production manager for *A Grand Night for Singing*; this soon became a permanent position with UKOT. Joan worked with several local theatre groups, and she was one

of the actresses who founded On the Verge Theatre. In 2008, McCorvey invited Joan to join UKOT as the program coordinator and, as they say, the rest is history. After retiring on July 1, Joan plans to spend her time "gardening, visiting our grandchildren in Los Angeles, and working again with friends in the Lexington theatre scene."

Susan Wigglesworth

Susan Wigglesworth began her theatrical career as an actress, then studied theatrical costume design and construction in London and New York before starting her own design firm in Los Angeles. She began designing costumes for UK Opera Theatre and other Lexington companies in the early 2000s. Impressed with her many skills, Dr. McCorvey offered her a UKOT staff position in 2009 and she has recently dazzled audiences with her beautiful creations



in *Phantom of the Opera*, *Les Misérables*, *La Traviata*, *Tales of Hoffmann* and *Madama Butterfly*. Susan said she was won over "by Everett's resolutely positive support" and the "can-do attitude" of the Thimble Brigade, the Bravo Guild volunteers who met weekly to assist in costume construction for UKOT productions. After retiring July 1, Susan plans to do freelance work with local theatre companies and enjoy making her own schedule!

Mary Powell

A McGlinn summer tonic

By Tedrin Blair Lindsay, PhD

One of my heroes is the American conductor and musical theater archivist John McGlinn (1953-2009) who devoted his career to producing definitive renditions of great American musicals and song standards on stage, in concert and on recordings. Some of his show recordings I have already recommended in previous columns over the years, including Lerner and Loewe's *Brigadoon*, Irving Berlin's *Annie Get Your Gun*, Leonard Bernstein's *Wonderful Town*, Kern and Hammerstein's *Show Boat*, Cole Porter's *Kiss Me, Kate* and *Anything Goes*, and a compilation called *Kurt Weill on Broadway*, all with the most magnificent stars from the worlds of opera and Broadway alike.

I have recently encountered two more of his recordings that simply set me swooning. The title *Broadway Showstoppers* (1992, Angel CDQ 54586) is misleading, as it sounds like it's going to be big, razzmatazz numbers, but it actually focuses on wonderful songs from rarely produced old shows like *No, No Nanette* and *The Band Wagon*. In some cases, these songs are presented in their original forms and orchestrations, like the delightful "Swanee" sung by Kim Criswell, the delectable "Tea for Two" delivered by George Dvorsky and Rebecca Luker, the ravishing "Dancing in the Dark" rendered by David Gaines and "Who?" pleasingly offered by Brent Barrett and Rebecca Luker. Novelties like the hilarious "Triplets" or the original version of "Bill" later rewritten for use in *Show Boat* lend variety to this album, and best of all are the oversized production numbers utilizing many of these stars, such as Gershwin's little-known "Come To the Moon" and the most gorgeous, over-the-top reimagining of the Kern and Hammerstein classic "All the Things You Are" that I have ever encountered. The London Sinfonietta and the Ambrosian Chorus, McGlinn's go-to orchestral and vocal ensembles, fulfill the music as splendidly as ever.

In the same vein is McGlinn's *The Busby Berkeley Album* (Angel CDQ



Dr. Tedrin Lindsay

55189) which uses the same performing forces in the service of the legendary songs created by Al Dubin and Harry Warren for such Busby Berkeley movie musicals as *42nd Street*, *Gold Diggers of 1933*, *Gold Diggers of 1935* and *Dames*. What fun to hear these familiar songs like "We're in the Money," "Shuffle Off To Buffalo" and "Lullaby of Broadway" in their original arrangements and orchestrations, again performed by the best legit cross-over talents in the business.

McGlenn also lent his mastery, along with his orchestra and chorus, to several albums of opera stars "slumming" with composers of the so-called "Great American Songbook." It would be almost impossible to exaggerate how thrilling, how entertaining, how perfectly rendered is the 1991 recording *Night and Day: Thomas Hampson Sings Cole Porter* (EMI Classics CDC554203), a generous sampling of 18 songs from the thrice-familiar to the obscure. *My Funny Valentine: Frederica von Stade Sings Rodgers and Hart* (EMI CDC 7-54071-2) and *Kiri Te Kanawa's Kiri Sings Gershwin* (Musical Heritage Society 515130Y) are also utterly charming and highly enjoyable.

Happy summer listening!



John McGlenn



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