

## COVID concerns prompt production changes

Due to rising COVID-19 concerns and the uncertainty about performers wearing masks on stage, the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre has postponed its production of *La Bohème* until March 3, 4, 5, 2022. The production was originally set for early November 2021.

"With the Delta variant becoming rampant at the beginning of the fall semester, it caused us to have to reassess whether or not we could present the opera on stage in masks," said UKOT Director Dr. Everett McCorvey. "We realized that the audience would be masked, but we were hoping that the cast could sing the opera without masks. While we work to figure out what the CDC and University recommendations will be for masks for performers, we felt that it was probably better to postpone until the



*"This change is only to keep all of us safe and to be able to present La Bohème in the manner that it should be presented."*

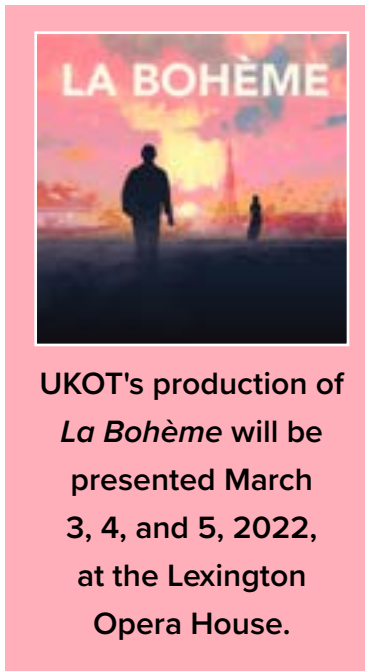
UKOT Director Dr. Everett McCorvey told students and staff.

spring so that we could have a clear idea of the policies related to wearing masks on stage with this new variant."

McCorvey went on to say that UKOT wanted the students to have a "robust experience" performing one of the world's greatest operas.

"I've said many times over the past few days that the Delta variant is nimble. We must find ways to be nimble," he added.

It was also announced that *La Bohème* will be presented at the Lexington Opera House. Other production changes include moving *Magic Flute* to the fall of 2022. The Alltech Vocal Scholarship Competition will be on March 6, 2022, at the Singletary Center.



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The 9/11 commemoration concert was held at Empty Sky Memorial in Jersey City, New Jersey.

## *McCorvey leads National Chorale in 9/11 ceremony*

University of Kentucky Opera Theatre Director Dr. Everett McCorvey led the music at a ceremony marking the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks. The music also featured five current UK students and five alums, as well as several Lexington-area musicians.

McCorvey conducted the National Chorale, a New York-based group he has led since 2015, and the U.S. Army Field Band and Soldiers' Chorus. The ceremony was held at the Empty Sky Memorial in Jersey City, New Jersey, which was built after the 2001 attacks that took the lives of 2,996 people.

Current students who participated were: Kathrin Thawley, doctoral voice student and Alltech Scholar; Courtney Porter, doctoral voice student and Lyman T. Johnson Fellow; Houston Tyrrell, master's voice student and Alltech Scholar; Nathaniel Thompson, senior

voice student, graduate arts administration major, and Alltech Scholar; and Jackson Arnold, freshman violin major.

Soldiers' Chorus members who are UK alums include Charis Humphress Strange, Mario Garcia, Dan Erbe, Mark Huseth, and Jeremy Cady (retired).

Also participating were: Megan Meadows, Berea College theater major and intern with UKOT and the National Chorale; Dr. Elizabeth Arnold; associate professor of voice and assistant dean in the UK College of Fine Arts; and Dr. Rob Seebacher, director of Orchestra at Centre College and assistant conductor of the National Chorale.

Saturday's performance included "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Taps," "God Bless America," and "America the Beautiful" with Broadway star Philip Boykin. The ensemble also pre-

sented Stephen Paulus' a cappella choral favorite "The Road Home" and Kentucky-based composer Earlene Rentz's arrangement of "Amazing Grace."



Mario Garcia, left, one of several UK alums who performed with the Soldiers' Chorus, reconnected with UKOT's Dr. Everett McCorvey at the 9/11 commemoration ceremony.

# A fond farewell

*Editor's note: Kelsey Loeslie, who has been the program coordinator for the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre for the past two years, is leaving her role in October to return with her husband to her native Minnesota. Following is a tribute to Kelsey by UKOT Executive Director Dr. Everett McCorvey.*

Kelsey came to UK to work on her doctoral degree in vocal performance with Dr. Angelique Clay. It was very evident at the beginning of her work here that she was an extremely talented student. Kelsey progressed very quickly with Dr. Clay and was involved in many of our operas and also the "Grand Night for Singing."



Kelsey Loeslie

Many people will remember her as Mary Poppins in the "Grand Night" 25th anniversary video, where she sang "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious." In many ways, Kelsey is Mary Poppins! I've never met someone who was so good and so calm and so gracious at juggling 20 balls in the air all at the same time. She reminds me of me!

When her predecessor, Joan Rue, was out for any reason, Joan would always recommend Kelsey to sub for her. When Joan retired, she encouraged Kelsey to apply for the position. Kelsey did apply and was offered the job.

To no one's surprise, the job of opera coordinator was a perfect fit. It was also a very easy transition from Joan to Kelsey. My No. 1 requirement for anyone working in the opera program – including the program coordinator – is that they are kind and supportive and good to the students. I remind people all the time that we are here to serve the students, and not the other way around. Kelsey took that to heart.

It's going to be a big loss for us as she has become a big part of our family. But I am so proud of the work that she has done to grow our program, and I am very supportive of her next steps as she continues this journey in singing, performing, teaching, and administration. It would not surprise me at all if, in 10 years, Kelsey is either on Broadway playing Mary Poppins or working as a general director of a major opera company. I look forward to what she does in the future and I will be very proud to say that part of her life was spent with UKOT.



MARK CORNELISON/UK PHOTO

Ben C. Kaufmann and Janet Zusman

## Gift to honor work of McCorvey, others

A \$6.6 million deferred gift to the University of Kentucky College of Fine Arts from Ben C. Kaufmann and Janet Zusman will be used in part to honor the work of UK Opera Theatre Director Dr. Everett McCorvey, according to UKNow.

"Our goal at UK Opera Theatre is to be the best training program for young artists in the country. This gift helps us to recruit, develop, and retain some of the best young artists in the country through scholarships, support, and preparation for the future," McCorvey told UKNow's Whitney Hale. "Along with our talented artists, the Lexington audiences will be the beneficiaries of this transformational gift because they will get to experience some of the best young talent in the world right here on our stages in Lexington at the University of Kentucky."

The couple's gift establishes the Ben C. Kaufmann and Janet Zusman Music Fund in the School of Music. It will also honor the work of John Nardolillo, director of UK Symphony Orchestra, and Jefferson Johnson, director of UK Choirs. Funding will be used to impact their work and current students, as well as future generations of students and the Lexington community overall.

The fund's priority will be student scholarships, and it will support performance, outreach initiatives, and programming for UKOT, UK Symphony Orchestra, and UK choral ensembles. Its goal will be to build access to and appreciation for music and ensure that it thrives in the Bluegrass region.

The fund will also be used to recruit and retain top-ranked faculty that demonstrate excellence and promise and other opportunities for students participating in the opera, orchestra, and choral programs.

Kaufmann and Zusman have been long-time supporters of UK, especially the arts. Their most recent commitment represents the largest in UK College of Fine Arts history and one of the largest ever to the arts in Central Kentucky.

# APPLAUSE!

NEWS TO CLAP ABOUT



## Smith represents U.S.

Reginald Smith Jr. – a baritone who recently completed his master’s degree from the University of Kentucky - represented the United States in the 20th BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition in the United Kingdom in June.

Smith competed against 15 of the world’s most outstanding rising stars in international opera and song, part of the prestigious vocal competition in classical music. The competitors – selected during three stages from a record-breaking pool of applicants – hailed from 14 other countries: Austria, China, Denmark, England, Georgia, Iceland, Mongolia,

Republic of Korea, Russia, South Africa, Venezuela, Wales, Madagascar, and the Republic of Kosovo. The competition was held at the United Kingdom’s St. David’s Hall, Cardiff, Wales, without an audience due to COVID-19 protocols.



## Kenney makes Met debut

Christopher Kenney, a 2014 graduate in vocal performance from the University of Kentucky, has made his Metropolitan Opera debut.

The baritone is playing Chester in the Met’s production of Terrance Blanchard’s *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*. The opera is based on the memoir of journalist Charles M. Blow. It premiered Sept. 27 and runs through Oct. 23.

*Fire Shut Up in My Bones* is the Met’s first performance of an opera by a Black composer.

## ‘Grand Night’ survey results

A survey following “It’s a Grand Night for Singing” in June provided the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre a brief snapshot of those who attended the in-person salute to Broadway and musical theater. Two hundred and seventy-seven people responded.

The survey showed that most ticket buyers - 61.4 percent – were between 55 and 75 years old, while 23.1 percent were 75 or older. Just over 11 percent were in the 35-54 age range, and 4.3 percent were 18-34 years old.

When asked how long they’ve attended “Grand Night,” 35 percent said they have attended 11 to 20 years; 25.6 percent have attended one to five years; 24.2 percent have



attended six to 10 years; 11.2 percent said this was their first year; and 4 percent said they’ve never missed the UKOT production.

Responding to the question: How did you hear about “Grand Night”: 43.3 percent heard about it through email blasts; 39.7 percent heard from a friend or family member; 24.5 percent heard through social media; 20.9 percent responded “other”; 6.5 percent found out about it from television; and 1.4 percent cited radio.

Respondents were also asked if they prefer watching “Grand Night” performances at the Opera House or the Singletary Center. (It’s normally held at Singletary but, because of COVID restrictions, was moved to the Opera House this year.) Overwhelmingly, they said they preferred Singletary – 70.8 percent to 29.2 percent.



## Message from the President: W. Harry Clarke

Dear Friends of OperaLex,

It is with a great deal of pleasure that I greet you as the new president of OperaLex and on behalf of our Board of Directors and our Executive Committee, which consists of our vice president, Bonnie Mays; secretary, Jan Furst; treasurer, Kris Gilbert; and myself.

In the weeks following July 1, the beginning of our term, the board has been very busy. Critical structural changes we have made include adding active committees that can better focus on specific areas. Those standing committees include the Development Committee, Abby Vaughn, chair; the Financial Committee, Kris Gilbert, chair; the Communications Committee, Kay Collier McLaughlin, chair; and the Student Development Committee, Cheryl Lalonde, chair. A very important ad hoc committee plans and operates the district Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition in November, led by its chair, Cacey Nardolillo.

One of the important developments that will impact our many friends is the formation of an OperaLex membership portal for all who would like to show direct support for our efforts. You will soon hear of those plans as the process is defined and developed. At that point, we encourage you to join our organization. Why? Because everything we do, every support venture we undertake, every scholarship we offer, every dollar we raise is for the enhancement of the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre program, its students, its faculty, and its marvelous director, Everett McCorvey. In addition, we plan to employ a development coordinator who will lead our efforts in raising funds to meet our goals for the financial support of the opera program.

It is also our intention to put greater emphasis on the work of Bravo Guild, as those volunteers are a key to many of the activities of OperaLex. Other plans include the active involvement of our vocal student representative and the addition of an intern from the UK Arts Administration program. To better represent OperaLex and Bravo Guild in all that we do, we plan to hire professional assistance in redesigning our website.

On a personal note, those of you who don’t know me should know a little about who this board elected as president. As a graduate student working on a doctorate in music education, I came to UK in 1965 as a teaching assistant with the band. It so happened that I loved to sing and became actively involved in the vocal program at UK, singing a lead opera role at times, and even singing with Phyllis Jenness, my hero, in small chamber operas. My singing career came to a sudden end in 1968 when I was offered the position as a one-year interim appointment as the director of the UK Band. That single year became 21 years as director of bands, leading to another 14 years as director of the School of Music, and then a few more teaching years until retirement in 2011. With time on my hands, I ran successfully for the Lexington Fayette Urban County Council. It was while on council that I was able to make a whole new set of friends unrelated to the University. In 2021, the University honored me with the Doctorate of Humane Letters degree.

Through all this, one of the most important tasks that I have undertaken is as president of OperaLex. And I take that responsibility very seriously.



# ON BOARD

SPOTLIGHT ON OPERALEX BOARD MEMBERS

In each issue of BravoLex, we feature three of OperaLex's dedicated board members. This issue, we focus on Jordan Gilliam, Kay Collier McLaughlin, and Abby Vaughn.



**JORDAN GILLIAM**

Jordan Gilliam is an attorney with Stites and Harbison. He joined the firm in 2019 and is a member of the Real Estate and Banking Service Group. His practice area includes real estate development and finance, and general practice.

Gilliam is a 2016 graduate of the University of Virginia with a bachelor's degree in English. He obtained his juris doctor degree from the University of Kentucky College of Law. He joined Stites and Harbison after serving as a law clerk with Omni Title and Escrow during the summers of 2017 and 2018. There he drafted deeds, contracts, and other legal documents and assisted in residential and commercial real estate closings.

Gilliam was honored as a "Top 40 Under 40" by the National Black Lawyers Association.



**KAY COLLIER MCLAUGHLIN**

Kay Collier McLaughlin was formed as a musician and lover of the arts through the Central Kentucky Youth Orchestra, the orchestra program at Henry Clay High School in Lexington, and the music department at the University of Kentucky. She served on the first Lexington Arts Council, was the music reviewer for The Lexington Leader, and founded and directed the first Suzuki violin program in Central Kentucky. Any way she can support the continuing growth of the arts in this area, the opera program, and Dr. Everett McCorvey, "provides a small way to pay back for the foundation I was given," she said.

She officially retired in 2015 after a long career in leadership development, transitions, and communications for the Episcopal church and as a teacher, trainer, and consultant in Suzuki Talent Education. Today, she is an independent design consultant with her firm, Transformative Leadership Consulting. In that capacity, she works with nonprofit, religious, and academic systems across the United States.

In addition, McLaughlin continues her vocation as a nonfiction writer addressing issues and responses to cultural shifts and multiple aspects of social justice. Her study, writing, and consulting in areas of transitions, combined with a love of the arts, heightens her interest in serving on "the most significant board at this particular time."



**ABBY VAUGHN**

With over 30-plus years in the financial industry, Abby Vaughn has worked for a global financial services company and a Fortune 500 bank. She is currently with Unified Trust. Her experience includes 16 years of management experience, custom lending strategies, and cash management. Vaughn spent a decade in the private banking/wealth management sector.

On a personal level, Vaughn and her husband moved to Lexington in 1987 from her hometown of Harold, Kentucky – a small town between Pikeville and Prestonsburg. They have a daughter, who is currently doing her residency at Frankfort Regional Medical Center. Her passions include giving back to the community, dabbling in home design, caring for rescues Bella and Louie, and cheering on the University of Kentucky Wildcats.

## TalkingwithTedrin

# Tedrin's Recording Corner #42

By Dr. Tedrin Blair Lindsay

In recognition of University of Kentucky Opera Theatre's work on *La Bohème*, I wanted to highlight a few notable recordings of Puccini's beloved opera so you can get to know it well before we do it for you in person (March 3, 4, and 5, 2022, at the Lexington Opera House). Let's start with some renditions from the so-called "Golden Age."

Most experts agree that the finest recording of this opera is the 1956 rendition on Angel/EMI conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Spanish soprano Victoria de los Angeles is exquisite as Mimì, and her Rodolfo is the superb Swedish tenor Jussi Bjoerling. The great Robert Merrill brings a nuanced portrayal of Marcello to the performance, and the Musetta of Lucine Amara is effectively charming as well. Colline's bass aria about the cloak is another highlight of this recording, as sung by the legendary Giorgio Tozzi. This is the recording I recommend if you are only in the market for one.

However, the 1972 *La Bohème* starring Luciano Pavarotti and Mirella Freni is also a fabulous interpretation, with better quality of recorded sound. Pavarotti and Freni are every bit the equals of Bjoerling and de los Angeles in their performances, and with more sumptuous voices, but English soprano Elizabeth Harwood and baritone Roldando Panerai do not achieve nearly the vocal or comic characterizations that Amara and Merrill do. Herbert von Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic play with passion and precision but with less Italianate style and lyricism than the RCA Victor Orchestra and Beecham. Quibbles aside, though, both versions are worthy of repeated listening.

There are also delightful traversals starring Anna Moffo and Richard Tucker from 1961 (very moving with beautiful singing), Renata Tebaldi and Carlo Bergonzi from 1959 (heavy but effective singing), Maria Callas and Giuseppe di Stefano from 1956 (as dramatic as you'd expect from Callas, from La Scala, no less, with Anna Moffo as a lovely Musetta early in her career), Montserrat Caballé and Plácido Domingo from 1973 (with American soprano Judith Blegen, early in her career, too), conducted, respectively, by Erich Leinsdorf, Antonino Votto, Tullio Serafin, and Sir Georg Solti. Yet another splendid version from 1964 starring a younger, dewyvoiced Mirella Freni features Nicolai Gedda as her Rodolfo and Thomas



Schippers as her conductor.

Post-Golden Age recordings of this perennial favorite are just as plentiful as their predecessors, and although the opera itself seems indestructible, the level of artistry of more recent versions does not seem to rise to the level of the earlier ones as often. Some of the more appealing are a Leonard Bernstein-led production from 1987 starring Angelina Réaux, Jerry Hadley, Barbara Daniels, and Thomas Hampson (a very good, slightly more contemporary option) and a 1998 rendition from La Scala conducted by Riccardo Chailly, featuring the hottest singing team of that era, Angela Gheorgiu and Roberto Alagna (also quite fine, and perhaps the liveliest of these recordings).

All of these, among literally dozens of others, are easily available from online vendors. Enjoy swooning with the beautiful music of the lovers in the Parisian garret!

- Beecham/RCA Victor Orchestra – EMI Classics 7 47235 2 Von Karajan/ Berlin Philharmonic – Decca 421 049-2
- Leinsdorf/Rome Opera House – RCA VictorB000003EMZ
- Serafin/Accademia di Santa Cecilia – Decca B00006469L
- Votto/La Scala – Warner Classics 0825646341078
- Solti/London Philharmonic – Sony B000009NIW
- Schippers/Rome Opera House – EMI Classics 72438-19297-2-8
- Bernstein/Accademia di Santa Cecilia – Deutsche Grammophon B00000E40A
- Chailly/La Scala – Decca B00001IVPD



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