



It's a Grand Night for Singing is a high-energy salute to Broadway and musical theater.

30 Years In, *It's a Grand Night, Indeed*

It's been 30 years since the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre began saluting Broadway and musical theater with *It's a Grand Night for Singing*. And while the production has experienced many changes since that first night in 1992, at least one thing has remained the same: It provides a "magical" experience for the audience.

"I cannot say enough about the fact that this is an event unlike any I know of," said Rob Baldwin, the show's conductor for the past 22 years. "The quality is professional. The production is high quality and the result is always magical. I cannot wait for the downbeat of *Grand Night 30*."

It's a Grand Night for Singing opens Friday, June 10, at the Singletary Center for the Arts on UK's campus. There will be eight performances across six days. The theme this year is "From Billboard to Broadway," featuring a variety of current hits, popular Broadway songs, and some favorites from past productions. (See additional dates and information on page 2.)

"We are so excited about this show that we've decided to add two performances,"

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Grand Night

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said Everett McCorvey, UKOT director and co-creator of the musical revue. “People who’ve never been to *Grand Night* will be amazed by the level and quality of the singing, the dancing, the lights, the full orchestra. It has everything.”

The cast of *Grand Night* will be 40 to 50 people strong and will feature many of the “stars” from previous years, McCorvey added. They include Michael Preacely, Whit Whitaker, Jessica Bayne, Lily Meekin, Emilia Bustle, Kelly Jo Crawford, and Alicia Helm McCorvey.

The entire show will be about an hour and a half, without intermission. It will feature about 20 songs whittled down from 200 or so that McCorvey and his team start with each year. Director Peggy Stamps, in particular, said she looks for songs that are “uplifting.”

“I try to introduce songs that will encourage people to go to New York to see these shows,” she said.

That might include newer shows that many people might not have seen yet, as well as some of the revivals that are currently popular on Broadway, Stamps added. The songs featured this year include selections from shows currently on Broadway, such as *MJ: The Musical* and *The Music Man*, a Sondheim tribute, and others yet to be announced.

Grand Night wasn’t always the high-energy, high-impact production that has become a staple in the Lexington community. In fact, the first show was more like a choral concert than a musical revue. There were no costumes, no dancing, no special lighting – only singing.

“*Grand Night* is a lot grander now,” McCorvey said. “When we started off, it was people in formal gowns standing on choral risers. I’d say it was more like a Lawrence Welk production ... which was one of my inspirations. Then a few years in, we invited Peggy Stamps in to dance a few numbers. Then five or six years in, we started choreographing a few numbers. ... Now it’s morphed into a full-fledged, high-energy night that would be similar to an evening at a Broadway show.”

The success of the 30-year-old show is partly due to the team that puts it together. That team includes: McCorvey, producer/music director; Baldwin, conductor; Stamps, director; Grady Bowman, choreographer; Tedrin Blair Lindsay, associate music director; Nan McSwain, assistant music director; Bob Pickering, set designer; Tanya Harper, lighting designer; and Johnie Dean, arranger.

“The team has been together for almost the history of *Grand Night*,” McCorvey said.

Of course, the music itself is also largely responsible for the show’s staying power. As Baldwin noted, “Music, particularly songs, has a way of reaching across our manmade divisions. It has a uniting power. The reason people come, and return, is the power of music to reach us, speak to us, and define our lives.”



Grand Night features singing, dancing, and acting - similar to what you’d see in a Broadway show.



There will be eight performances of *It’s a Grand Night for Singing*, beginning Friday, June 10. They are:

Friday, June 10, 8 p.m.

Saturday, June 11, 2 p.m.

Saturday, June 11, 8 p.m.

Sunday, June 12, 6 p.m.

Friday, June 17, 8 p.m.

Saturday, June 18, 2 p.m.

Saturday, June 18, 8 p.m.

Sunday, June 19, 2 p.m.

Tickets are available at scfatickets.com.

Prices are:

Adult: \$55-\$45 by location

Senior: \$50-\$40 by location

UK Faculty: \$50-40 by location

UK Staff: \$30

Student: \$15

Groups of 25 or more:

\$50-\$40 by location

Like Father, Like Son

For those who know 11-year-old Benjamin Preacely – and have heard him sing – it comes as no surprise that his talent has already taken him to the big stage. Specifically, he appeared at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, where he starred as Char’es Baby in the critically acclaimed opera *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*.



Benjamin Preacely



Michael Preacely

For those who know his father, lecturer in voice at the University of Kentucky and professional baritone Michael Preacely, it’s also no surprise that young Preacely is following in his father’s footsteps. Like father, like son, as the saying goes.

“Both are just easy going – so joyful when they sing,” said Peggy Stamps, a talent manager who represents Benjamin. “It’s almost like when you turn a switch on, when they get on stage and start to sing, the voice that comes out of them is just magical.”

Of course, it doesn’t hurt that Benjamin has been watching his father perform for years. Michael’s resume includes Phantom in *Phantom of the Opera*, Scarpia in *Tosca*, Ford in *Falstaff*, Marcello in *La Bohème*, and Porgy and Jake in *Porgy and Bess*. He’s performed with many major and regional opera houses and orchestras in the United States and abroad.

“Watching my dad gives me that push and that drive to do what he does,” Benjamin said.

Still, despite having talent and connections in the opera

The Chicago Tribune, in a review of the Lyric’s *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, said Benjamin’s portrayal of Char’es Baby was “movingly rendered.”

world, it’s not always easy for an opera singer at any age, much less a child, to land a principal role like Char’es Baby. As Stamps describes it, there are more opportunities for professional basketball players than there are principal roles at the country’s five major opera houses.

So, how did Benjamin, a sixth-grader at the School for the Creative and Performing Arts in Lexington, win his role

in *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*? First, at Stamps’ urging, he auditioned for the part in the original production at New York’s Metropolitan Opera. But because it was during the COVID pandemic and he was too young to have the required vaccinations, he had to drop out of the running.

Then, when the Lyric Opera of Chicago started auditions for *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, Stamps got a call to see if he’d be interested in the role there. She said the music conductor at the Metropolitan Opera remembered Benjamin’s New York audition and had recommended him.

The Lyric was so impressed with him, Stamps added, that he didn’t even have to audition again.

While in Chicago, Benjamin’s grandmother, Carol Preacely, was his chaperone, although Michael and his wife, LeTicia, also spent time with him. His brothers Joshua and Jayce Bryson likewise visited and took in his performances.

To make sure he kept up with his school work, Benjamin was tutored privately during the more than a month he was away.

“It’s just been a wonderful transition,” Michael said. “I think he’s growing and his concept of voice is evolving because his voice is constantly changing so his experiences are changing.”

What’s next for Benjamin, who described his Chicago experience as “thrilling”? There are a few things in the works, Stamps said. But for sure “the sky’s the limit for him.”

Benjamin Preacely wasn’t the only UK connection to the Lyric Opera of Chicago’s production of *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*. Four UK opera alumni were also featured: Kenneth Hamilton, Reginald Smith Jr., La’Shelle Allen, and Christopher Kenney.

***Fire Shut Up in My Bones* is a three-act English-language opera based on the memoir of the same name by New York Times columnist Charles M. Blow. The libretto tells the poignant story about a young man’s journey to overcome a life of trauma and hardship. Benjamin Preacely played Char’es Baby, Blow’s 7-year-old self.**

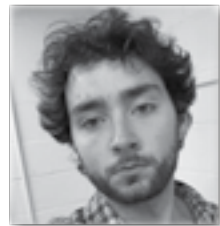
Summer Festivals Represent 'Next Level' for Students

Every year, thousands of voice students audition to take part in summer festivals and programs around the world. They give students the opportunity to perform publicly, said Everett McCorvey, director of the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre. "This is the next level for them."

Here's a look at some of the UK students who won summer roles and the programs they'll take part in:



Wagner Pástor – Third-year doctoral student Wagner Pástor, from Quito Ecuador, will appear in the Cincinnati Opera's Summer Festival. He will perform in the chorus for *La Bohème* (June 18, 23, and 25); *The Pirates of Penzance* (July 7, 8, and 10); and *Aida* (July 22, 26, 29, and 31). "I'll be singing in two of my dream operas and networking with some of the best people in the performing business."



Harrison Hancock – Junior Harrison Hancock, from Lexington, will appear in the American Institute of Musical Studies' Summer Programs in Graz, Austria. He will be in recitals and concerts singing German Lieder, dates yet to be determined. "I'm so excited to travel out of the country for the first time and also to be immersed in Lieder and Austrian culture for six weeks. I know this program will truly help me grow."



Parker Van Houten – Fifth-year senior Parker Van Houten is currently in Charleston, South Carolina, performing in the Spoleto Festival. The season, which lasts till June 12, consists of *La Bohème* and a world premiere work by Rhiannon Giddons called *Omar*. In between, the festival chorus will perform two individual choral concerts. "Being selected as the youngest participant as an inaugural fellow with the Spoleto Festival is beyond my wildest dreams. I cannot wait to learn from experts and professionals in the industry."



Houston Tyrrell – Louisville native Houston Tyrrell, a graduate student, will perform in the Cincinnati Opera's Summer Festival. He'll perform as Parpignol and cover Rodolfo in *La Bohème* (June 18, 23, and 25); The Messenger in *Aida* (July 22, 26, 29,

and 31); and Pirate in *Pirates of Penzance* (July 7, 8, and 10). "The experiences that I will have, the people that I will meet, and the things I will learn about the craft will be invaluable."



Marquita Richardson – Pottstown, Pennsylvania, native Marquita Richardson will perform at the Chautauqua Opera Conservatory in Chautauqua, New York, this summer. She'll cover roles and sing in the chorus for *The Mother of Us All* (July 30) and *The House on Mango Street* (Aug. 12). "Joining the Chautauqua Summer Conservatory is an opportunity to learn from renowned teachers and artists, to expand my horizons as a relatively new artist myself, and to connect with a different community through art."



Jessica Bayne – Soon-to-be doctoral student Jessica Bayne, from Christiansburg, Virginia, will perform July 27-28 and Aug. 2-3 at the Bay View Music Festival in Petoskey, Michigan. "It is a beautiful opportunity to be reminded why I fell in love with performance in the first place."



Jeffrey Todd – Doctoral candidate Jeffrey Todd, from Salisbury, Maryland, will perform Marcello in *La Bohème* at the Bay View Music Festival in Petoskey, Michigan. "As the performance industry is slowly rising from the ashes of COVID-19, the opportunity I have been given as a scholarship recipient and principal artist at Bay View Summer Music Festival affirms my aspirations of being a professional vocalist."



Clement Baloyi – Upcoming summer engagements for graduate student Clement Baloyi include his Wolf Trap Opera (Vienna, Virginia) debut as Elder McLean in *Susannah* (Aug. 12, 14, and 20), Ottokar in *Der Freischütz* (June 18, 24, and 26), and the reprisal cover role of Germont in *La Traviata* (July 15). "I am very excited about the opportunity to be joining the Wolf Trap Opera this summer. I am looking forward to meeting new talented colleagues and mentors and making connections."



Message From the President: W. Harry Clarke

The pandemic has brought serious challenges to the arts through the past two years, and you and I have missed the indescribable joy that the arts bring to our lives. The University of Kentucky Opera Theatre program has been impacted as well, but because of its residual strength and the support and creative solutions of the faculty and its director, Everett McCorvey, the program remained strong. OperaLex has been using this time to make structural changes that will make our support for the UKOT program even more effective, with bright new ideas in place.

The new OperaLex website is taking form, with the experts at Trifecta matching our informational materials with new creative techniques, color, pictures, and videos, to make this truly an outstanding representation of OperaLex and UKOT. In addition, expect to see a great deal more use of social media as we advertise and promote our mission.

If you have been sending your support of OperaLex and the UK Opera Theatre program through Bravo Guild the last few years, thank you! Your support is greatly appreciated, and I know that Everett, the voice faculty, and our wonderful opera students are extremely grateful. But soon we will change that process to a new concept of OperaLex Membership, where your membership dues will be sent directly to OperaLex. This improved process will still include several levels, from the most affordable level to higher ones that generate increasingly greater support. The service aspect of Bravo Guild will continue under the new and more descriptive label of OperaLex Volunteers. Therein lies the key to your opportunity to personally serve the faculty and students of UKOT. On the membership form you will be able to indicate not only your level of membership and financial contribution, but also your willingness to become more involved through personal service. Your service would directly impact the UK opera program, through continued and expanded ways to lend a hand, under the direction of the leadership team of OperaLex Volunteers. Look for OperaLex Membership applications later this spring. We need your support.

The OperaLex Board of Directors has been working diligently on our always spectacular *Encore!*, now scheduled for Friday, Oct. 21, at the newly recreated and absolutely beautiful ballroom at the Campbell House. We have found this site to be perfect for the *Grand Night* of wonderful food and wine, with marvelous UK Opera Theatre performances from Broadway to your favorite arias, accompanied by members of the renowned UK symphony orchestra. But that's not the end of your evening...join your friends and finish the evening with dancing to the beat of a UK dance band. All I can say is, "What an evening!" Tickets will go on sale soon, and sponsorships are available.

We appreciate YOU!

ON BOARD

SPOTLIGHT ON OPERALEX BOARD MEMBERS

In each issue of BravoLex, we feature three of OperaLex's dedicated board members.



LESLIE ANN ASBURY

Leslie Ann Asbury has been an ear, nose and throat physician with Georgetown Community Hospital and LifePoint Health since completing her residency in 2012. Her decision to pursue a career in ENT was partially influenced by growing up as a singer and cellist in her hometown of Maysville. Although small, Maysville was rich in performance opportunities and a community commitment to the arts.

Asbury is married to Jeremy Ashby, a local chef and restaurateur, and they have two children – Eliza, 12, and Fields, 9. She served on the board of the Lexington Children's Theatre for six years and is currently on the Junior League of Lexington Horse Show Board. She enjoys saddlebred horses in her free time.



LESLIE SMART

Leslie Smart serves as the president of CHI Saint Joseph Health Foundations, overseeing six separate nonprofits across Kentucky. Although engaged professionally in health care, she has a strong passion for the arts. Her mother, classically trained in piano and voice, sang with the Kentucky Opera. Smart studied classical ballet at the School of American Ballet at Juilliard, the official school of New York City Ballet, and danced with the Louisville Ballet.

Smart moved to Lexington in 2019 with her husband, John, who is a jazz drummer. She is a Lexington Rotarian and serves on the board for Leadership Kentucky, Downtown Lexington Partnership, New Opportunity School for Women, and the Fund for the Arts. She has two grown children, Charles and Emily.



F. DOUGLAS SCUTCHFIELD

F. Douglas Scutchfield was the initial incumbent in the Peter P. Bosomworth Professorship in Health Services Research and Policy at the University of Kentucky, where he received his medical degree. He held faculty appointments in the College of Public Health and the College of Medicine, where he is now emeritus. He currently serves as a Faculty Fellow in the Lewis Honors College at UK.

Scutchfield holds fellowships in both the American College of Preventive Medicine and the American Academy of Family Practice. He holds honorary doctoral degrees from Eastern Kentucky University and the University of Pikeville. He has held many national positions in professional organizations, including president of the American College of Preventive Medicine.

The Alltech Vocal Scholarship Winners

The Alltech Vocal Scholarship Competition – held in March this year – gave 11 talented students the opportunity to pursue their operatic ambitions and receive an education in the arts at the University of Kentucky. Voice Professor Michael Preacely, who coordinated the contest for UK, said the competition was fierce. "The students made it very difficult for the judges to choose winners," he said.

GRADUATE AWARDS

Alltech 1st Place Graduate Award + Graduate Assistantship: **Daniel Rich**
 Alltech 2nd Place Graduate Award + Graduate Assistantship: **Christopher Burchett**
 Pearse & Deidre Lyons Award 3rd Place Graduate Award (Half Assistantship): **Jessica Bayne**
 Graduate Encouragement Award: **Blayne Ziegenfuss**
 Gail Robinson Alumni Performance Award: **Fairynne Rogers**

UNDERGRADUATE AND TRANSFER AWARDS

Alltech 1st Place Undergraduate Award & Scholarship: **Saige Hoffman**
 Alltech & Bryant's Rent-All 2nd Place Award & Scholarship: **Glorie Nell Wood**
 Alltech Feed Division 3rd Place Undergraduate Award: **Calista Case**
 Alltech Crop Science Undergraduate Award: **Dejah Watts**
 Barbara Rouse Kentucky Prize: **Isabella Recktenwald**
 1st Place Transfer Student Award: **Dylon Crain**

TalkingwithTedrin

Tedrin's Recording Corner #44

By Tedrin Blair Lindsay

Several people have mentioned to me how much they appreciated my column about art song recordings in the last newsletter, so I thought I would follow that up with another art song treasure trove, this time featuring classic American works.

Probably the greatest American composer of art songs was Samuel Barber, whose many contributions to the genre spanned his entire career. He had superb eclectic taste in poetry, and both his vocal and piano writing were world-class, resulting in such masterpieces as the song cycles *Hermit Songs* and *Despite and Still*, and some beloved individual songs like "Sure On This Shining Night," "O Boundless, Boundless Evening," and "Nuvoletta," the latter setting an extended portion of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Many artists have recorded Barber songs, but my go-to traversal of the complete songs, under the title *Secrets of the Old*, is sung by Thomas Hampson and Cheryl Studer, with the legendary John Browning, for whom Barber wrote his Pulitzer Prize-winning piano concerto, at the keyboard. This 1992 collection even includes Barber's setting of Matthew Arnold's *Dover Beach* for singer and string quartet. I have enjoyed countless hours listening to this two-disc set (Deutsche Grammophon D 203-205).

Aaron Copland shares first-rank American composer status with Barber but wrote far fewer art songs. Fortunately, the ones that this "Dean of American Composers" did commit to paper are glorious exemplars both of the art form and of Americana in classical music. His two five-song sets of *Old American Songs* transformed familiar folk tunes into stunning new arrangements, while his *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson* set some of the great author's most well-known poems to unforgettably effective music. Copland himself orchestrated all of the *Old American Songs* and eight of the Dickinson songs, and as much as I love playing the wonderful piano parts, the orchestrated versions with Thomas Hampson (again) and Dawn Upshaw are my favorites for listening. This beautifully produced 1994 recording also features a suite from Copland's ballet *Billy the Kid* for good measure. (Teldec 5181771)

The most important and wide-ranging body of American



art songs, however, emanated from the pen of the iconoclastic Charles Ives, who basically wrote whatever he wanted with no care for publication or what anyone else would think of it. Thus, one of the most original geniuses in music history challenged and changed every genre in which he composed. Famously, he self-published 114 of his songs, which vary from the simplest doggerel to almost unperformable creations of staggering complexity. The great American soprano Roberta Alexander and her Dutch pianist Tan Crone recorded 54 of them in two volumes dated 1984 and 1989, and they have never been equaled. Their attention to every detail in Ives' heavily annotated scores served by their absolutely exquisite singing and playing resulted in definitive renditions of their chosen repertoire. These remarkable recordings have been rereleased on the Etcetera Digital label (KTC 1020 and 1068).

Finally, one of our alumni, Nicholas Provenzale, who was a star of our program during his graduate work at UK Opera, has recently released an album of songs by the lovely, lyrical American composer Ernest Charles. He and his pianist Terry Klinefelter offer a generous program of 24 songs, beautifully performed. I must say that this material is perfect for Nick, and we are all so proud of his wonderful professional accomplishment with this recording (Albany Records TROY 1895).

Enjoy a springtime and summer full of song!



Publisher: Operalex
Editor: Terri McLean
Copy editor: Sylvia Davis
Designer: May May Barton
Summer 2022, Vol. 21, No. 3
P.O. Box 8463
Lexington, KY 40533-8463

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