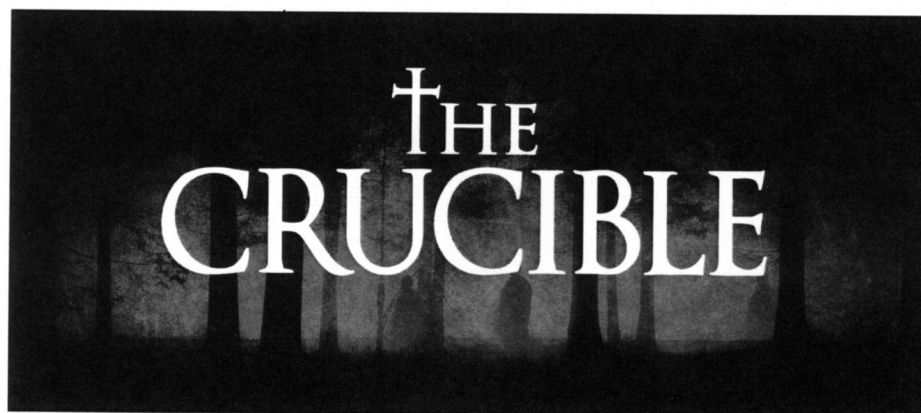


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OPERALEX.ORG

SPRING 2021



THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM

The Crucible takes the virtual stage in April

The University of Kentucky Opera Theatre's production of *The Crucible* will go on ... finally. After being canceled twice for the COVID pandemic, the concert will be recorded April 9 and 10, for a release date to be determined.

"*The Crucible* has been on the books for three semesters, and we feel like we need to do it before this crop of students leaves because they are the ones that prepared for this," said UKOT Director Everett McCorvey.

UKOT will have to recast a few roles, McCorvey said, but for the most part the original cast will perform. They will be in masks, and they will be accompanied by a small chamber orchestra instead of a full orchestra as originally planned.

Nevertheless, McCorvey said, "I think the most important thing about *The Crucible* is that it's a powerful story, which the audience will still be able to get."

You will be able to watch the production on the UK School of Music website, <https://finearts.uky.edu/opera> and UKOT's YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/user/UKOperaTheatre>.

ABOUT THE CRUCIBLE

In 1792-1793, more than 200 townspeople of Salem, Massachusetts, were accused of witchcraft, in most cases by teenaged girls. Thirty of them were convicted, and 14 women and five men were hanged.

Another man, Giles Corey, found himself caught in a trap. If he pled innocent, he would without doubt be convicted, upon which his property would be seized by the government. If he confessed, his property would still be seized by the government. He refused to plead at all, in order to save his family from poverty, and was tortured by having heavier and heavier stones piled upon his body to force him to do so. He died, still defiant, an extreme model for anyone caught in a similar trap, particularly one set up by the authorities and fueled by mob violence.

In the play *The Crucible*, written by Arthur Miller in 1953, and the opera, written by

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UKOT alums provide updates on life, work during pandemic

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Professor Cynthia Lawrence creates masks in her home "laboratory."

The Masked Singer(s)

Voice professor's mask creations popular among students, community

Helping singers perfect their technique is Cynthia Lawrence's vocation. Helping singers perfect their technique during a pandemic has become her avocation. The University of Kentucky voice professor is making masks so singers can continue to sing – and sing well – during the time of COVID.

The masks, designed to reduce the particle emissions associated with singing and at the same time create as little interference as possible with sound production, have quickly become must-have items among local singers. Already, from her "laboratory" at home, she has made masks for the students in her own studio, other students in the UK School of Music, and a variety of singers from the community, nearly 400 in total.

"Her masks have become very popular – everybody wants to purchase them," said Everett McCorvey, UK Opera Theatre

director.

Lawrence created the design for her masks and began making them in mass quantities, but not because there were no singers' masks already on the market. In fact, the UK School of Music bought one type of mask for all its vocal students. But the masks – large, heavily wired creations that fit tightly to the face – restricted the singers' mouths and breathing and were not very comfortable, she said.

"I found that some of the singers were really struggling. The really unfortunate thing is when the singers are singing in a mask that limits their movements, they feel constrained and they feel unable to stretch when they need to or open their mouths, particularly for high notes," she added.

Plus, as McCorvey said, because those masks stuck out about

4 or 5 inches from the mouth they looked like a “duck bill.”

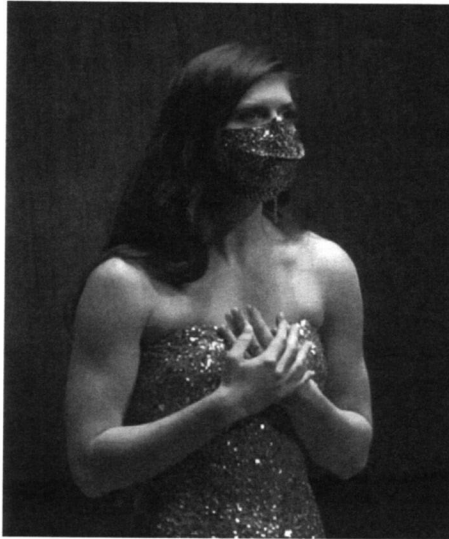
So Lawrence, a lifelong seamstress, thought, “Hang on a minute, I can make these.”

Modifying a design she found online, Lawrence created her own pattern and then plotted how to put it together. She said creating the masks is a bit like creating origami, the Japanese art of folding paper into decorative shapes.

“I start from a flat square of fabric, cut, and then fold and shape the mask so it fits comfortably and stays in place,” she said.

Lawrence’s masks are similar to other singers’ masks in that they “bow” across the face, which creates room for singers to breathe and articulate. Hers, though, only stick out about 1 to 2 inches with a stabilizer – enough to give singers’ breath particles time to be captured while also keeping the masks “out of their mouths” when they breathe in.

Her creations are also a little wider, taller, and more tapered to fit the face, and they feature double or triple layers of fabric for the utmost safety. More importantly, she uses elastic that has a silicone band on the bridge of the nose



Student Sydney Carbo chose a Lawrence mask for the Fall Opera Gala.

and cheeks to keep the masks from slipping up and down.

“Without the elastic and silicone, the singers are constantly having to readjust their masks,” she said.

While black remains the most popular color among singers, Lawrence has added an element of creativity to her mask-making by using colorful fabrics and a little “bling.” In the lead up to the UK Opera Theatre’s Fall Opera Gala, she took requests from women to use fabric that matched their gowns and, in several

cases, added such things as sequins and lace. Many men also requested masks beyond the basic tuxedo black. “Oddly enough, a lot of men requested a gold sequined mask,” she said.

“I love the fun colors and fabrics that Professor Lawrence has to offer,” said Kelsey Loeslie, a doctoral candidate in vocal performance. “There aren’t other singing masks on the market that offer so many options.”

Because of the popularity of the masks among UK’s singers, word has gotten out to singers in the community and beyond. She has been commissioned by a high school in Lexington, a Berea College men’s group, and the American Spiritual Ensemble to make masks for their singers. An instrumentalist group also has asked her to make masks with zippers to allow members to be safe while playing wind instruments.

Lawrence’s masks should sell for \$30 or \$40, considering the hours of labor she puts into them. But she only charges \$10 apiece to cover her costs. It’s a labor of love, she said.

“I love sewing and I love the creative aspect of it ... I just love making them.”

-Terri McLean

The Crucible

From Page 1

Robert Ward in 1961 for a commission by the New York City Opera, the victim is called John Proctor, but Giles Corey’s case resonates with Miller’s theme, the McCarthy trials of the 1950s. Miller himself had refused to name suspected Communists in the theater and film worlds and was convicted of contempt of Congress. If he had given the names, he would have considered it not just a betrayal of friends and colleagues, but of himself and his principles as well.

In *The Crucible*, John Proctor is accused by his bitter former mistress; her accusation is believed because Proctor does not accept the culture and rules of the Puritan religious/governmental establishment. He is pressured to name other “witches” and refuses to do so. At one point, he signs

a confession but then tears it up. In prison, he struggles to discover what decision will allow him to be true to himself, to “find his goodness,” as his wife says. There is no easy way out of the trap, but there might be a righteous one.

Ward’s operatic version of *The Crucible* won both the 1962 Pulitzer Prize for Music and the New York Music Critics Circle Citation. There are several good sources for learning more about the history of the Salem witch trials, but I highly recommend these: *The Salem Witch Trials: A Day-by-Day Chronicle of a Community Under Siege*, by Marilyn K. Roach, uses many documents from the historical record and is available from Amazon in several formats. I would highly recommend as well *Three Sovereigns for Sarah*, a TV miniseries from 2005, starring Vanessa Redgrave as one of three sisters tried for witchcraft. The dialogue is based on the actual transcripts from the trials, and the performances are first-rate.

- Dorothy Carter

CATCHING UP... WITH UKOT ALUMS DURING THE PANDEMIC

As with all the performance arts, the COVID pandemic has wreaked havoc on the opera industry. Whole seasons have been canceled, tours postponed, and careers put on hold. After all, as one industry official told *The New York Times*, "Social distancing and grand opera cannot go together."

Among those impacted, of course, are the singers themselves – the men and women who pride themselves on being adaptive under normal circumstances and now find themselves called to an even higher standard.

A few University of Kentucky Opera Theatre alums took time to update us on how they have been impacted during this challenging time and how they've managed to look to what they hope is a brighter future.

MONICA DEWEY

Monica Dewey, who won an Alltech award in 2008 and studied voice, arts administration, and German at UK from 2008-2012, said the pandemic has been "devastating" – especially when her debut at the Metropolitan Opera was canceled.



But the soprano has turned her attention to other pursuits. She has done several virtual Q&As for high school and college students. She has contributed videos for fundraisers and virtual opera nights. And most recently, she and her partner –whom she credits for "lifting me up every day" – started a recording studio in New York City that allows artists to make low-cost or no-cost videos for auditions.

"We served over 200 artists in three months," she said. "It was wonderful to see opera continue to thrive and to experience artists making live music again."

In the next few months, Dewey has a few auditions and virtual competitions she will participate in. "I have a concert in Germany that was postponed to this summer, so I'm hoping that will be possible. Who knows? I have faith that there will be opportunities on the horizon."

MARY-HOLLIS HUNDLEY

The pandemic has "changed every single aspect" of life for soprano Mary Hollis-Hundley. The 2011 UK graduate, who double majored in voice and arts administration, said it was particularly difficult when her "dream come true" debut with the Metropolitan

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Opera was canceled due to the pandemic. She was also supposed to be debuting with the Glimmerglass Festival in Cooperstown, New York, last summer, but it was canceled as well.



Nevertheless, she, too, has found ways to stay busy and to further her career at the same time.

"I have always held an arts admin position in conjunction with my performances and have been trying to bolster that résumé during this time by volunteering with the Seattle Symphony (development project),

Bronx Opera (grant officer), and Soloist Coalition (secretary of the Soloist Coalition Young Artists)," she explained.

She is also looking toward the future, although cautiously. "It's hard to talk about what is coming up, since there is a fear that it may all be canceled once again ... but I hope to be returning to the Glimmerglass Festival in a new season, debuting as the-soprano soloist in *Messiah* with the Santa Fe Symphony, and finally going on my first audition tour abroad."

Hundley has been inspired by her colleagues throughout the industry. "I continue to be in awe of my friends' talent and tenacity, and I can't wait until we can get back to creating music in the way that drew us to this artform in the first place - in person."

BLAKE DENSON

Blake Denson, a 2018 UK graduate, has been "very blessed to be working and growing in my career" during the pandemic. Though it hasn't been easy, the baritone credits his Christian faith with that positive outlook.

"The thing that keeps me going during this trying time is 110 percent the Lord. I have made it my mission in life to serve the Lord no matter what comes or what goes. I believe that in this time of my life my purpose is to be in opera," he said.



Denson, who majored in voice and arts administration while at UK, is finishing up his first year as a studio artist with the Houston Grand Opera. He has also "been fortunate" to have worked the past summer with Wolf Trap Opera, a summer residency program of the Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts in Virginia.

And the future? He has several competitions coming up. They will either be virtual or in-person with COVID safety protocols in place. After his time in Houston is complete, Denson plans to become a contracted opera singer.

"I just walk daily and ask the Lord to direct my path."

REGINALD SMITH JR.

With the pandemic postponing or canceling his scheduled performances last year, Reginald Smith Jr. turned his attention back to the classroom. The baritone, an Alltech scholar who completed one bachelor's degree in vocal performance in December 2012 and another in choral music education a year later, returned to his alma mater UK to work toward a master's degree in vocal performance.

"Like so many of my fellow alumni and colleagues, we have all been home, unemployed during this pandemic," he said. "It has truly been a trying time for many of us in the performing arts arena."

But, he added, "I've been fortunate to mostly focus on my education during the pandemic."

Smith did have a couple of things on his schedule last fall. "I recorded a concert during with Cincinnati Opera and diva-beloved soprano Angela Brown. That concert should be streaming on their digital platform through March 21. Likewise, the performances of Pagliacci with the Atlanta Opera from this fall are now streaming on their digital platform," he said.

He has also taken the time to continue some of his other pursuits, including teaching master classes and mentoring young people.

MARKEL REED

When the pandemic first started and everything shut down, Markel Reed "slipped into a dark depression."

"Having just made the shift to full-time performing in NYC, where I now live, I saw most of my work canceled or postponed with no income for the foreseeable future," he said.

And as the first few months progressed, Reed, a baritone who attended University of Kentucky as a transfer student from 2007-2013, said that he had to work hard to find purpose in learning music or singing.



"I only had one gig that was not cancelled due to its isolated nature; but rather it was rebranded and presented as a socially distant event presenting excerpts from the opera *Tom-Tom* composed by Shirley Graham Du Bois wife to W.E.B. Du Bois,

with Caramoor Festival. This was critical to my finding focus to learn and develop myself, in spite of not having immediate application."

Shortly thereafter, "I was contacted to play in a show that was composed during the pandemic and specifically created to be performed live through Zoom entitled *Fortune's Children* with Hartford Opera Theater," he said.

Reed also was "blessed" to find a few artist funds that provided financial assistance. "Thank God for them," he said.

Currently, he is preparing new projects that will be presented over the next few months, including a feature film production of an opera produced in collaboration with four regional companies and a virtual recital.

- Terri McLean

OPERA 101**(OPERALEX LECTURE SERIES)****DR. TEDRIN BLAIR LINDSAY,
INSTRUCTOR****Spring 2021 Schedule – Operatic
Voices in Combination**

Having explored the seven main operatic voice types last fall, we will continue by examining how great opera composers have used these voices in combination:

SATURDAY APRIL 3

Same-Gender Opera Duets

SATURDAY APRIL 10

Opposite-Gender Opera Duets

SATURDAY APRIL 17

Opera Trios

SATURDAY APRIL 24

Opera Quartets

SATURDAY MAY 1

Opera Ensembles

SATURDAY MAY 8

Opera Choruses

All sessions, approximately an hour in length, will drop on the OperaLex YouTube channel at 11:15 on these Saturday mornings, and will remain available thereafter. There is no fee for accessing the videos, but your generous contribution to OperaLex or UK Opera Theatre will be greatly appreciated! Send to P.O. Box 8463, Lexington, KY 40533-8463.

ON BOARD

SPOTLIGHT ON OPERALEX BOARD MEMBERS

In each issue of BravoLex, we will feature three of OperaLex's dedicated board members. This issue: Jan Furst, Wolfgang Korsch, and Cheryl Lalonde.



JAN FURST

Jan Furst is a proud Hoosier, born and raised in southern Indiana and a graduate of Hanover College. After college she moved to upstate New York where she began working as director of Christian education at the Dansville Presbyterian Church and later as a teacher in the Dansville elementary school. It was while in New York that she met and married Richard (Dick) Furst.

After a few years in New York, the Fursts moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where Dick completed his graduate degree at Washington University and Jan worked in the university's development office. After four years in St. Louis, it was off to Columbia, South Carolina, for 12 years. Then in August of 1981 the Fursts moved to Lexington and Dick began his tenure as dean of the University of Kentucky's College of Business and Economics. The Fursts are the parents of two daughters, Pam and Stacie, and have six grandchildren.

Dick Furst was a member of the Lexington Opera Society, now OperaLex, until his death in 2012 and was dedicated to supporting and promoting the mission of OperaLex and Dr. Everett McCorvey. With the enthusiasm for UKOT that she

shared with her husband, Furst was pleased to have the opportunity to continue that support and joined the board in 2014. She has been serving as its secretary since 2016.



DR. WOLFGANG KORSCH

Dr. Wolfgang Korsch was born in the central part of the former West Germany, and he attended a high school with a focus on arts, especially music, classic languages, and sciences – a real “humanistisches Gymnasium.” Although Korsch has always been fascinated by classical music, his main interest is science.

Growing up, he played the trumpet in a few brass ensembles and in the local high school orchestra. After graduating from high school and one year of military service, he enrolled as a physics major at the Philipps-University of Marburg, one of the 10 oldest universities of Germany. Following his undergraduate studies, he pursued a doctorate in nuclear physics at a Max-Planck-Institute in Heidelberg. At the end of his doctoral studies, he met Dr. Susan Gardner, whom he married in 1998.

After receiving his doctorate, Korsch was a research scientist at MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and at Caltech in Pasadena, California, for a few years before joining the physics faculty at the University of Kentucky in 1996.

The Korsch family enjoys living in Lexington,

and both are enthusiastic fans of the UK Opera Theatre program. He said he is proud to serve as a board member of OperaLex. Whenever time permits, he loves to ride his bicycle, and he participates regularly in organized bike rides, which are a “great way of enjoying Kentucky's beautiful natural scenery.”



CHERYL LALONDE

Cheryl Lalonde has served as a board member of OperaLex since 2019. She is honored to contribute to this organization that seeks to elevate appreciation of opera, primarily through support of the opera program at the University of Kentucky.

Lalonde has raised seven children, but it was her youngest son who brought the musical notoriety of UK to her attention, as he is pursuing a bachelor of fine arts in vocal music. After living in the community for much of her life, she was delighted to learn that UK's music program is as much a gem as its basketball program.

Lalonde is an attorney. She works as a pharmacy clinical adviser lead at Humana. Prior to her current employment she had a long career in state government as general counsel for the Kentucky Board of Pharmacy and an assistant attorney general.

She loves to cook, travel, write, and socialize with friends and family.

TalkingwithTedrin

Tedrin's Recording Corner #40

By Dr. Tedrin Blair Lindsay

Many critics and connoisseurs consider Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (1865) the best opera ever written. That point is debatable, but it's certainly one of the longest and, indeed, one of the most beautiful. It's easy to get lost in the glorious vocalism, the lush orchestration, and the dramatic story about a doomed but sublime love affair, unfolding inexorably over the course of more than four hours.

The standard recording of the work is the 1966 performance from the Bayreuth Festival starring arguably the greatest Wagnerian soprano of them all, Birgit Nilsson, and legendary heldentenor Wolfgang Windgassen, as the title characters. Conducted by Karl Böhm, many consider this the gold standard for the work, with stiff competition from Herbert von Karajan's 1972 traversal leading the Berlin Philharmonic, which features Helga Dernesch (not as good as Nilsson) and Jon Vickers (better than Windgassen) as the lovers. Both recordings feature the redoubtable mezzo Christa Ludwig as Isolde's companion Brangäne, while Tristan's manservant Kurwenal is sung by baritone Eberhard Waechter for Böhm and Walter Berry for Karajan.

And yet, neither of those classic recordings is my first or even second choice. I admire the thrilling work Daniel Barenboim coaxed from the Berlin Philharmonic in 1995, and even more the incisive characterization and amazing, huge singing by Waltraud Meier and Siegfried Jerusalem in the title roles, with Marjana Lipovšek and Falk Struckman as their cohorts. Jerusalem is particularly strong as Tristan, and yet my favorite is the German heldentenor, who later in his career transitioned to rock star, Peter Hofmann – his stunning, stentorian performance is beautifully complemented by the most lovely, feminine-sounding Isolde of the lot, and my preferred Wagnerian soprano, Hildegard Behrens. I find their performances the most compelling, thanks in no small part to the absolutely brilliant interpretation by conductor Leonard Bernstein, whose rendition of practically any opera or symphonic work is automatically the most extroverted dramatic reading out there: I can in fact think of no exceptions! In this case, his work with the Bayerischen Rundfunk from Munich in 1983, is simply gorgeous, everything one could want from this most orchestrally conceived of operas. Yvonne Minton and Bernd Weikl fill the secondary roles to perfection as well. This is my go-to recording of the work, although I enjoy all four of these traversals enormously.



The other main role in *Tristan und Isolde* is the inadvertently wronged monarch König Marke. The basses portraying this role in these four recordings present a fine cross-section of the leading low voices of the second half of the 20th century – Martti Talvela (Böhm), Karl Ridderbusch (Karajan), Matti Salminen (Barenboim), and Hans Sotin (Bernstein) – although none of them equals the live performance I heard from René Pape at the Metropolitan Opera in the early 2000s. Even with Jane Eaglen and Ben Heppner as the tragic lovers, Pape stole the show, and when the relatively small part of King Mark upstages everyone else, you know he was superlatively outstanding!

Any one of these recordings will provide many hours of listening pleasure. It's easy to get immersed in this opera, and, clearly, I need at least four renditions to satisfy my mania for this masterpiece. Perhaps you will, too!

(Product details:

Böhm – Deutsche Grammophon 449772-2

Von Karajan – Angel EMI CDMD 7 69319 2

Barenboim – Teldec D-297229

Bernstein – Philips 438 241-2)

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