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OPERALEX.ORG

WINTER 2020



WITCH HUNT

The Crucible: The cost of intolerance

The Crucible

Where: Singletary
Center for the Arts, UK
campus

When: April 3, 4 at 7:30
p.m.; April 5 at 2 p.m.

Tickets: Call
859.257.4929

or visit
www.SCFATickets.com

More on Page 5

Dr. Lindsay's pre-
performance talks on
the opera

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.

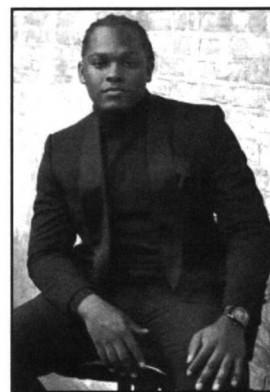
Another man, Giles Corey, found himself caught in a trap: if he pled innocent, he would without doubt be convicted, upon which his property would be seized by the government. If he confessed, his property would still be seized. He refused to plead at all, in order to save his family from poverty, and 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, one set up by the authorities and fueled by mob violence.

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

See Page 4

MONICA DEWEY

Opera News spotlight
on UK grad **Page 2**



MET WINNER

Blake Denson won on
the Met stage **Page 3**

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Opera News

Monica Dewey

Intelligence and humor

UKOT alum Monica Dewey's big year, interview

It's been quite a year for UKOT alumna Monica Dewey. In spring 2019 she was a National Semi-Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, went on to perform Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro* at Opera Theatre of St. Louis to critical acclaim, and then to the Met to cover Poppea in *Agrippina* this spring before reprising Susanna in April for Montana's Intermountain Opera.

She was also the featured singer in *Opera News'* Sound Bites earlier this year, which said her conversation, like her singing, is "cool, clear, brimming with intelligence and charged with humor."

Excerpts from the interview with Dewey, who earned BAs in vocal performance and arts administration from UK in 2012:

A Georgia native, Dewey attracted serious attention during the seasons she spent at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, where her roles included Mozart's Servilia (2017).

.... "Saint Louis offered Susanna first, and that was so exciting that I couldn't breathe. And then Regina, with that incredible cast! But I didn't feel intimidated, because they were all so warm and welcoming from

day one. I had my first rehearsal with Susan Graham, and my heart was in my throat. And when we were done, she turned to me and said, 'Lunch?' And I said, 'Oh. Yeah. Yessssss. I'd like that.' So we had lunch."

Dewey followed up Regina with an unusually peripatetic 2018–19 season, which brought her to Cologne Opera for First Niece in *Peter Grimes*, Michigan Opera Theatre for *Cunegonde* and Sacramento Philharmonic for her first Gilda in *Rigoletto*....

Asked to classify her voice type, Dewey demurs. "You could say I'm a lyric soprano with an extension, but I'm still studying every day and discovering things about my voice, which is still a work in progress. The really cool thing about this career is that you have to be open to doing the work.... That's one of the many things I love about opera. It requires quality time — quality time to learn it, appreciate it and live with it. And in a time when society seems obsessed with convenience and speed, doing things that require quality time is good for your soul."

"I'm still
... discovering
things about
my voice"

APPLAUSE!

NEWS TO CLAP ABOUT

UK Singers Gain at Met Auditions

At the Metropolitan District Auditions in Lexington last November UKOT student Kendra Faith Beasley, a 2018 Encouragement Award Winner at the Alltech Auditions, won the Gail Robinson Encouragement Award and the \$500 bequest that accompanies it.

Two UKOT alumni moved forward in Met Auditions in other regions. Countertenor Key'mon W. Murrah (B.A. Arts Administration and Voice, 2017) advanced in the Southeast Region and baritone Blake Denson (B.M. Music, 2018) in the Midwest Region (see story below).

From math to music, now the Met

UKOT doctoral candidate Makeda Hampton was featured in the January 24 edition of *UKNow*, a newsletter of the University of Kentucky, which focused on her role in the chorus in The Met's production of *Porgy and Bess*, which also included seven UKOT alumni. Hampton, a soprano, previously a math and chemistry major with a music minor, told *UKNow* that she switched after she was cast in a production of *The Magic Flute* in her freshman year of college. She said she came to UK for her doctoral work after winning an Alltech Graduate Scholarship. At UK, she said, "the voice department has an amazing faculty and the program offers so many opportunities to perform."



Kendra Beasley



Key'mon Murrah



Makeda Hampton

Hampton also added that the UK connections made singing at the Met even more special. "Being in a production with so many friends from UK and beyond is very fun. There were times when we could all laugh and joke about specific experiences we had at UK."

UK Singers, Alums recognized at NATS

UKOT students and alumni represented the program well at the Kentucky National Association Teachers of Singing Vocal Competition held at Murray State University in November. Graduate student Gabrielle Fuqua won the Gina Scaggs Epifano Award and alum Brittany Benningfield was the NATS Artist Awards Semi-Finalist. Both are students of Dr. Angelique Clay.

In the Undergraduate Classical category, students of Cynthia Lawrence (Katherine Ivie, Williams Atkinson, Katherine Copeland, Cameron Howard), Catherine Nardolillo and Noemi Lugo (Hailey Wells, Ashton Kidd), Angelique Clay (Casteel Fullen, Ethan Mooney, Ashley Cissell, Catarine Hancock and Ruth Sangster) Dennis Bender (Michael Sudduth) Elizabeth Arnold (Joseph Kingsbury) and Everett McCorvey (Marquita Richardson, Devin Davis, and Nathaniel Thompson) also won various awards.

Graduate Classical winners also included Kendra Beasley (Angelique Clay) and Tevin Vincent (Everett McCorvey). In Musical Theatre, students of Cynthia Lawrence (Copeland) and of Angelique Clay (Ethan Mooney, Sangster and Fuqua) took honors.

Blake Denson made history on the Met stage

Baritone Blake Denson made personal and University of Kentucky Opera Theatre history Sunday March 1 by winning the 2020 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions on the stage of the Met in New York City.



Blake Denson

Denson, a Paducah native, studied with Dennis Bender at UK and graduated in 2018. He is the third UKOT grad to earn this honor, following Gregory Turay in 1995 and Reginald Smith Jr. in 2015, students of Dr. Everett McCorvey.

Denson was one of five singers chosen to receive a \$20,000 prize as well as, according to *Broadway World*, "the prestige and exposure," that comes with a win.

While at UK, audiences saw Denson perform as Joe in UK Opera Theatre's 2018 production of *Show Boat*, as Dottore Grenvil, in the 2017 production of *La Traviata*, and as Future in its 2017 world premiere of *Bounce: The Basketball Opera*.

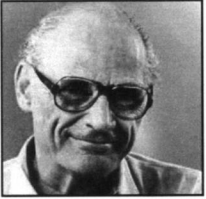
Since graduating, Denson studied at the Houston Grand Opera Young Artist Vocal Academy and is set to finish his master's at Rice University this year. He will join the Houston Grand Opera Studio for the 2020-21 season and return for a second summer at the Wolf Trap.

"Tonight was an absolute dream come true," Denson wrote in a Facebook post after winning. Although born with chronic asthma he sang and won on "the largest, most notorious stage in the world."

The Crucible

From Page 1

1953, and the opera, written by 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 1950's. These hearings, directed by Senator Joseph McCarthy, were based on his accusations that Communist spies had infiltrated the CIA and other government branches,



Arthur Miller

the military, and Hollywood. Prominent figures were called in to testify and were given the choice of naming suspected "Reds" or of becoming suspects themselves. Many careers were ruined before McCarthy was brought down. Miller himself

had refused to name suspected Communists in the theatre 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.

Richard Gammon, the director of the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre production of *The Crucible*, considers the story to be relevant to today. He visited Salem recently to do research and was struck by how the themes of "class struggles, abuse of power, corruption and fame" resonate today. Gammon sees "art as a mirror to society," and is staging this opera to avoid anything that encumbers the story as told through the singing.

Ward's operatic version of *The Crucible* won both the 1962 Pulitzer Prize for Music and the New York Music Critics Circle Citation. Gammon describes Ward's music as "similar in scope to grand opera, while remaining approachable," in the mode of good cinematic music. He recommends that we "listen for soaring vocal lines, lush instrumentation, and heart-wrenching dramatic moments."

There are several good sources for learning more about the history of the Salem witch trials, but I highly recommend *The Salem Witch Trials: A Day-by-Day Chronicle of a Community Under Siege*, by Marilyn K. Roach, uses documents from the historical record and is available from Amazon. I also recommend *Three Sovereigns for Sarah*, a TV mini-series from 2005, starring Vanessa Redgrave as one of three sisters tried for witchcraft. The dialogue is based on the transcripts from the trials and the performances are first-rate. It is available on DVD at the Lexington Public Library.

Dorothy Carter

Alltech: Singers win over \$700,000 to pursue voice studies

Eighteen students competed at the Alltech Vocal Scholarship Competition March 2 for more than \$700,000 in scholarships and prizes and to join the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre.

The winners are:

Undergraduates

Alltech First Place: Jania Gomes-Moniz; Louisville.

Alltech and Bryant's Rent-All Second Place: Harrison Hancock; Lexington.

KPMG Third Place (tie): Kacie Galarce, Miami, Florida. Sophia Baete, Louisville.

Barbara Rouse Kentucky Prize: Luke Dailey, Lexington.

Alltech Encouragement Awards: Mya Barber, Tallahassee, Florida. Liam Anderson, Lakeland, Florida. Theo Harrah, Louisville.

Graduates

Alltech First Place: Christopher Burchett, Lexington.

Alltech Second Place: Erica Gabriel, Southfield, Michigan.

Alltech Third Place: Miguel Angel Ortega Bañales, Berea,

Alltech Gail Robinson Performance Award: Eliana Barwinski, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Alltech Encouragement Awards: Christina Kerstan, Park Hills. Aaron Eaves, Henderson

Alltech's founder, the late Dr. Pearse Lyons, was an avid supporter of the arts. His friendship with Dr. Everett McCorvey inspired the competition in the world. Since the competition began in 2006, more than 160 students have received over \$1.4 million in cash prizes and over \$6.1 million in scholarships and assistantships at UK.

Happenings 2020

April

The Crucible

Where: Singletary Center

When: April 3, 4 at 7:30 p.m., April 5 at 2 p.m.

Cost: Ticketed event

Talks on The Crucible

What: Pre-performance lectures by Dr. Tedrin Blair Lindsay

Where: Gail Robinson Music Library, Schmidt Vocal Arts Center

When: April 3 and 4 at 6:30-7 p.m.

Cost: Free and open to the public

May

Encore! 2020

Where: Keeneland Entertainment Center

When: May 16

Cost: Ticketed event

June

It's a Grand Night for Singing

Where: Singletary Center

When: June 12,13,19,20 at 7:30 p.m.; June 14, 21 at 2 p.m.

Cost: Ticketed event.

In appreciation of Ellen Rice

OperaLex Board Member Ellen Rice died unexpectedly of a heart arrhythmia Sunday, Feb. 2, at the age of 42. Board President Sanford Archer wrote this appreciation of her:

Ellen Rice loved OperaLex. And OperaLex loved Ellen Rice. 'Nuff said? Not really. To everything that Ellen did she gave the proverbial 110%. She joined the OperaLex Board and quickly volunteered to be corresponding



Ms. Rice

secretary and on several committees. Her enthusiasm was infectious, her commitment serious. She envisioned herself as its president in several years and I have no doubt she would have been an excellent choice. She single-handedly obtained more than

80 percent of our silent auction items for *Encore!* and when asked how she did it, she simply replied "I just went in to the business and asked!" I received emails from her two to three times a week regarding ideas on how to make *Encore!* more successful.

It is so tragic to lose someone so young and so good at heart. We mourn for her, her family and friends. One of her family's generous acts at this difficult time was to think about OperaLex in her passing, requesting donations in her memory to OperaLex as well as to the University of Kentucky Libraries. We will miss her, I will certainly miss her. And her emails. May she rest in peace with the angels watching over her and opera music in the background.

It's *Encore!* time! Calling all sponsors!

Encore! 2020, OperaLex's annual fundraiser, will be held on May 16 at Keeneland. The proceeds help support the productions and students of the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre (UKOT), recently rated as one of the country's top 20 university opera training programs.

Table sponsorships are available, beginning at \$1,000 for a half table of four guests. If you know an individual or business who might be interested in becoming an *Encore! 2020* sponsor, please contact OperaLex board member Eli Griggs (eli.griggs@whiting-turner.com).

The event includes a four-course dinner with wine pairings, a silent auction with typically about 100 items and

a live auction during the entertainment portion of the evening. Auction items include entertainment and travel packages as well as specialty items. If you know an individual or business who might be willing to make a donation, please contact Becky Eblen (eblen@windstream.net) who can provide information about OperaLex, UKOT, and *Encore!*, as well as a donation form.

If you receive *Bravo!* regularly, then you are already on our mailing list and will receive an invitation in April. If you do not get the newsletter and would like to, please send your contact information to Becky Eblen (eblen@windstream.net).



The players, left to right: Joshua Logsdon, Joelle Lachance, Gabrielle Barker and Kyle Burney.

Billy goats not so gruff

SOOP is on the road teaching children about opera, life

Young Kentucky students in nine counties are getting a taste of opera this spring through SOOP's (the Schmidt Opera Outreach Program) presentation of *Billy Goats Gruff*.

The 40-minute performance tells the story of three young billy goats who have to deal with a big, difficult billy goat who blocks a bridge on their way home. Ultimately, the kindness of one of the young billy goats – after she inadvertently pushes the bully off the bridge – teaches him the value of kindness. Students are invited to “join our billy goat friends as they teach a bully how to be kind and find friendship.” The operetta is set to music from operas by Mozart, Donizetti, and Rossini adapted by John Davies.

The 2020 cast for *Billy Goats* includes Gabrielle Barker, Kyle Burney, Joelle Lachance and Jeshua Logston with Christina Wagoner director/accompanist, Aaron Chavatal, designer, Janet

Scott, director, Michelle Kelley, outreach program coordinator, and Marc Schlackman, SOOP director.

With the sponsorship of the William E. Schmidt Foundation, SOOP not only tells the stories, but also introduces children to the fundamental components and basic terminology of opera through commentary in the show, a question and answer session after each performance, and study guides.

Reviews of early performances this season have been enthusiastic. “Today’s performance was wonderful! The students really enjoyed it and the cast and accompanist was amazing!” wrote a teacher at John W. Reiley elementary in Campbell County. In Bellevue an administrator wrote, “Our



Gabrielle Barker as Lucy

students and teachers have had nothing but great things to say about the program. They thoroughly enjoyed it!”

Miller's enduring legacy in opera

By Tedrin Blair Lindsay, PhD

Throughout opera history, composers and librettists have looked to the theatre for source material, and American opera creators have taken advantage of the masterful treasure trove that 20th century American playwrights gifted to the world.

Major plays of Tennessee Williams, Elmer Rice, Eugene O'Neill, and Lillian Hellman, among others, have occasioned major operas, and likewise two of the legendary Arthur Miller's dramas have inspired successful operatic adaptations. Thus far, his masterpiece *Death of a Salesman* and his early success *All My Sons* have evaded transformations into prominent works for the lyric stage, but not so his other best-known plays, *The Crucible* and *A View from the Bridge*, which are the basis for two operas regarded as standard American repertoire. Less than a decade after the successful Broadway premiere of *The Crucible*, librettist Bernard Stambler tightened and re-ordered Miller's text resulting in a brilliant libretto ripe for Robert Ward's highly theatrical music, together earning for the opera a Pulitzer Prize, an honor which had eluded Miller's original. New York City Opera, long the progressive champion of American opera, mounted the premiere in 1961, with leading stars of its company including Patricia Brooks, Chester Ludgin, Frances Bible, Spiro Malas, and John Macurdy



Dr. Tedrin Lindsay

under the baton of the redoubtable Emerson Buckley, an expert in the American repertoire. This original cast recorded the opera in 1962, and this historic sound document has never been out of release, currently available on CD through Albany Records (TROY025-26-2). In 2017, Albany Records released a new recording of *The Crucible* by Purchase College (part of the SUNY conglomerate), a worthy university performance (as ours at the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre will also surely prove to be).

In 1999, Lyric Opera of Chicago brought *A View from the Bridge* to the stage in an adaptation it had commissioned by composer William Bolcom and librettist Arnold Weinstein. Weinstein, much like Stambler had done with *The Crucible*, adapted Miller's own text into a dynamic libretto. One of the most successful American operas of the last few decades, it has received productions by companies around the world, as well as an excellent recording in 2001 (available on New World Records 80588-2). This performance, conducted by Dennis Russell Davies, also features the opera's original cast, starring Kim Josephson, Catherine Malfitano, Timothy Nolen, and UK's very own Gregory Turay, who originated the role of Rodolpho and the work's most celebrated aria, "New York Lights."

Perhaps one of the current generation of composers will be inspired to write operatic treatments of the remaining Arthur Miller canon, but certainly these two wonderful existing adaptations are with us to stay!

Opera 101

By popular demand, this semester's series will explore the characteristics and repertoire of the various voice types. This will be a revised and revamped reworking of the same series first presented in 2004.

April 5: Sopranos

April 11: Mezzo sopranos and contraltos

April 18: Tenors

April 25: Baritones

May 2: Basses and countenors

Classes meet from 10 a.m. until noon in the Gail Robinson Music Library at UK's Schmidt Vocal Arts Center. Parking is available behind the building. The cost is \$20 per class, \$5 for students.

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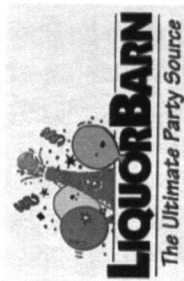
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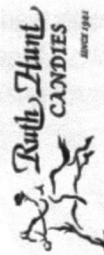


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