

Applause

Summer 2026



McCorvey's Corner *Song, Stage, and Celebration!*

What a WONDERFUL year! As the semester winds down and I reflect on this chapter in UKOT's story, I can't help but feel proud. We opened the fall with a whimsical, joyful, and visually delightful production of *Hansel and Gretel*, sung in English, welcoming a new generation of opera lovers and reminding us that all that opera is magic. This spring, I had the honor of conducting the WORLD PREMIERE of *A Nation*

of *Others*, the second installment in our "Telling America's Stories" project. It was a powerful, beautifully realized production, with students calling it one of the most meaningful experiences of their careers. We were also thrilled to welcome back alumni Dr. Chris Burchett and Dr. Jessica Brunet – true fan favorites – whose return felt like a homecoming.

We continue "Telling America's Stories" this fall with *Rappahannock County* by Ricky Ian Gordon and Mark Campbell, and I'm excited to collaborate again with director Richard Gammon. In March, we'll present a semi-staged *Tosca* starring the incomparable Angela Brown, part of a 2026–2027 season you won't want to miss. **If you believe in this work, we invite you to support it: through your presence, your advocacy, and your generosity.** Opera is an investment, and together, we're making it matter.

Dr. Everett McCorvey, Artistic Director

What a spectacular year!

We couldn't be prouder of our students and are delighted they are moving towards some well-deserved rest as well as fun summer adventures. We have current students and alumni who will be on stage from San Diego, California, to Portland, Maine, and everywhere in between. Hop on a plane across the Atlantic and you can find UKOT singers singing their way through the summer across Europe. The training these students gain here is showcased worldwide in the summer. Don't worry, *It's a Grand Night for Singing* is full of UKOT students and alumni to bring you the best of Broadway from the Golden Age to today. It is going to be a great summer!



*Megh Jennings-Posner, MA, BFA
Program Coordinator, UK Opera Theatre*



Won't You Join Us?

Buy
Tickets!



Fri, June 12 | 7:30pm
Sat, June 13 | 2pm
Sun, June 14 | 2pm
Fri, June 19 | 7:30pm
Sat, June 20 | 2pm
Sun, June 21 | 2pm

Singletary Concert Hall
www.etix.com

Beware of fraudulent online tickets.

Join Us for OperaLex Hospitality Before Every Grand Night Performance!

OperaLex invites you to make *It's a Grand Night for Singing! 2026* even more memorable by joining us at our **exclusive Hospitality Area** before each performance at the Singletary Center for the Arts.

This is your place to gather, reconnect with fellow arts supporters, and celebrate the incredible talent of the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre. Whether you're a longtime patron or attending Grand Night for the first time, we welcome you to stop by and enjoy complimentary refreshments, a cash bar, and conversation in a festive, music-loving atmosphere.

Our Hospitality tradition is one of the many ways we show appreciation for the fantastic community that keeps opera thriving in Lexington. The "pre-party" is always buzzing with energy and excitement!



Mark Your Calendars!

**Subject to changes or additions*

Jun
12-21

Friday, Jun 12 – Sunday, Jun 21: *It's a Grand Night for Singing! 2026*

Fridays at 7:30pm, Saturdays and Sundays at 2:00 pm – Singletary Center

Jun
15-19

Monday, Jun 15 – Friday, Jun 19: Summer Vocal Institute

All Day, Schmidt Vocal Arts Center

Oct
16-18

Friday, Oct 16 – Sunday, Oct 18 : *Rappahannock County* – by Ricky Ian Gordon, Libretto by Mark Campbell

Lexington Opera House

Oct
23

Friday, Oct 23: Ricky Ian Gordon Art Song Recital

Recital Hall – Singletary Center

Nov
TBD

Saturday in Nov: The Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition

Nov
14

Saturday, Nov 14: Grand Encore Affair 2026

6:30pm – UK Gatton Student Center Ballroom

Dec
13

Sunday, Dec 13: Celebration of Song

Alltech Arena, Kentucky Horse Park

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Raffle Dates: Mon., May 4 to Sun., June 21, 2026

Drawing: Sun., June 21, 2026, 5:30pm



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Alumni Accolades!

Mary Joy Nelson Inspires the Next Generation

For **Dr. Mary Joy Nelson**, music has always been at the center of her life. Raised in a musical family in Saskatchewan, Canada, Nelson grew up singing with her parents and grandmother, all of whom were deeply involved in music. That early foundation led her to the University of Kentucky, where she earned both her Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees and studied with Dr. Everett McCorvey.



Today, Nelson is the founding executive director of InnOVATION Arts Academy in Lexington, where she has spent more than 20 years working with young performers. Through her leadership, students have gone on to careers on Broadway, national tours, and in a wide range of artistic fields.

Nelson believes the arts play a vital role in personal development, helping students build confidence, creativity, and a strong sense of community. Her work reflects a commitment not only to artistic excellence, but to shaping the next generation of leaders through the performing arts.

OperaLex is proud to celebrate alumni like Mary Joy Nelson, whose dedication to young artists continues to strengthen the future of the arts in our community.



Phumzile Sojola Shines on the Global Stage

From the stages of Kentucky to some of the world's most renowned venues, **Phumzile Sojola** is building a career defined by versatility, artistry, and international reach.

A proud South African and graduate of the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre, Sojola is currently performing in *Masquerade* on Broadway, where he appears as

Piangi and serves as a cover for the iconic role of the Phantom. His journey to this moment reflects years of dynamic work across opera, musical theatre, and concert performance.

In New York, he has brought his talent to productions such as *Cats: The Jellicle Ball*, *Dreaming Zenzile*, and *Encores!* at New York City Center, in addition to performing with The Metropolitan Opera. His career has also taken him on national tour with *The Phantom of the Opera* and onto stages with leading organizations including The Boston Pops and Syracuse Stage.

Whether in opera houses or on Broadway, Sojola continues to captivate audiences with performances that bridge genres and traditions. His success is a powerful example of the global impact and artistic excellence fostered at UK Opera Theatre.

OperaLex is proud to celebrate Phumzile Sojola as he continues to make his mark on stages around the world.

Alumni Announcement:

University of Kentucky Professor Cynthia Lawrence is marking a remarkable milestone year with a production that brings together three historic anniversaries on a single stage.

In 2026, *The Ballad of Baby Doe* returns to the Central City, Colorado Opera as part of a unique celebration: the 250th anniversary of the United States, Colorado's 150th year of statehood, and the 70th anniversary of the opera's world premiere. Based on the true story of silver baron Horace Tabor and Baby Doe, the work captures ambition, love, and resilience set against the backdrop of the American West.

Lawrence, a legendary soprano and Central City, Colorado Opera alumna, directs this new production while celebrating her own milestone – 40 years of association with the company. Her leadership brings both deep artistic insight and a personal connection to this iconic American work.

OperaLex is proud to recognize Professor Lawrence's continued impact and artistry as she helps bring this powerful story to life for a new generation of audiences.

Board Member Spotlight!

MARK MAHAN

Mark Mahan is the founder of Mahan Multimedia, a Lexington-based photography and videography company he launched in 2010. Raised on a fourth-generation family farm, Mark brings a strong work ethic and an authentic understanding



of people to every project he captures. His sharp eye for detail and passion for storytelling have helped him build one of the region's premier multimedia service providers, serving individuals, businesses, and nonprofits with compelling visual content.

Mark's work spans professional headshots, dynamic event coverage, and corporate branding photography and video, all with a focus on delivering high-quality, narrative-driven visuals. His dedication to excellence has earned Mahan Multimedia numerous honors, including the **2024 Commerce Lexington Entrepreneur Award**, the **2022 Leadership Lexington Distinguished Alumni Award**, and the **2009 Building Industry Association Associate Member of the Year**.

Mark is a devoted supporter of the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre and is proud to contribute his time and talents to OperaLex. He lives in Lexington with his wife, Melissa Sparrow Mahan.

Join OperaLex Today!

When you become a member of OperaLex, you provide vital support for Central Kentucky's vibrant opera scene and help educate the next generation of opera stars.

By joining OperaLex, you will play an instrumental role in preserving and promoting the arts in our community. Our organization has supported UK Opera Theatre and its renowned director, Dr. Everett McCorvey, for over 25 years.



To learn more about the benefits of OperaLex membership and to join our organization, we encourage you to visit our website at **operaalex.org**. Or, review membership levels and benefits below, and scan the QR code above to join or renew your membership today!

Membership Benefits

OperaLex Members provide the leadership support to sustain UK Opera Theatre as one of the top five academic opera programs in the United States.

BRONZE: \$1,000

- Bronze Patron level recognition in performance programs and on website
- Preferred seating at operas, Grand Night for Singing and Alltech Celebration of Song

SILVER: \$2,500

- Bronze + Silver Patron level recognition in performance programs and on website
- Access to preferred parking
- Luncheon with the Artistic Director
- Invitation to a dress rehearsal with backstage tour and photos

GOLD: \$5,000

- Bronze & Silver + Recognition in Artistic Director's remarks at opera performances
- Gold Patron level recognition in performance programs and on website

GENERAL DIRECTOR'S CIRCLE: \$10,000

- Bronze, Silver & Gold + Annual Meeting with the Director
- Exclusive opportunities to travel with Director to see operas around the country
- 45-minute in-home performance by faculty and staff

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Applause for the Minds Behind the Music

Our OperaLex community is undoubtedly aware of the opera faculty and staff who train our students, but I would like to highlight the erudite musicologists at UK who teach them the history and literature of music.

My own doctoral advisor **Diana Hallman** was so keen on blending opera studies with opera performance that she founded the UK Opera Research Alliance many years ago. But she was not the only opera scholar among her colleagues. **Jonathan and Beth Glixon**, experts in the field of early opera with numerous publications to their credit, were also excellent mentors to me.



*Dr. Tédrrin Blair
Lindsay, Instructor*

Beth Glixon has finished editing a book on the female composer Barbara Strozzi, a years-long project to which she and Jonathan also contributed chapters. This is not her or their first book, but I wanted shout-out her wonderful achievement on the publication *Barbara Strozzi in Context* by Cambridge University Press.

Our performances do not happen in a vacuum – we need such scholarship to inform what we do with depth and authenticity. **Congratulations to the Glixons and all the UK musicology faculty for their meaningful service to our profession!**