

# BRAVO!

Lexington Opera Society Newsletter Vol. 10 No. 3 Spring 2011



## "Prelude" Turns Ten! Join the Party!

The University of Kentucky Opera Theatre and its commu-

nity supporter, the Lexington Opera Society, have never been accused of aiming too low.

To be assured of this, one need look no farther than "Prelude to *It's a Grand Night for Singing*." When the first "Prelude," as it is generally known, was held in 2002, the LOS board knew it wanted a fundraiser as elegant, sophisticated, and successful as *Grand Night* itself. Achieving that meant unwavering insistence on quality in food, drink, entertainment, and auction items. It also meant long hours of work for board members, including some late night exercise long after other guests had gone home as, still in evening attire, they broke down the stage, folded chairs, and packed up hundreds of rented wine glasses.

The high standards and unstinting effort soon paid off. "Prelude" quickly became one of Lexington's best parties. The event outgrew its first home and has settled in at UK's spacious Singletary Center. Revenue from the "Prelude" has become a key factor in supporting UKOT's ambitious endeavors. "Prelude" has grown from gross receipts of \$27,000 in 2002 to almost \$70,000 last year. Ticket sales have jumped from about 150 to 400 and the items up for auction have grown to include more classy destinations and unique offerings.

"Prelude" is always a celebration of music, art, spring, and town-gown cooperation, but this year the board wanted

to have a special celebration to mark the event's 10th anniversary on May 21.

Guests at "Prelude" will, as always, be treated to fine wines and excellent food. The silent and live auctions will again feature everything from tickets to basketball games to cases of superb wines to weeks at exclusive vacation homes, and much more.

To make life a little easier for bidders, some items will be offered for the first time at "buy it now" prices for those who do not

want to be guarding an auction sheet throughout the evening.

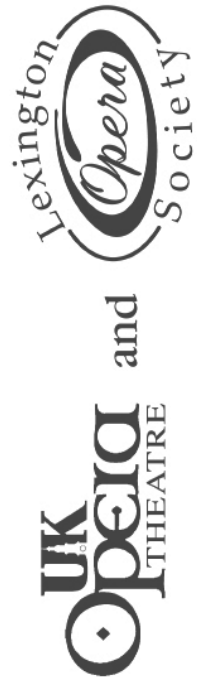
Another new feature will be a "boutique" section in the silent auction for some of the most precious items, including valuable art and jewelry. Liquor Barn, a UKOT and "Prelude" partner throughout the years, is offering a special item for the live auction called "52 Weeks of Celebration," which entitles the winning bidder to a bottle of fine champagne or sparkling wine each week during the year.

The list of one-of-a-kind auction items continues to grow. Check out the LOS Web site, [www.lexingtonopera.com](http://www.lexingtonopera.com) for more details closer to the event. Also, look for the May 13 issue of Business Lexington at [www.bizlex.com](http://www.bizlex.com) for a sneak peak.

Do not miss this special "Prelude." For reservations go to [www.lexingtonopera.com](http://www.lexingtonopera.com) or call LOS President Brian Tremain at (859) 533-3443. Tickets are \$100 each, \$75 each for groups of four or more, and \$50 for patrons ages 21 to 39.

Aim high and join us for this 10th anniversary "Prelude to *It's a Grand Night for Singing*."

— By Jacalyn Carfagno



Sing the Praises of Their Sponsors!



Dione Johnson, accompanied by Cliff Jackson, at her recital.

## Joy, Reflection for Dione Johnson and Her Audience at Final Recital in Lexington

Dione Johnson. Soprano. Doctoral candidate. Opera performer. Alltech winner.

During her time at UK Dione has been many things and done much. We can reflect with this gifted singer and remarkable young lady on her experiences here as her degree work ends and her time in Lexington comes to a close.

Dione performed her final recital February 13, singing both classical and modern pieces. "I have grown more as an artist," she said after the recital. "I was freed up to enjoy performing this recital more than any of the others I had previously performed." She appreciated the interaction with the audience and hoped that they "left feeling relaxed, entertained, and uplifted."

The recital was the final chapter in her extensive performance career at UK, where she's appeared in both recital and operatic roles, including leading parts in *River of Time*, *Die Fledermaus* and *Porgy and Bess*. "I am most thankful for these opportunities," Dione said. She added that they've helped her "become more

confident on stage and a more honest performer."

Dione credits caring mentors in Lexington, among them Professor Cliff Jackson and Dr. Angelique Clay, with helping her grow and gain confidence.

In moving on from UK, she hopes to be accepted into an operatic apprentice program to continue performing. Though the future remains unsettled, she is preparing for several auditions.

This young lady's poise and talent are unmistakable. The local community can look forward to following her continued progress. Good luck, Dione!

Dione's recital experience exemplifies the importance of recital work as an educational and career-building tool within the vocal music program. By attending these recitals, we help give the UKOT students the confidence and experience to achieve the dream of a professional singing career.

Let these young artists know you support them by attending a recital soon!

— By Anne Taul

BRAVO!

## Tedrin's Recording Corner

by Tedrin Blair Lindsay, PhD

Last year, as we approached *Grand Night*, I recommended some Broadway musicals in the operatic vein for your consideration. This year, I would like to suggest some cast albums from four of the most excellent shows that I saw on the Great White Way when I lived in New York in the late '80s and early '90s.

In 1990, two big musicals became hits at the same time -- so big, in fact, that they have been difficult to produce elsewhere. First, the fabulous *Grand Hotel*, based on the MGM film of the '30s, which starred Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, Wallace Beery, and both Lionel and John Barrymore, also has five leading roles and a slew of supporting parts. I happened to see *Grand Hotel* on the night that Cyd Charisse, the great Hollywood dancer, made her Broadway debut as the replacement for Liliane Montevecchi in the Garbo part of an aging ballerina, and I was star-struck beyond enchantment! Montevecchi brings the role to life richly on the original cast album, but is in fact outshined by her co-stars Brent Barrett (my favorite Broadway baritenor), Jane Krakowski, Karen Akers, and Michael Jeter, who won a Tony for his role as the dying Jewish man having a last fling at life. The multi-faceted score was begun decades ago by the song-writing team Robert Wright and George Forrest, who wrote *Kismet* and *Song of Norway*, but remained unfinished until the late '80s, when Maury Yeston, composer/lyricist of *Nine* and *Titanic*, brought this classy, elegant musical drama to Broadway.

While *Grand Hotel* wafted the flavor of 1930s Berlin over Broadway, *City of Angels* shed the hot sunshine and slick jazz of 1940s Los Angeles so entertainingly that it beat out *Grand Hotel* for Best Musical at the Tony Awards. This high-octane show moved back and forth between the colorful travails of a Hollywood screenwriter and the black-and-white



adventures of his film noir counterpart, played by Gregg Edelman and James Naughton respectively. The exciting, jazzy score is one of Cy Coleman's best, with sophisticated, witty lyrics by David Zippel. This show contains one of my favorite torch songs, the truly haunting "With Every Breath I Take," sensually and intensely delivered by Kay McClelland.

Another Coleman musical I love, with lyrics by the legendary team Betty Comden and Adolph Green, is *The Will Rogers Follies*, which swept the Tonys a couple of years after *City of Angels*. The title role was a career-maker for Keith Carradine, but he was almost upstaged by the gorgeous production styled after the lavish spectacles mounted by Florenz Ziegfeld between the two world wars. On recording, the marvelous score prevails with a dazzling

parade of songs in the styles of that generation. I especially appreciate the marvelous vocalism of Betty Blake as Mary Rogers -- and who can resist a theme song like "Never Met a Man I Didn't Like," Will Rogers' mantra made over into a powerful show tune!

The other musical that really captivated my imagination during that period was *Aspects of Love*, Andrew Lloyd Webber's follow-up to *Phantom of the Opera*, compared to which *Aspects of Love* was a relative failure. And yet *Aspects of Love* is perhaps my favorite of all Lord Andrew's musicals. It is by far the most European of his works, extremely cosmopolitan, adult, twisted, decadent and modern -- the big hit song is the stirring ballad "Love Changes Everything."

My readers will enjoy this anecdote: when *Aspects of Love* opened on Broadway, it was fashionable amongst musical theatre snobs to pooh-pooh Webber as a facile pretender, and I swore I would not see it. However, an urbane group of friends KNEW how much I, of all people, would adore this show, so they took me for my birthday, and made 1991 one of my lifetime's greatest natal celebrations. Because of this show, I will always love the British pop tenor Michael Ball, and I bet that once you hear it, you will not be able to forget Ann Crumb singing the terrifying "Anything But Lonely."

Take my trip down memory lane, and you will enjoy the excess and nostalgia offered by the best of Broadway during the culturally transitional time between the Reagan and Clinton eras.

### Cast albums

*Grand Hotel* (Original Broadway Cast) – RCA Victor 09026-61327-2.

*City of Angels* (Original Broadway Cast) – Columbia CK 46067.

*The Will Rogers Follies* (Original Broadway Cast) – Columbia CK 48606.

*Aspects of Love* (Original London Cast) – Polydor 841 126-2.

# Lexington Opera Society Calendar

## May

- 13  
Recital, Vincent Davis (Free and Open to the Public), 7:30 p.m., UK Singletary Center Concert Hall
- 15  
“Singing for Our Summer!” (Free but donations encouraged and suggested) 7:30 p.m., Central Christian Church (see article on Page 3)
- 21  
“Prelude!” (Ticketed Event) 6:30 p.m., Singletary Center (see article on Page 1)
- 22  
Recital Mary-Hollis Hundley, (Free and Open to the Public), 7:30 p.m., Singletary Center Recital Hall



Another *Grand Night* coming soon.

## June

- 11, 12, 18, 19  
*It's a Grand Night for Singing!* (Ticketed Event), 7:30 p.m., Singletary Center (see article on Page 4)
- 13, 20  
*It's a Grand Night for Singing!* (Ticketed Event), 2 p.m., Singletary Center



Major General Stanley played by Ronald Wilbur

## Pirates Entertains, Amuses Again as UKOT Undergrads Shine

Before Kentucky native Johnny Depp swaggered into the popular imagination with *Pirates of the Caribbean*, Gilbert and Sullivan caught the imagination of pirate and music lovers with *The Pirates of Penzance*.

The show's enduring popularity was evident in the April production by UK's Undergraduate Showcase. The show turned a profit and gave talented young singers a chance to shine. The grander operas presented by UKOT usually feature gradu-

ate students so last year, with *The Magic Flute*, UKOT began offering undergrads an opportunity to take center stage.

Director Margo Buchanan, who has an extensive background in theatre, said the demands of comedy also give the voice students a chance to hone their acting skills.

Keep an eye out next spring for another spirited offering from the undergraduates. Get an early peek at the talent UK is developing for the world's opera stages.

# Send These Singers Off for the Summer in Style

Three gifted young singers from the University of Kentucky opera program have been offered wonderful opportunities to further their vocal studies and gain performance experience in very prestigious training programs.

Arianna Afshari and Mary-Hollis Hundley will make their European debuts singing the roles of Donna Anna and Donna Elvira, respectively, in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with the Lyric Opera Studio of Weimar in Weimar, Germany. Reginald Smith Jr. will be performing the role of Germont in Verdi's *La Traviata* at the Brevard Music Center in Brevard, North Carolina.

Although all three of these talented singers have won scholarships, they will not cover nearly all the cost of these highly esteemed programs nor any of the travel expenses. So, these young artists are going to Sing for Their Summers. You are invited to attend and provide your support.

Their recital program will feature well-known arias from the standard opera repertoire, some Brahms, American art songs, spirituals and other exciting selections.

Arianna, Mary-Hollis and Reggie said of their time in Lexington, "Your love and support are unparalleled."

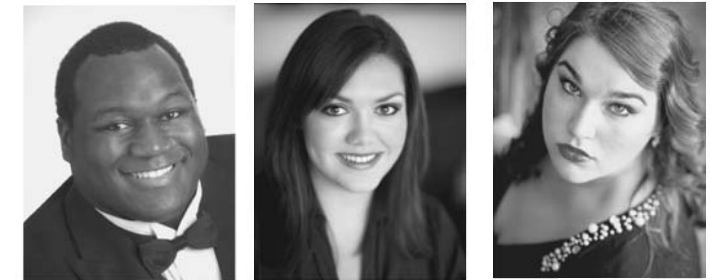
— By Anne Taul

## Singing For Our Summer!

When: Sunday, May 15, 7:30 p.m.  
Where: Central Christian Church (corner of Martin Luther King and Short Streets)  
Program: Arianna Afshari, soprano  
Mary-Hollis Hundley, soprano  
Reginald Smith Jr, baritone  
Nan McSwain, piano

Admission is free; however donations are encouraged and appreciated.

If you cannot attend the recital but wish to make a contribution, you may contact the singers via email:  
Arianna: aafsh2@gmail.com  
Mary-Hollis: maryhollis.hundley@yahoo.com  
Reggie: Reggie\_jr1@yahoo.com



From Left: Reggie, Mary-Hollis and Arianna

## Bohemians Join Pirates as Mayhem Continues

As the UKOT *Pirates of Penzance* raided Memorial Hall, the Bohemians joyfully joined in as special guests at the Sunday performances.

The Bohemians, not yet a year old, are young professionals whose mission is to make opera a passion for a new generation.

About 20 Bohemians and guests attended the 2 p.m. show. Prior to the 7:30 p.m. show, several cast members and *Pirates'* director, Margo Buchanan, met with a group of Bohemians to talk about the show.

Buchanan offered perspectives on Gilbert and Sullivan as the natural forefathers of Monty

Python and talked about the benefit of performing in an opera for undergraduates.

Jacob Waid, the Modern Major General, talked about the differences and similarities among musical theatre, opera and light opera. Rebecca Farley (Mabel) and Elliot Lane (Frederic) gave the Bohemians a backstage account of the production.

Two new members joined the group in order to take advantage of the Bohemian rate.

To learn about the Bohemians and their adventures, e-mail LexingtonBohemians@gmail.com, check out "Lexington Bohemians" on Facebook or on Twitter@LexBohemians, or call 257-9331.

# Legally Grand

## Grand Night Turns 18 to Melodies of Top Hits

UK Opera Theatre closes its 2010-11 season with six performances of the spectacular annual musical revue, *It's a Grand Night for Singing*, June 12-14 and 17-19 at the Singletary Center for the Arts.

In the early years, *Grand Night* themes focused on famous American composers of popular music such as George Gershwin and Cole Porter. Later it featured selections from the top musicals from Broadway and London, and standards from the American Songbook. By the early 2000s, Oscar-winning songs from films began to appear, and this year's show comes of age musically, featuring hit songs from Billboard to Broadway, including favorites from *Memphis*, *Urinetown* and other musicals and a few edgy songs straight from the hottest pop charts.

When he and Dr. James Rogers were working on the first show in 1993, "we never dreamed that it would grow so successfully," said Everett McCorvey, executive producer and music director of *Grand Night*. "This show provides a wonderful opportunity for UK students and orchestra members to work with talented singers, dancers, and musicians from the Lexington community. And it gives our vocal music students excellent preparation for future roles in a musical theatre to supplement their experience in opera performance – essential 'cross-training' for young singers."

*Grand Night* stage director Peggy Stamps first appeared in the cast in 1994. Experienced in musical theatre, she noticed that the singers were



Director Peggy Stamps thought singers could learn to dance, too. And she was right.

mostly just ... singing while dancers performed in front of them. She persuaded McCorvey and Rodgers that singers could also dance and became the production's choreographer and later co-director and choreographer.

This year the cast tops 60, including students and faculty from UK's vocal music programs and talented local singers, many multi-year *Grand Night* veterans. Dr. Tedrin Blair Lindsay is associate musical director and Nan McSwain assistant musical director. All of the musical numbers are arranged by Lindsay and Dr. Johnnie Dean.

Dr. Robert Baldwin will return to conduct the UK Orchestra as will Lyndy Franklin Smith, joined by her husband Jeromy Smith, to choreograph large production numbers. Also back are Marc Schlackman, production

supervisor and Tanya Harper, lighting designer. Bob Pickering's wonderful multi-level set will bring the sparkle of Broadway to the stage.

The show on Saturday, June 18, will honor Dr. and Mrs. Lee Todd for their enthusiastic support of the UK School of Music. UK has purchased 300 tickets for that performance, and it will include several musical tributes to the Todds.

Tickets are going fast. Call the Singletary Center Box Office (859-257-4929) or go online at [www.uky.edu/scfa](http://www.uky.edu/scfa). Bravo Guild members may buy one full price ticket and get a second for half price!

— By Mary Powell

BRAVO!

# God Gave UK Singers Their Gift but Jackson Helped

Students, faculty, alumni, friends, and fans of Professor Cliff Jackson gathered in the Recital Hall at Singletary Center on the evening of May 3 to honor him as he ends his 20-year tenure as a member of UK's School of Music Voice Department.

Jennifer Sgroe, one of Jackson's former students, and Courtney Turay assembled a stellar cast in collaboration with the School of Music, Voice Department, and Opera Theatre.

Everett McCorvey, director of the UK Opera Theatre, opened the joyous celebration by announcing the newly created Cliff Jackson Collaborative Piano and Vocal Coaching Endowment. This endowment will fund an annual scholarship to UK for a graduate or undergraduate student pianist who has demonstrated unusual aptitude in these areas. McCorvey invited music lovers in the audience to spread the word about this wonderful new scholarship and to contact the UKOT office (859-257-9331) for information on pledging donations to supplement the initial \$10,000 for the endowment. Pledges may be paid over a five-year period.

The musical program presented 19 arias, duets, and trios on the themes of "Invocation," "Gratitude," "Mentorship & Inspiration," "The Spiritual Path," and "Operatic & Fond Farewells" sung by Jackson's current and former students and members of the UK vocal faculty.

In his remarks to the audience, Profes-



Dr. Everett McCorvey and Cliff Jackson share a moment at the concert honoring Jackson.

sor Jackson said, "I always told my students that I didn't give them their gift. God did."

In the closing "Benediction" ("Oh Lawd, I'm on my way" from *Porgy and Bess* and "The Lord bless you and keep you") additional UK vocal students and faculty and members of the American Spiritual Ensemble filled the stage for a heartfelt tribute to a man whose warmth, spiritual grace, musical acumen, and consummate professionalism have enriched the lives of countless singers and enthusiastic lovers of music for so many years.

— By Mary Powell

## Lexington Mayor Sings UKOT's Praises

As *Grand Night*, with its splendid combination of musicians from UK and the community demonstrates, town-gown cooperation has long been at the heart of UKOT's success.



Gray

Recently-elected Lexington Mayor Jim Gray, in his first state of the merged government address in January, recognized that partnership and took a moment to compliment UKOT and its energetic director Dr.

Everett McCorvey with these comments:

"Think for a moment about Everett McCorvey, the Director of Opera at UK. Who would have thought UK could become a national center for excellence in opera? Everett

McCorvey did! He is attracting many of the best voices in the country and his students are building a record of success within the nation's professional opera companies."

Well said, Mayor Gray!