

BRAVO!

Lexington Opera Society Newsletter Vol. 8 No. 3 Spring 2010



Maestro of the World Equestrian Games

Multi-tasking comes easily to Dr. Everett McCorvey,

director of UKOT, but he is taking that skill to a whole new level in his role creating the opening and closing ceremonies for the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games, to be held in Lexington Sept. 25 through Oct. 10. Combining the talents of human and equine performers requires the patience of a horse whisperer and the tactical skills of a military general.

McCorvey, however, is used to making things happen. He is much admired for taking UKOT from obscurity to renown in less than two decades. He is also the founder of the in-demand American Spiritual Ensemble, whose music is keeping slave melodies alive, as well as the creator of the production company Global Creative Connections, which is behind the WEG ceremonies and which co-produced the acclaimed production of *Our Lincoln* at the Kennedy Center in 2009.

Compared to opening and closing ceremonies for other major athletic events such as the Olympics, this production is a different animal. Not to mention it is the first time in history that the World Equestrian Games have been held in the United States. The budget is \$1 million compared to the approximately \$40 million spent on the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games' ceremonies, but McCorvey hopes to supplement that with corporate sponsorships, as he has done with UKOT with firms such as Liquor Barn, Alltech, and Bryant's Rent-All Inc.

The overall theme of the ceremonies is "Artistry in Motion."

"We're going to have a duet, if you will, between human performers and equine performers," says McCorvey, combining the talents of about 200

horses; 700 dancers, musicians, singers; and others. Many performers will be homegrown. Says McCorvey: "I wanted to make sure we engaged Kentucky artists and Kentucky technicians because I think we have such a wealth of them here. The talent here is amazing."

Because the Games are an international event, a key aspect of the ceremonies is giving people a deeper look into what the United States and Kentucky are

about. The opening ceremony will include "A Ride Across America: Cadence of Our Country," showcasing equine performers from different regions across the United States, coupled with music from each particular area.

McCorvey is currently "on loan" from UKOT for the Games, but he is still teaching and playing a key role in producing performances like the spring production of *Die Fledermaus* and the popular summer variety show, *It's a Grand Night for Singing!*

The closing ceremonies — likely a concert with a major headliner — will be a celebration of not only the winners of the various equine athletic disciplines, but of the roughly 10,000 volunteers who will have helped make the Games happen.

Brian Tremain, president of the Lexington Opera Society, says McCorvey "is a classic impresario. This is a guy who has these visions and acts on them," citing *Our Lincoln* as one. The Kennedy Center production included the Lexington Singers and the U.K. Symphony orchestra, and was narrated by radio personality and Kentucky native Bob Edwards.

"On September 25, he's going to rock this place," says Tremain of the opening ceremonies. "It's going to be incredible for Kentucky."

— By Leslie Guttman



Recording *Die Fledermaus*: An Interview with Richard Kagey

A couple of weeks after UKOT's highly successful March production of Richard Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*, Richard Kagey, UKOT Artist in Residence and director of the operetta, chatted with Sylvia Davis, Bravo Guild member, about the audio recording that has just been made of the production.

Question: Richard, what was the impetus for the recording of *Die Fledermaus*?

Answer: Well, Everett (McCorvey) and I were having a conversation in Evansville, Indiana, and came to the conclusion that a recording would be in order. Several of the people involved in the local production, including the Lexington Vintage Dancers, had asked which recordings they should listen to in order to prepare for the production. Although the Metropolitan Opera recorded an English version around 1951 as a private issue for the Book-of-the-Month Club, other than that, no complete English translation existed. And this is unusual considering the fact that *Die Fledermaus* was translated into English within a year of being composed by Strauss. It was natural to turn to Albany Records, with locations in Albany, New York, as well as New York City. Albany has a reputation for recording new works in opera as well as a wide range of music that big labels wouldn't tackle. For example, Albany recorded Thomas Pasatieri's *Hotel Casablanca* for UKOT a couple of years ago. John Ostendorf of Albany Records readily agreed that an English language version of *Die Fledermaus* would be a most worthwhile project. And so the recording was done at Singletary Center for the Arts over the last weekend in March.

Q: How did you decide on an English translation to be used for the recording?

A: We took about six translations and married them and I wrote some of the dialogue. The lyrics are for the most part from the Ruth and Thomas Martin score from Schirmer Publishing Company. They wrote it in 1955 and there are some phrases that don't work anymore because the vernacular changes. For example, throughout the

second act there are lines like, "Let's all be gay." I felt it wise to change to words such as "free" and "bright". It was tough to make rhyme work because the word "gay" ends many phrases and rhymed couplets. And there are changes from the original German because Strauss included some "in" jokes that wouldn't work today, even in German. For example, Falke is left on the street in his bat costume in front of his law offices and his partners fire him. He

has to go off to industrial Munich, rather than staying in bright, cultural Vienna. This is a kind of insult or downgrade that most likely wouldn't be picked up on today.

In some productions, the dialogue is done in English and the lyrics are sung in German. I feel that the lyrics are meant to be frivolous and fun and the whole opera works well in English. There is no German in the Schirmer score. However, many internationally known singers know the music in German and then often sing the dialogue in their own language.

Q: How were the singers selected for the UKOT recording?

A: It was basically Everett's decision as to which singers would sing, although John Ostendorf had also listened to the UKOT production with both casts. And John Nardolillo did an outstanding job conducting the University Orchestra. The students in the orchestra really rose to the occasion.

Q: How long did it take to make the UKOT recording?

A: Recording is not easy. You record sections of each song, perhaps recording measure by measure and putting together the best. There are 377 "takes" in the recording of *Die Fledermaus*; a take can be as short as two measures. It took 13½ hours over two days to complete the recording.

Q: Although I asked you this question in an earlier interview, I'll ask again, "What keeps bringing you back to UKOT?"

A: UKOT is serious about what it does. Everett and the staff understand that in order to produce great music, the students have to see what the business is really like.

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

In *Die Fledermaus*, the students got an opportunity to do a dialogue operetta in which they had to deal with both the spoken and the sung word in English. The cast and crew got to do a real recording with a full orchestra. They even had the experience of working with a union crew and all that that entails. At UKOT, the students get the full package and are made aware of just how much it takes to pursue a career in their chosen field.

Q: What are your responsibilities as Artist in Residence?

A: I help out in many ways, including doing individual acting coaching for singers and giving some master classes in audition techniques. On occasion, I cover classes for instructors who need to be absent. I am focusing on next season's two productions, *La Bohème* in the fall and *Porgy and Bess* in February. The set for *La Bohème* is my design and is currently in the warehouse.

I'll be fluffing it up for the production. For *Porgy and Bess* I'll be the set designer and production coordinator. I'm working on some revolutionary technology which integrates rear projection technology into three-dimensional opera. The Visual Media Center (VIS) at UK is playing a major role in making this all happen. There will be actual film footage from Charleston.

Q: These are exciting challenges and the public will thoroughly enjoy the results throughout the coming season. The recording of *Die Fledermaus* will be a permanent reminder of your time with UKOT.

A: Yes, it certainly will be and I hope the public will enjoy it immensely when it appears on the market this summer or early fall.

— By Sylvia Davis

Make Plans for Prelude

The premiere wine-tasting event of the season approaches ... *Prelude!* An elegant evening with friends of the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre, *Prelude* provides an entertaining and enjoyable way to support the Lexington Opera Society. Opera stars of the future serenade the guests with well-loved songs from stage and screen, a preview of *It's A Grand Night For Singing!*

While sampling delicious delicacies, guests are invited to enjoy select bourbons and fine wines from Liquor Barn's extensive selection. More than 100 upscale silent auction items are available for inspection and bidding during the cocktail hour. Finally, guests are invited to relax in the auditorium and participate in the popular live auction event. This year, bidding will be particularly competitive as the items include a dinner and stay at the 21 Hotel in Louisville, an original work of art by Marjorie Guyon, and signed memorabilia from UK's coaches Calipari and Phillips.

We hope you will plan to attend this year's *Prelude* on Saturday, May 22, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the University of Kentucky's Singletary Center for the Arts. For more information and to purchase tickets, please visit www.lexingtonopera.com. Tickets are \$100 per person or 4 tickets for \$300. For those who are under the age of 40, tickets have been specially priced at only \$50 per person. All proceeds from this fundraising event go to support the marvelous productions of UKOT. Invite your friends to join you and enjoy a most memorable and rewarding evening at *Prelude!*

— By Susan Mullineaux






www.lexingtonopera.com

Prelude!

A Grand Night of
Wine, Food and Song
Saturday, May 22 • 6:30 p.m.
Singletary Center for the Arts

Join the Lexington Opera Society for the premiere wine tasting event of the season.

- Sample unique wines, beers and bourbons.
- Enjoy delicious hors d'oeuvres.
- Bid on one-of-a-kind auction items including Coach Calipari and Phillips signed memorabilia.
- A sneak preview of Grand Night featuring Broadway and pop music.

**\$100 per person
or 4 tickets for only \$300
Under 40 years, \$50**

Visit www.lexingtonopera.com or call 859.533.3443 to reserve your tickets today.
All proceeds benefit the UK Opera Theatre.

Alltech Vocal Competition Winners

Alltech partnered with UKOT for the fifth time to present the Alltech Vocal Scholarship Competition. The March 14 competition awarded more than \$300,000 in scholarships and stipends to undergraduate and graduate winners. Since the competition's inception, more than 400 students have applied and auditioned to win one of the many awards presented. This year alone more than 300 students applied in the hopes of being one of the 22 finalists who were able to compete for the grand prizes at the Singletary Center for the Arts Concert Hall.

2010 Alltech Vocal Scholarship Competition Grand Prizes:

Undergraduates:

First Place Alltech Undergraduate Award:
\$5,000 plus University of Kentucky Full Tuition;
American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS) in
Graz, Austria, Award; \$1,750 toward Tuition
Jacob Waid, Baritone, Paducah, Ky.

Second Place Bryant's Rent-All Undergraduate Award:
\$2,500 plus University of Kentucky Full
Tuition; AIMS Award: \$1,750 toward Tuition
Jermaine Brown, Tenor, Louisville, Ky.

Graduates:

First Place Alltech Graduate Award:
\$10,000, plus University of Kentucky
Full Tuition, Graduate Assistantship;
AIMS Award: \$2,200 toward Tuition; Kentucky
Opera Prize: Promise of a future Main Stage
Role with Kentucky Opera in Louisville:
Michael Precely, Baritone, Mount Laurel, N.J.

Second Place Alltech Graduate Award:
\$7,500, plus University of Kentucky Full
Tuition, Graduate Assistantship;
AIMS Award: \$2,200 toward Tuition
**Mark Elliott Golson II, Bass-
Baritone, Lexington, Ky.**

Special Awards:

Bio-Cat Inc. "Outstanding Transfer Student" Award:
\$1,000 plus Full Tuition, University of Kentucky:
Francisco Bedoy, Tenor, Ayutla, Jal., Mexico
Mr. William L. Rouse III "Barbara Rouse
Kentucky Prize" (for a student born or
educated in Kentucky): \$5,000:
Gabrielle Barker, Soprano, Lexington, Ky.

Stoll, Keenon, Ogden PLLC "Gail Robinson
Musicianship Award": \$1,500:
Juliana Moura, Soprano, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Dippin' Dots Audience Favorite Award: \$500
**Dawn Elizabeth Coon, Mezzo-
Soprano, Versailles, Ky.**

Barlow Truckline's Encouragement Award: \$500
Seongcho Choi, Baritone, Campbellsville, Ky.

The program consisted of the top undergraduate finalists performing one song or aria of their choice, while the top graduate finalists were asked by judges to perform a second song or aria in addition to their chosen one. The 2009 winners showcased their winning pieces and the Paul Laurence Dunbar High School Choir presented a selection of songs. Dr. Everett McCorvey of UKOT

and Alltech president Dr. Pearse Lyons presented the awards.

"Music is such an important part of our society, and this is a unique opportunity we have in Kentucky to have a top-notch opera program. We are happy to reward the talented individuals at the University of Kentucky who have entertained us over the years and will continue to entertain us for years to come," Lyons said.

— By Allee Hembree



Opera Productions and Recitals Offer Students Unique Experiences

Students enrolled in the UK vocal music program have great learning opportunities. There are classes designed to make them knowledgeable musicians, lessons with high-quality teachers and coaches, and endless hours of practice and training in a program widely recognized for its excellence. We in the Lexington community can take pride in the young singers who train here.

When it comes to showcasing their talents and achievements in front of an audience, however, students basically have only two avenues available. Opera productions or recitals offer young singers the chance to use and share what they have learned to do. While both performance types can be important learning tools, they are vastly different experiences for the students.

Recitals are a regular part of the study curriculum and are generally presented at specific points in the educational process. A recital is typically a part of the requirements for a degree at any level within the opera program and offers the student an opportunity to learn and develop a body of vocal literature with some variety and breadth, but often revolving around a central theme.

Opera appearances, on the other hand, are cast through an audition process. Not everyone gets the chance to showcase his or her talents here. For those who do, the rehearsal process is rigorous and emotionally consuming.

Even students who get the chance to sing in both recitals and operas find the two experiences very different. Former doctoral student Eric Brown commented, “When you’re doing an opera, you have so much else on stage with you to rely on. There are other singers, props, scenery, costumes, and the vision of a director. You are only a part of the show and it takes a lot of the focus off you. In a recital, it’s just you with the music and your own interpretation and vision. It’s much more vulnerable and emotional.”

Current doctoral candidate Catherine Clarke-Nardolillo echoes Brown’s sentiment, saying, “Recitals open you up emotionally — make you raw and exposed. You don’t really get that as much in an opera. There’s too much else going on.”

Voice instructor Dr. Angelique Clay encourages her students toward both types of performance, but acknowledges the great difference between opera and recital singing. “Recitals are much more difficult for



Dr. Angelique Clay advocates the merits of both opera and recital experience for students.

students because with opera, you have other cast and a director for collaboration. With recitals, it’s you and the piano. You have to create the entire focus — each song is a little mini-opera to bring to life for the audience.”

She urges students to do both types of performance because she believes that “the more diverse you can make your musical experience, the better.” Dr. Clay touts the educational value of both recitals and operas as parts of the same artistic development that is important for students.

The operas we see staged by UKOT are the product of much hard work by a variety of people. Usually we see only the finished product and are impressed by how well our students do. But if we miss seeing student recitals, we are missing other high-quality expressions of our students’ talents and accomplishments.

Not all UKOT students get the chance to perform roles in operas, but even those who do will not dismiss the importance of their recital experience. Undergraduate Mary-Hollis Hundley said, “Recitals give students the best opportunity to express themselves and interpret the music.”

See an upcoming opera production — and don’t forget to catch a student recital, too.

— By Anne Taul

Lexington Opera Society Calendar

MAY

22

Prelude! (Ticketed Event) 6:30pm UK Singletary Center

JUNE

11

It's a Grand Night for Singing! (Ticketed Event) 7:30pm UK Singletary Center

12

It's a Grand Night for Singing! (Ticketed Event) 7:30pm UK Singletary Center

13

It's a Grand Night for Singing! (Ticketed Event) 2:00pm UK Singletary Center

18

It's a Grand Night for Singing! (Ticketed Event) 7:30pm UK Singletary Center

19

It's a Grand Night for Singing! (Ticketed Event) 7:30pm UK Singletary Center

20

It's a Grand Night for Singing! (Ticketed Event) 2:00pm UK Singletary Center

The Magic Flute Offers Opportunities for Undergraduates

On April 17 and 18 UKOT presented Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, its first all undergraduate opera, which featured students we do not typically see singing leading roles in opera. And it was an experience they relished. Reggie Smith, who sang the role of The Speaker, was passionate in discussing the experience. "There are some really great voices in this program that aren't getting the opportunity to sing in operas. This was a great way to allow young singers to be on stage and be heard — and it was a lot of fun."

Senior Mary-Hollis Hundley, who sang Pamina, cited the high quality of the students in the program when

talking about the importance of her recent experience. "UK is attracting such strong singers that there are lots of really talented people who are ready to do performances now. Understandably, graduate students usually get the larger roles, so a show like this is really a great thing for a lot of us. And we hope that the audience enjoyed getting to see and hear some of the other students."

Senior Ashley Jackson, who shared the role of Pamina with Hundley, hopes that this will become a tradition at UKOT. "The experience of singing a major role as an undergraduate was just invaluable."

— By Anne Taul

Tedrin's Recording Corner

by Tedrin Blair Lindsay, PhD

At the time of this writing, I have just returned from a week's residency as guest artist at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, for the purpose of polishing and headlining their first *It's a Grand Night for Singing* — a huge success for their program. And since we at UKOT have already had auditions for our *Grand Night* here, I am in full Broadway mode. For that reason, I decided that I would devote this column to a few of my favorite Broadway musicals that aspire to the grander musical and dramatic scale of opera, or stylistically utilize operatic elements and conventions.

People most remember composer and lyricist Frank Loesser for his big hit *Guys and Dolls* (1950), but I listen to his Broadway opera *The Most Happy Fella* (1956) much more often. This three-act musical about an older man who becomes involved with a younger mail-order bride, is through-composed with practically no spoken dialogue, like most operas, and the score is rich with beautiful melodies ranging in style from operatic arias to barbershop quartets. The show starred the New York City Opera baritone Robert Weede and the future Mrs. Loesser, Jo Sullivan, and has been revived more frequently by opera or operetta organizations than by regular musical theatre groups. The original cast album is still available on the Sony Broadway label (S2K 48010).

Leonard Bernstein's *Candide* (also 1956) was only moderately well received in its original Broadway run, partially because of a pedantic script that dragged down the ebullient music. Bernstein tinkered with *Candide* a number of times throughout the rest of his life, gradually fashioning it into a fully-fledged opera (this version was recorded in 1981 on the Deutsche Grammophon label with such opera stars as Jerry Hadley, June Anderson,

and Christa Ludwig, and Bernstein himself conducting). However, my favorite recording of this brilliant score is the fantastic 1986 production by New York City Opera with David Eisler in the title role and Erie Mills in the virtuosic soprano part of Cunegonde. This recording is available on New World Records (NW 340/341-2).

One of the biggest Broadway hits of the early 1950s was *Kismet* (1953), a fantasy set in ancient Baghdad and starring Alfred Drake, Doretta Morrow, and Richard Kiley. The score, by Robert Wright and George Forrest, utilized sensual and vibrant tunes from the works of Russian composer Alexander Borodin, using them to create such enduring songs as "Stranger in Paradise" and "And This Is My Beloved." This original cast album is also still available, on Columbia Broadway Masterworks (89252).

Finally, one of the greatest shows in all Broadway history not to be remembered as a huge hit was composer Cy Coleman's and lyricists

Betty Comden and Adolph Green's frothy spoof of opera conventions, *On the Twentieth Century* (1978). This show featured a Tony Award-winning production with an incredible set representing the famous luxury train named in the title, a Tony Award-winning performance by Imogene Coca as a nutty religious zealot, and hilarious leading turns by John Cullum as a broke Broadway director and Madeline Kahn as his former lover, now a Hollywood star. Truly one of the most brilliant shows ever conceived for the Broadway stage, *On the Twentieth Century* has an original cast album available on Sony Broadway (SK 35330). It will bring you much musical pleasure and probably a few belly-laughs as well.

See you in June at *Grand Night*.



Frank Loesser

• UKOT kicked off the entertainment segment of the celebrity-studded **Barnstable-Brown Derby Eve** party in Louisville April 30.

• UKOT alumnus **Jennifer Sgroe** finished third in the recent David Adams Art Song Competition in New York

What's New at UKOT

and subsequently performed in a full-length recital with the other winners. The David Adams Song Competition aims to recognize and assist emerging artists who demonstrate talent and ability as recitalists in the performance of art songs.

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