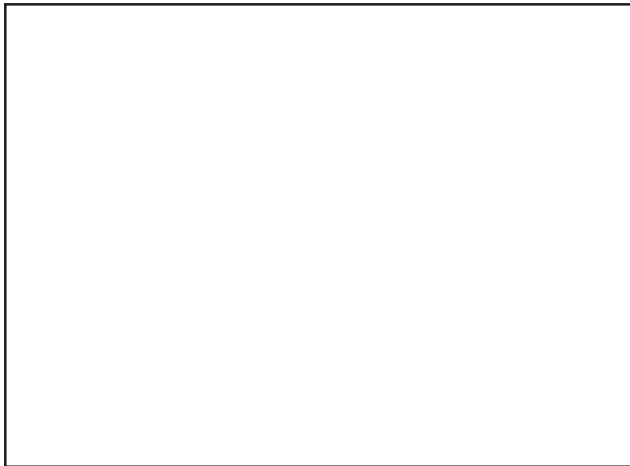


Bravo!

Lexington Opera Society Newsletter Vol. 2 Issue 1 Fall 2002



UK Opera Theater presents *Street Scene*



To many of us the word opera is synonymous with the likes of *La Boheme*, *Carmen*, *Tosca*, *Don Giovanni*, etc. We'll buy tickets to see productions of these masterpieces because after all, THEY are opera. So what's our motivation to see "*Street Scene*" the American opera by the German-born composer Kurt Weill and Harlem poet Langston Hughes, based on the Pulitzer Prize winning play of the same name by Elmer Rice that the UK Opera Theater will present for us later this month? Aren't you intrigued already? And how's this for a far-out connection? Remember Bobby Darrin's hit song "Mack the Knife" and the lyric about Lotte Lenya? Well, she was Kurt Weill's wife and considered the foremost interpreter of his music. (Why she was part of the lyrics for "Mack the Knife" I still don't know). Ok - so that's a stretch but let's look at the opera and the people responsible for crafting it and we guarantee you will pick up the phone and order tickets.

Fall 2002

Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions to be held on UK campus

Singing for Their Future

Once again opera lovers will be treated to a free concert that also just happens to be a major national vocal competition. The Kentucky District Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions will be hosted on the University of Kentucky campus for the third year on November 2nd at Memorial Hall. This is an event not to be missed!

Each year a group of aspiring opera singers present their renditions of operatic arias to panels of judges all across the country in the hope of becoming part of the Metropolitan Opera's Young Artist program. The National Council auditions represent only one avenue that a singer can take to perform with the Metropolitan Opera, but the experience for a young singer is especially important because of the opportunity to be part of the Lindemann Young Artists Program.

The Metropolitan Opera began sponsoring a structured auditions program for young singers in 1935 with the Auditions of the Air, the ancestor of the

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and more!

As stated above, “*Street Scene*” is an American opera with Broadway musical elements based on the Pulitzer-Prize winning play of the same name by Elmer Rice. Rice resisted Weill’s attempts to set the play to music for ten years before finally agreeing. Although Rice wrote the libretto for the opera, it was the Harlem Renaissance poet, Langston Hughes who wrote the lyrics. The opera opened on Broadway in 1947 and was hailed as the successor to “*Porgy and Bess*”, and, in fact, enjoyed a longer Broadway run than the famous Gershwin musical.

Weill was born in Dessau, Germany in 1900 and by the time he was twelve he was already composing concerts. By 1925 Weill was established as one of the leading composers of his generation. Weill pursued collaborations with contemporary playwrights like Bertolt Brecht, with whom he achieved commercial and artistic success in Germany. He fled the Nazi onslaught in Germany in 1933 and went to Paris. In 1935 he and Lotte Lenya (from whom he was now divorced) went to the United States and by 1937 he had two works running simultaneously in New York. Encouraged by his reception, he decided to stay in the United States. He and Lenya remarried, and applied for American citizenship. Weill established himself as a new and original voice in the American musical theater and continued to enlist leading

dramatists for musical theater. His first American “standard” was “September Song”. His first hit was *Lady in the Dark* by Moss Hart with lyrics by Ira Gershwin. This production broke Broadway records for production costs but recouped all its expenses in its 777 performances. Weill was working on a musical version of Mark Twain’s “Huck Finn” when he suffered a massive heart attack at the age of 50 and died shortly thereafter.

Street Scene (the opera) was first performed in January 1947 in New York.

The story recounts a day in the depression-era life of a New York apartment building. According to a recent press release from the Pittsburgh Opera (which produced *Street Scene* earlier this year) Rice’s original play, reviewed in the *New York Times* in 1929, was called a “humane portrait” with honest and real characters who epitomized the diversity of immigrant America. Interestingly, Rice’s original play did not contain any African-American characters. This element was added to the libretto by Langston Hughes. Weill called *Street Scene* “the Broadway Opera”.

The UK Opera Theater production of this work coincides with the Langston Hughes festival at the university. Performances are Friday, October 11th at 8 PM, Sunday, October 13th at 2 PM, Thursday, October 17th at 8 Pm and Saturday, October 19th at 8 PM. All performances are at

**Links to web sites for more information
about Kurt Weill and Langston Hughes**

<http://www.mtr.org/exhibit/weill/weill.htm>

<http://w3.rz-berlin.mpg.de/cmp/weill.html>

<http://www.videoflicks.com/titles/1105/1105799.htm?SHOW=1&TYPE=0&ASSN=V00001>

<http://www.kwf.org/pages/kwbib.html>

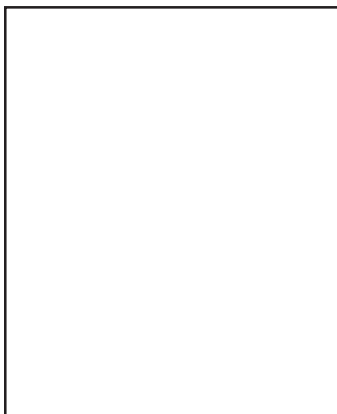
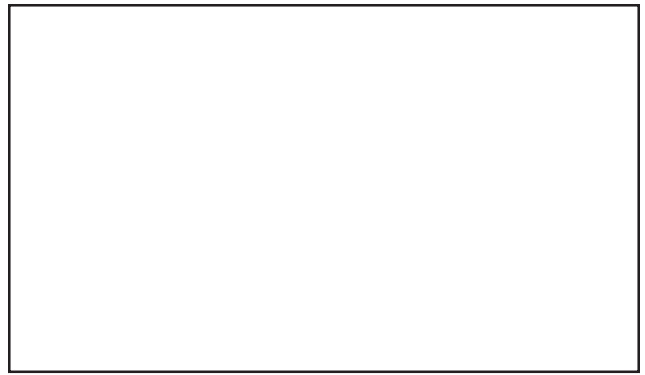
<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/hughes.htm>

<http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/lhughes.htm>

<http://www.poets.org/poets/poets.cfm?prmlID=84&CFID=11741321&CFTOKEN=35741140>

<http://www.uga.edu/~iaas/LHR.html>

Students' Point of View
The Master Class



Become a part of the BRAVO Committee

Opera is flourishing in Kentucky and the University of Kentucky Opera Program is recognized as one of the best such programs in the country. How fortunate we are to be involved with these aspiring singers and this outstanding program! **Lexington Opera Society** invites you to consider becoming a part of the **BRAVO Committee**. The contributions that you make are tax deductible, and your membership in the **BRAVO Committee** brings you glimpses of the magical world of opera from backstage as well as from the "Grand Circle". We plan educational events, group tours to the Metropolitan Opera in New York, and offer many ways in which you can become involved in opera on the grass roots level. As a **BRAVO** member you also receive a discount on single performance ticket purchases for UK Opera productions such as "Street Scene" and the "Opera Gala", and reduced ticket prices for **BRAVO** events where you will have the opportunity to share your enthusiasm with others also drawn to opera. We hope you will join us in promoting this wonderful art form and become an active member.

NOTE: Volunteers needed for "Street Scene" and Metropolitan National Council Auditions. If you are available to help (ushers, hospitality, lobby table) please call Mary Powell (859 276-4576)

Lexington Opera Society
BRAVO Committee

Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ e-mail _____

Circle category:

Bravo Committee Membership	\$15.00 single, \$30.00 family
Opera Buff	\$25.00-\$50.00
Duet	\$51.00-\$100.00
Aria	\$101.00-\$500.00
Overture	\$501.00-\$1000.00
Figaro	\$1000.00 +

Total enclosed

Students' Point of view cont'd

Where are they now?

Don't Miss the BRAVO Party!

present Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. The Auditions of the Air was a radio program that featured exceptionally talented young American singers who were auditioning to become part of the Met's working roster. The first prize was a contract with the Metropolitan Opera. Fifteen broadcasts were aired the first year, and eventually, singers such as Rise Stevens, Eleanor Steber, and Robert Merrill were brought to the Met's attention through the Auditions of the Air.

The director of Auditions of the Air from 1950, William Marshall, was becoming more and more aware of the expenses facing singers who wanted to audition for the program but did not live near New York City. In addition, it was clear that New York singers were dominating the program. Consequently, the Met's board and management turned to the Metropolitan Opera National Council to take over sponsorship of the auditions and to establish a regional auditions program. The National Council, a group of opera devotees from around the nation, was organized in 1952 to support the Met through financial contributions and volunteer work. The primary objective in having the National Council run the auditions was to make it a truly nationwide effort. The pilot operation of the regional auditions took place in Minneapolis in 1954 with great success, and, as a result, more regions were established across the country through the efforts of dedicated volunteers. With full responsibility for the Auditions now in the hands of the National Council, it was decided to bring all of the regional winners to New York City to be heard in a concert on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. The finalists in the auditions had the further



opportunity of attending Metropolitan Opera performances and having coachings with Met staff during their week of preparation for the Finals Concert. By the 1958-59 season, a district level of the auditions was added as a first round feeding into the already established regions.

By 1980 the Auditions had grown to over 50 districts and 17 regions, all run by National Council Members who volunteered their time. This basic structure has remained in place up to the present. From 1979 until 1998, ten equal winners were chosen from the 25 regional winners to perform on a Winners' Concert on the Metropolitan Opera stage with the Met Orchestra. In 1998 the format was slightly altered to include another round of competition. What was formerly the Winners' Concert was changed to the Grand Finals Concert. Instead of the ten singers chosen as winners, they are now called finalists and up to five equal winners are chosen and announced on the stage after an intermission and the judges' deliberations.

Today, the five winners each receive \$15,000 in prize money, and those finalists who do not become winners receive \$5,000 each. The experience for a 1/25 of the singers is worth a great deal more than the cash prizes. Each of the 25 regional winners

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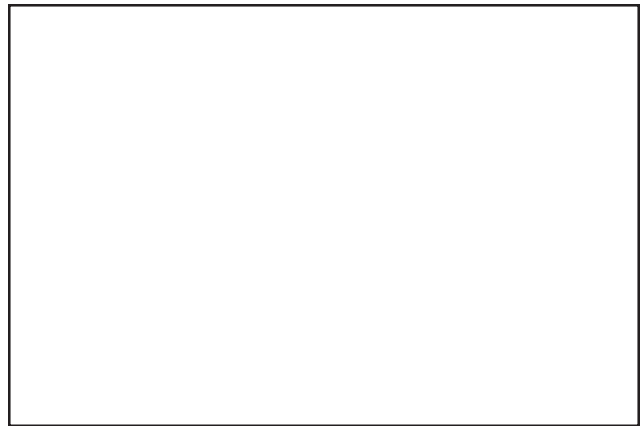
who come to New York are eligible to return during the next five years and audition for the Met's artistic staff for additional grant money of up to \$5,000. In this way, the National Council has the opportunity to track the singers' progress and continue to be of assistance in their career development.

Those who attend the auditions will discover a depth of talent that is drawn from throughout the state. The contestants are between the ages of 20-33 and come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Many are university students or students in young artist programs in the state. Your support for these young vocalists is important and we hope you will join us as they vie for a chance to sing with the Metropolitan Opera!

The above article is reprinted in part from information provided by the Metropolitan Opera National Council.

Street Scene cont'd from page 2

the Lexington Opera House and tickets are available by calling (859) 257-4929. Season tickets for UK Opera Theater are also available. There will also be a free concert of vocal arts songs by various composers on the text of Langston Hughes on Wednesday, October 16th at 8 PM in Memorial Hall on the UK campus.



They put together the pieces!



Opera Calendar

UK OPERA THEATRE 2002 - 2003 SEASON

All tickets may be ordered by phone (257-4929) or go to Singletary Center Ticket Office at the Center, open 12 noon to 5 pm Mon. - TR; 12 noon to 6 pm FR. Tickets: Adult \$20; Student/Child \$12 Season Tickets: Adult \$80; Student/Child \$45

STREET SCENE - Kurt Weill; Langston Hughes, libretto October 11th, 17th, 19th: 8 PM; 13th matinee: 2 PM The Lexington Opera House

AM AHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS - Giancarlo Menotti Dec. 7th & 8th: 2 PM

First Presbyterian Church, 171 Market Street, Lexington

STARS OF TOMORROW, OPERA GALA Febr. 28th, 8pm Singletary Center for the Arts
(Production is featured event of the UK Art in Bloom Festival Weekend in collaboration with the Lexington Philharmonic Orchestra)

A STREET CAR NAMED DESIRE, Andre Previn; Philip Littell, libretto Lexington Downtown Arts Center
April 12th, 19th, 26th: 2 PM April 13th, 21st, 22nd: 8 PM

REGIONAL OPERA

LOUISVILLE OPERA EVENTS - KENTUCKY OPERA

Whitney Hall, Ky Center for the Arts Tickets: \$24-\$59, call 1-800-690-9236; www.kyopera.org

LA TRAVIATA - Verdi Oct. 11, 8pm; Oct 13, matinee 2 pm

DON PASQUALE - Donizetti Dec. 6, 8 pm; Dec. 8, matinee 2 pm

DON GIOVANNI - Mozart Febr. 28, 8 pm; March 2, matinee 2 pm

Lexington Opera Society

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Mission Statement of the Lexington Opera Society

The mission of the Lexington Opera Society is to enhance the general public's awareness and appreciation of opera in Central Kentucky and throughout the Commonwealth primarily through support of the opera program at the University of Kentucky and the continuation of its educational and public programs.