



# BRAVO!

Lexington Opera Society Newsletter Vol. 8 No. 1 Fall 2008

## Michael Ehrman's Fresh Approach

Michael Ehrman has directed several operas for UK Opera Theatre, including *Susannah* by Carlisle Floyd, *Falstaff* by Giuseppe Verdi, *Street Scene* by Kurt Weill, and *Carmen* by Georges Bizet. A graduate of the drama program at Northwestern University, he has taught theatre courses at NU, Roosevelt University, and the University of Tennessee, and directed more than 70 opera productions around the world over the past 30 years. He spoke recently with Lexington Opera Society member Mary Powell.

**Question:** *La Bohème* is the most frequently performed opera in the modern repertory. Why do you think that it is so universally beloved?

**Answer:** This opera is very accessible, with colorful, sympathetic characters, lively action, and a unique blend of comedy and tragedy, particularly in the final act. It's a great vehicle for young singers because all of the principal characters are "20-something," and the story showcases their natural exuberance and emotional resilience. The music sounds easy but it's not — it's really a "big sing," particularly for the tenor (Rodolfo) — and that's why Everett McCorvey brought in two experienced tenors, Phumzile Sojola (a recent graduate of the UK Vocal Music program) and Jeremy Cady (a doctoral student in the program), to sing this role. I enjoyed working with both of them in *Carmen* in 2007.

**Q:** Your production of this opera takes place in Paris in 1925. Why did you change the setting from Puccini's original period for the opera — the 1830s?

**A:** This will be my 15th production of *La Bohème* and many of them were set in 19th-century Paris. However, post-World War I Paris witnessed a re-birth of bohemian life, similar to the Roaring Twenties in the U. S.: The first Surrealist art exhibition opened in 1925, American jazz was all the rage, and Parisian women cast off their corsets and long skirts for the freedom of "flapper" dresses. So the story of these frisky "Bohemians" fits right in. In Act II (Christmas Eve at the Café Momus), keep an eye out for some of the American artists who enlivened the arts scene in 1920s Paris (e.g., Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, Josephine Baker, Ernest

Hemingway, F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, etc.).

**Q:** You are well-known for working carefully with the casts of your opera productions to develop a back story for each of the characters, to enrich the singers' interpretations. What gave you the idea to take this innovative approach?

**A:** I learned this technique in my drama classes at Northwestern University, and I have used it as a director for a very long time, with good results. Actors and singers should always have a set of clear, specific ideas about the characters that they portray on stage, just as they must really understand the language of the libretto or art songs that they sing. What events led these characters to the moments in their lives that we see in each act of the opera, and what happens in their lives between the acts? In *La Bohème*, each chorus member is an individual character, with a specific history, desires, abilities, and mannerisms.

**Q:** Your professional schedule is always quite busy. What drew you back to Lexington to direct *La Bohème*?

**A:** Cliff Jackson has been a close friend of mine for many years, and I always enjoy seeing him again while working on UKOT productions. I also enjoy working closely with UKOT director Everett McCorvey, stage manager Mark Schlackman, and UK Symphony Orchestra director John Nardolillo. This is a wonderful time of year to be in Kentucky. Everett is taking me to Keeneland to see the races, and I'm looking forward to touring the Woodford Reserve distillery because I love good Kentucky bourbon.

# Outreach Program Travels

Since its inception in 2003, the educational opera outreach program, now called the Schmidt Opera Outreach Program (SOOP), has traveled the length and breadth of Kentucky. From Pike County in the east to Hickman in the far west, to Whitley in the south and Boone County in the north, and many, many points in between, SOOP has performed in approximately 300 schools in about 100 counties. Singers have performed more than 500 shows to an audience of approximately 150,000 young Kentuckians ranging from pre-schoolers to high school students..

Beginning last year with *The Freedom Trail* and continuing with this year's shows, *The Billy Goats Gruff* and *Young Abraham Lincoln*, *Shirttail Boy from Kentucky*, the program has entered a new era by bringing young professionals in from all over the country. This has increased the talent pool and the quality and flexibility of the performances and scheduling. *The Billy Goats Gruff* cast — Sheena Law from Michigan, Craig Price from South Carolina, Justin Moore from Washington State, and our own Diana Vetter from Lexington — has raised the bar for the performances and increased the enthusiasm for the program.

SOOP continues to grow with the generous help of the Lexington Opera Society, LexArts, the Equitable Resources Foundation, the Schmidt Foundation, the UK School of Music, and particularly with the gracious and generous sponsorships of LOS board members Janet Zusman, Linda Carey, and Dick Furst as well as other UKOT supporters Ben Kaufman and Marsha Bloxson.



*Top, William and Casiana Schmidt; YAPtracker helped bring performers Sheena Law, center, and Justin Moore, bottom right, to the outreach program. Diana Vetter (bottom left) is a UKOT participant in the program. UKOT costumer Susan Wigglesworth (bottom center) adjusts a sleeve.*

SOOP would like to book more shows in and around Fayette County and has dates open if you or an associate would like to sponsor a performance. Please contact Marc Schlackman at 230-5012 or doc613@insightbb.com. With your help, SOOP looks forward to bringing opera to every school in every county in the Commonwealth.

*By Margo Buchanan,  
UK Opera Theatre Outreach Coordinator*

## Finding Talent Online

The Schmidt Opera Outreach Program at UKOT has been tremendously assisted by a new online resource for young artists cleverly titled YAPtracker.com. YAP is an industry acronym for young artist program, and, as the name implies, YAPtracker is a subscription-based Web service that collects and posts information about Young Artist Programs across the country for the benefit of aspiring young artists and programs such as SOOP.

Since we began posting our information on YAPtracker.com more than a year ago, we have been able to expand our program visibility and have seen a successive increase in the number of applications we receive for each production. So far, SOOP has hired several young artists as a direct result of our YAPtracker announcements. With

YAPtracker and the generous support of William and Casiana Schmidt, three of the four cast members for *Billy Goats Gruff* were hired via applications generated from YAPtracker.

We look forward to a continued presence with this exciting new resource and are committed to expanding

our educational offerings and maintaining a high level of artistic quality that has become a hallmark of UKOT and the Schmidt Opera Outreach Program.

*By Stephen Penn, SOOP Music Director*

# Tedrin's Recording Corner

by Tedrin Blair Lindsay



When I planned the autumn 2008 schedule for the Lexington Opera Society Lecture Series ("Opera 101") to end with a class devoted to Jules Massenet's *Werther*, I was not even aware that Kentucky Opera would be mounting a production of this gorgeous work to end its season. This serendipity has prompted me to recommend one of the most critically acclaimed opera recordings of the stereo age, Sir Colin Davis's 1980 traversal of *Werther* with the Covent Garden orchestra.

This opera, composed from 1885 to 1887, and finally premiered in 1892, is an effective adaptation of Goethe's novel about the outsider status of the artist in society and his inability to live an objectively normal life. It has always been one of Massenet's most popular and highly regarded operas, and the compelling characterizations of both leading and supporting roles, rendered with psychological insight and dramatic vigor, have strengthened its claims in modern times to the status of masterpiece.

In the title role of the misunderstood artist, his passion unrequited, José Carreras found his perfect part. Adept as he was at Italian opera, in this French work Carreras' plangency of tone and ringing delivery of Massenet's soaring melodies prove him the ideal interpreter of this character. The voice, still fresh before the ravages of leukemia compromised it, is captured in breathtaking beauty, and his artistic nuance of every phrase inspires the soul even while breaking the heart. His performance of the standard tenor aria "Pourquoi me réveiller" is not only the high point of his recording career, but to my ear and taste, one of the most perfect and moving renditions of any aria ever recorded by anybody — I mean that most sincerely!

As Charlotte, the bourgeois housewife who realizes

too late her reciprocal feeling for Werther, Frederica von Stade captures the elusive blend of an ordinary person's comfort with convention challenged by an unexpected and dangerous yearning for passion. Also recorded here in her prime, von Stade's supple, even soprano-like, mezzo is warm, expressive, and rich in vocal colors, and the arc of her dramatic characterization from naïveté through struggle to desperation, argues a nobility equivalent to the sufferings borne by the rarefied artist. This is one of the most distinguished moments in her distinguished career.

The secondary roles were cast from the first rank of British opera stars. Standouts among them are baritone Thomas Allen as Albert, Charlotte's cold, pragmatic, white-collar husband; soprano Isobel Buchanan as the pert young Sophie, whose teenage infatuation with Werther ends in a bruised confusion; and bass Robert Lloyd as the village patriarch, representative and protective of the status quo.

Although there have been several worthy recorded traversals of this score, which, again, constitutes an uncommonly strong alloy of music and drama in and of itself, none can match the impact of this legendary production for either immediacy or longevity. Almost thirty years after its first release, on vinyl LPs, this *Werther* remains one of the most illustrious contributions to the legacy of recorded opera.

Massenet, *Werther* (Sir Colin Davis, conductor, Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden)  
Philips Classics 416 654-2

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## Your Coach Awaits You

Lexington opera lovers can attend the Kentucky Opera in style and comfort this season by letting the Lexington Express do the driving. Subscribe today for as low as \$112 and receive a matinee subscription and transportation on a luxurious motorcoach from Lexington or Frankfort with the option of enjoying a box lunch as you travel to Louisville.

For information, contact Cheri Reinbold at Kentucky Opera at 800-690-9236, or visit online at [www.kyopera.org](http://www.kyopera.org).

### Fall Season at Kentucky Opera

*The Pirates of Penzance*, Sunday, October 26

Showcase of Baroque Opera, Saturday, November 15

*Werther*, Sunday, November 30

# And the Judges Are ...

Come support your favorite UKOT singers and other fine young performers at the 2008 Kentucky District Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions on Saturday, November 22, at 1:00 p.m. at Memorial Hall. Three respected judges will select singers to advance to the regional auditions in Cincinnati. Catherine Malfitano, one of the judges, will also conduct a master class on Sunday, November 23, at Memorial Hall.

Here are profiles of the judges:

**Catherine Malfitano** is considered to be one of America's leading lyric sopranos. Her vocal versatility, physical grace, and dramatic abilities make her a sought-after performer in opera houses and concert halls. Ms. Malfitano made her professional singing debut in 1972 at the Central City Opera playing the role of Nanetta in Verdi's *Falstaff*. She soon appeared with Minnesota Opera, and, in 1974 at New York City Opera, in *La Bobème*, as Mimi. She then appeared with the Lyric Opera of Chicago (1975) and at the Royal Opera House (1976) and in other major European opera houses. In 1978, Ms. Malfitano achieved wider recognition in a telecast of Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Saint of Bleeker Street* from NYCO, playing Annina. Since then, she has sung at the major opera houses throughout the world, including the Metropolitan Opera in New York, Teatro alla Scala in Milan, and Royal Opera House in London, as well as the Lyric Opera of Chicago, the San Francisco Opera, the Los Angeles Opera, the Houston Grand Opera, and the Salzburg Festival.

One of her best-known roles is the title role in *Tosca*, for which she won an Emmy Award in 1992, performing opposite Plácido Domingo as Mario Cavaradossi and Ruggero Raimondi as Scarpia. The opera was broadcast live from the actual Roman settings and viewed by billions worldwide. Throughout her career, Ms. Malfitano has championed the music of American composers, including Carlisle Floyd, William Bolcom, Conrad Susa, and Thomas Pasatieri. Malfitano has also directed operas including *Madama Butterfly* at Central City Opera in 2005 and *The Saint of Bleeker Street* in 2007.

**Paul Groves** came to national attention as a winner of the Met's National Council Auditions in 1991. He made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 1992 as the Steuermann in *Der fliegende Holländer*. His Metropolitan Opera collaborations with James Levine have led to recordings of

*Rigoletto*, *Parsifal*, and *Idomeneo* for Deutsche Grammophon, *Der fliegende Holländer* for Sony, and *Manon Lescaut* for Decca.

Since winning the 1995 Richard Tucker Foundation Award, the American tenor has embarked upon a major international career with engagements at the world's leading opera houses and concert halls.

He made his debut at La Scala in 1996 as Tamino in the opening night performance of *Die Zauberflöte*, Riccardo Muti conducting, and he has returned nearly every season since. Audiences in Paris know him well since his debut there in the 1996-1997 season as Tom Rakewell at the Théâtre du Châtelet in a new Sellars/Salonen production.

Mr. Groves appears frequently throughout the United States and Europe in recital.

**Stephen Wadsworth** has directed productions for the Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Royal Opera Covent Garden, Vienna Staatsoper, Nederlandse Opera, Edinburgh Festival, and in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Toronto, and Santa Fe. He made his Seattle Opera debut in 1985 with Janacek's *Jenufa*. Other Seattle Opera credits include Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice*, Handel's *Xerxes*, and Wagner's *Lobengrin* (1994 and 2004), *Der fliegende Holländer* (1989 and 2007), and *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Wadsworth's productions of plays by Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Molière, Marivaux, Goldoni, Shaw, Wilde, and Coward, a number of which have played at Seattle Repertory Theatre (where he served as affiliate artist from 1998 to 2004), have established him as a master of the classical repertoire. He has translated and adapted a number of works for the stage, including operas by Monteverdi, Handel, and Mozart and plays by Molière, Marivaux, and Goldoni. With Leonard Bernstein, Wadsworth wrote the opera *A Quiet Place*. This Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres returned to Seattle for Gluck's *Iphigenia in Tauris* in 2007, which he also directed at the Met in November. Current projects include a new American opera, *Amelia* (story by Wadsworth, music by Daron Hagen, libretto by Gardner McFall), commissioned by Seattle Opera, and the direction of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* for the Getty Museum in Los Angeles. In 2007, Mr. Wadsworth was named the first Director of Opera Studies for the Juilliard Opera Center.

By Amelia Groetsch

(Amelia Groetsch is a master's degree student in vocal performance at UK.)

# UKOT Welcomes Heidi Skok

Heidi Skok, UKOT's visiting endowed professor of voice, has triumphed in her transition to the mezzo-soprano repertoire. After her outstanding recital debut in November 2006 at Boston's Jordan Hall at New England Conservatory, she sang two concerts within the next six months at New York's Carnegie Hall with the New England Symphonic Ensemble. Ms. Skok sang the mezzo solos in Vivaldi's *Gloria* and returned to the Isaac Stern Auditorium at Carnegie Hall for Canadian composer Imant Raminsk's new work, *The Peace of Wild Things*. She returned to Carnegie Hall in February 2008 to sing the



mezzo-soprano solos in Handel's *Sing Unto God* and Mozart's *Requiem*.

A former soprano, Ms. Skok performed in numerous productions at the Metropolitan Opera between 1992 and 2003, some of which include *Elektra*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Rigoletto*, *Jenufa*, and Britten's *Death in Venice*. During the 1998-1999

MET season, she performed as Masha in Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades* conducted by Valery Gergiev, which was featured on PBS's "Live from Lincoln Center." In addition, during the 1998-99 and 1999-2000 seasons, she sang in the MET's premiere of Arnold Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron* as one of the Naked Virgins, with James Levine at the podium. During the 2000-2001 season, Ms. Skok sang again under Maestro Levine's baton as a Flower Maiden in Wagner's *Parsifal*. In December 2003, she reprised her role of the Naked Virgin for the third time, again under the baton of James Levine.

Ms. Skok has won numerous awards and prizes including the Sullivan Award from Opera America, the Opera Index, and the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and she was a semi-finalist for the 1997 Birgit Nilsson Prize. Her solo CD album of *Ned Rorem's Song Cycle of Women's Voices & Songs of Martin Hennessy* was released in 1998 on the Newport Classic label and is selling nationwide and in Canada.

Her students sing at such opera houses as New York City Opera, Washington National Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Chautauqua Opera, Steans Institute at the Ravinia Festival, and Santa Fe Opera. Many of her students have won prizes in competitions including the Jenson Competition, the

Center for Contemporary Opera competition, the Sullivan Foundation, and the Neue Stimmen competition as well as the Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions.

— By Margo Buchanan

## Heidi Skok — The Insider's View

I had the great pleasure of meeting Heidi Skok at the 2007 Intermezzo Foundation Young Artist Program in Tampa, Fla. I immediately clicked with her no-nonsense, direct style of teaching and noticed results in no time. Her strong work ethic combined with her kind spirit provides an optimum learning atmosphere. It is clear that she is truly passionate about teaching. Upon returning to Lexington I continually raved about this mezzo-soprano who had made such an impression on me. I put Dr. Everett McCorvey in contact with her and the vocal department invited her to be a guest judge for the annual Alltech Vocal Scholarship Competition. After the competition she stayed to give a master class. It was awe-inspiring! The students were abuzz with excitement about this teacher who evoked the most glorious sounds from everyone who sang that day. We were all delighted to hear that she would be joining UK this fall as the visiting endowed professor of voice, and, as they say, "the rest is history."

— Sarah Klopfenstein,  
first year doctoral student, UKOT

I met Heidi a year ago while taking time off from my studies at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. I was immediately drawn to her genuine personality and hard-working nature. Heidi is extremely supportive and encouraged me with sincerity and honesty, as she does all her students, while also working at a high standard.

As the months went by, Heidi and I began to establish a very special student-teacher relationship. At a lesson in New York City, she told me she had accepted a position at the University of Kentucky and encouraged me to return to my collegiate studies, leave the city, and move to Lexington. I had no question that coming to UK and studying with her weekly would be the opportunity of a lifetime.

Heidi is a selfless teacher, a knowledgeable technician, an exquisite performer, and an incredible person. I am excited to have her join the talented music community at UK.

— Jessica C. Utset, undergraduate transfer, UKOT

## LOS Calendar 2008-2009

### 2008

October 15, 7:30 p.m.: U.S. Army Field Band & Soldiers' Chorus. Singletary (free, but tickets required)  
 October 17 and 18, 7:30 p.m.: *La Bobème*. Opera House (tickets required)  
 October 24, noon: Groundbreaking for Schmidt Vocal Arts Center, 412 Rose Street (free)  
 October 25, 8 a.m.–4 p.m.: Schmidt Youth Vocal Competition. Singletary Center (free)  
 October 25, 7:30 p.m.: *La Bobème*. Opera House (tickets required)  
 October 26, 2 p.m.: *La Bobème*. Opera House (tickets required)  
 November 8, 7:30 p.m.: *La Bobème*. Owensboro's River Park Center (tickets required)  
 November 22, 1 p.m.–5 p.m.: Metropolitan Opera District Auditions. Memorial Hall (free)  
 November 23, 1 p.m.–3 p.m.: Met master class (free)  
 December 11, tba: LOS Holiday Party  
 December 13, 7:30 p.m.: Alltech Celebration of Song: An Old-Fashioned Holiday Sing-Along. Victorian Square (free)

### 2009

January 9, time TBA: *Rigoletto* with Kentucky Symphony Orchestra (concert performance). Greaves Concert Hall, Covington (tickets required)  
 January 11, 3 p.m.: *Rigoletto* (concert performance). Singletary Center (tickets required)  
 February 2, 7:30 p.m.: *Our Lincoln*. Kennedy Center, Washington, DC (tickets required)  
 February 12, 12:30 p.m.–2 p.m.: *Lincoln the Decision Maker*. Singletary Center (free)  
 February 13, 7 p.m.: *Lincoln the Decision Maker*. Wesley United Methodist Church (free)

March 6 and 7, 7:30 p.m.: Gail Robinson Gala. *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Opera House (tickets required)  
 March 8, 2 p.m.: Alltech Opera Scholarship Competition. Singletary Center. (free)  
 March 8, 6 p.m.: Alltech Reception, Maxwell Place (invitation only)  
 March 13 and 14, 7:30 p.m.: Gail Robinson Gala. *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Opera House. (tickets required)  
 May 30, 6 p.m.: Prelude to *It's a Grand Night for Singing*. Singletary. (tickets required)  
 June 12, 13, 19, 20, 7:30 p.m.: *It's a Grand Night for Singing*. Singletary Center (tickets required)  
 June 14 and 21, 2 p.m.: *It's a Grand Night for Singing*. Singletary Center (tickets required)  
 June: Broadway Bound Musical Theatre Summer Camp for Children. TBA

### Metropolitan Opera Auditions

National Council Auditions  
 University of Kentucky, Memorial Hall  
 November 22, 2008, 1:00 p.m.

Tri-State Regional Finals  
 University of Cincinnati/CCM Corbett Auditorium  
 January 18, 2009, 1:00 p.m.,

National Semi-Finals  
 New York, Metropolitan Opera  
 February 15, 2009

Grand Finals Concert  
 New York, Metropolitan Opera  
 February 22, 2009

## What's New at UKOT

UKOT welcomes Carrie Nath to the staff as grant and development specialist and movement instructor. Ms. Nath is a director, actor, choreographer, and educator. Before coming to UKOT, she was an artistic associate at Kentucky Shakespeare Festival acting as movement director and teaching in the education department. In addition, she has also taught for Actor's Theatre of Louisville, Stage One, and Walden Theatre, where she directed *Dark of the Moon* and choreographed *A Winter's Tale* for the 2008 season.

Ms. Nath is the former associate director of

education for the Seattle Opera, where she was the primary dance instructor and choreographer for the Seattle Opera Young Artist's Program, a conservatory-style instructional for young opera singers ages 21 to 30.

She also has served as director of education for Nebraska Shakespeare, was the dance specialist for Washington National Opera's education residency program, and has taught period style dance and movement for the Shakespeare Theater in Washington, D.C.

By Amelia Groetsch

## Our Lincoln Kennedy Center-Bound

The UK Symphony Orchestra, UK Opera Theatre, and the Lexington Singers will present *Our Lincoln*, celebrating the life and legacy of Abraham Lincoln at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., on Monday, Feb. 2, 2009. The performance begins at 7:30 p.m.

The program premiered Feb. 10, 2008, at the UK Singletary Center for the Arts. The performance at the Kennedy Center will include much from the Lexington event while adding exciting new talent and music, including Metropolitan Opera stars Angela Brown and Gregory Turay and nationally known recording and performing violinist Mark O'Connor. The performance also will include narration by Nick Clooney.

The University of Kentucky Alumni Association has travel arrangements and ticket opportunities for for this performance. If you are interested in flights to the Washington, D.C., area or sightseeing tours while in the Washington/Arlington area, contact Liz Bates, Leisure Travel sales manager, Fair Winds Travel & Total Sports Travel at 334-213-2001 or 1-800-228-4155 or by e-mail to [Lbates@fwtravel.net](mailto:Lbates@fwtravel.net).

Group-discounted airfare costs \$395 per person roundtrip on Delta Airlines. Deadline to book is October 15.

Jan. 31 — Depart LEX at 8:40 a.m. — Arrive DCA at 10:06 a.m.

Feb. 3 — Depart DCA at 8:59 p.m. — Arrive LEX at 10:25 p.m.

For dates and times other than group air arrangements, call Liz Bates for the best airline pricing and options.

Make your hotel accommodations by Jan. 1, 2009. A block of rooms has been reserved at the Doubletree Hotel, Washington, D.C. To make reservations, call 202-232-7000 or visit [http://doubletree1.hilton.com/en\\_US/dt/hotel/WASDTDT-Doubletree-Hotel-Washington-DC-District-of-Columbia/index.do](http://doubletree1.hilton.com/en_US/dt/hotel/WASDTDT-Doubletree-Hotel-Washington-DC-District-of-Columbia/index.do). For tickets to the performance, please visit <http://www.alumniconnections.com/olc/pub/UKY/events>.

For more information, contact Gretchen Bower at 859-257-8905/1-800-269-2586 or [GretchenBower@uky.edu](mailto:GretchenBower@uky.edu).

## Here's to Your Voice

Heartburn, acid indigestion, reflux — all are common and bother all of us at some time in our lives. The classic symptoms of acid reflux are quite obvious and occur after eating something that “didn’t agree” with us. Frequent culprits are fatty foods, alcoholic beverages, chocolate, and heavily caffeinated foods and drinks. All these relax the lower esophageal sphincter, the muscle that wraps the top of stomach to prevent acid from spilling into the esophagus (food tube). When acid spills into the esophagus, it can travel all the way up to the throat and irritate the voice box as well.

Laryngopharyngeal reflux (LPR) occurs when the acid hits these areas. Unlike classic reflux, LPR may present with very subtle symptoms of throat clearing, a non-productive cough, and hoarseness. A bad taste in the mouth may or may not be present.

Treating LPR consists first of making the right diagnosis, then trying to prevent it from occurring. Obviously, avoiding items that trigger reflux is important. Eating late-night snacks or meals contributes to symptoms as well. A good rule of thumb is *not* to eat or drink three hours prior to bedtime. Medical management usually starts with an over-the-counter medication taken in the

evening or before bedtime. Elevation of the head of the bed is very helpful as well. Putting six- to eight-inch blocks under the feet at the head of the bed or using a bed wedge under the mattress allows gravity to prevent acid from spilling into the esophagus and throat.

Prescription medications may be necessary in cases resistant to OTC medications and head-of-bed elevation. Medications are geared to reducing the acidity of the refluxed stomach acid so as to be less irritating to the membranes of the throat. Obviously, prescription medications need to be obtained from your physician. Very severe reflux may require twice-daily doses of medications, supplementation with antacids, and even consideration of surgery to tighten the muscle around the top of the stomach. Fortunately, that is rarely necessary.

LPR is a very common problem and cause of hoarseness and is frequently not diagnosed. If you have persistent hoarseness, your throat needs to be examined by a voice professional and therapy started. Next time I will discuss hoarseness in children. Until then, here's to your voice ...

*by Sanford Archer, MD, LOS Board Member  
UK Division of Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery*



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