

BRAVO!

Lexington Opera Society Newsletter Vol. 9 No. 1 Fall 2010



La Boheme: Drama, Music, Opera!

UKOT's season opens this month at the Lexington Opera House

with Puccini's timeless and beloved La Bohème.

Bravo Guild member Sylvia C. Davis spoke with several of the singers about this classic opera.

Asked why La Bohème remains ever popular, Manuel Castillo (Rodolfo) said: "When I first saw the opera several years ago, I was young and did not understand the drama between Rodolfo and Mimi. I had not experienced those kinds of feelings and I was unable to relate to them. Now I can. We all know about the tragedy of a loved one who has been lost. ...This, and Puccini's beautiful music, creates a perfect match."

Julie LaDouceur (Musetta) added that the characters are real people, believable. Mary-Hollis Hundley (Mimi) praised the story's "universal appeal." But it's the score that makes it: "The most beautiful music ever written."

That music, said Gregory Turay (Rodolfo), Guest Artist in Residence with UKOT, "was written with very simple melodies that speak to people. The orchestration is lush."

Turay, like other singers, wasn't concerned that the production, scheduled during the World Equestrian Games, will likely draw an audience of discerning European opera-goers. Turay, who has performed all over the world, said simply, "the makeup of the audience shouldn't affect any singer who's worth his salt. You do your best, even if only one person is in the audience."

The student singers commented on how they relate to the characters, young artists like themselves. Castillo feels close to Rodolfo,

his debut in a lead role at UKOT. "We are both artists. He is a poet and I am a singer. ...of course I feel what Rodolfo feels! Look at me: I am a poor starving student...I struggle to pay my bills, but nothing stops me from having fun, falling in and out of love."

To Nicholas Provenzale, Schaunard, "is a fun-loving guy with an outgoing personality. I can relate to that."

"Mimi has been a dream role of mine," said Hundley, who is doublecast. "She is such a loving, trusting person." "To finally sing a long, full role has done wonders for my technique and stamina."

The other Mimi, Catherine Clarke-Nardolillo, finds a challenge in balancing vocal technique with emotional output. "It's tough to sing beautifully and yet act like you're dying. The goal is to move the audience to cry, but I can't lose control.... In the final scene, Mimi has waves of highs and lows. Her energy surges, then diminishes."

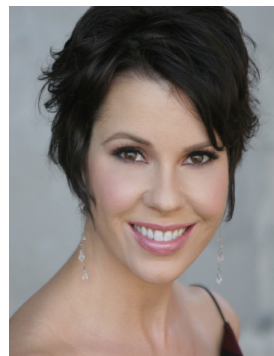
LaDouceur says Musetta is "the woman that every girl wants to be. She walks into a room and everyone watches her, wondering what she's going to do next."

This is Turay's first time to sing Rodolfo. "I've turned it down in the past because I was too young and didn't

feel I could do it justice. It is a dramatic role for a mature voice. If you don't have the chops, well..."

The singers agreed that La Bohème is first and foremost an ensemble piece. The cast members learn from one another and work together to produce a performance that allows the audience to both enjoy the light moments and fully engage in the emotionally draining ending.

This production, directed by Michael Ehrman, is not to be missed! - Sylvia C. Davis



The two Mimis: Mary-Hollis Hundley, above, and Catherine Clarke-Nardolillo

Planting a powerful seed: UKOT, Alltech team up to teach music, start a Haitian children's choir

Ouanaminthe. It's an emerging village in remote Haiti. When finished, it will provide jobs, culture, medical care and education to people in the poorest country in North America – a people ravaged by poverty, isolation and natural disaster. Alltech corporation is building this agricultural partnership community.

We, who are involved with the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre are familiar with the progressive vision and generosity of Alltech. Now, through the Ouanaminthe project the rest of the world will see that spirit and resolve.

UKOT graduate students are teaching children in the area beginning music in preparation for the new school not yet built in Ouanaminthe, They are practicing rhythm and vocalizing with Eric Brown and Manuel Castillo, who have made two trips to work with the children. Others, including Dr. Everett McCorvey, have also made teaching trips to Ouanaminthe. They hope to form a children's choir that can tour internationally.

Just before leaving on his second trip to Haiti, Castillo spoke passionately about the experience and the children. "I am very lucky to be doing it; whatever we do is going to be the foundation for what comes next. We are having such an effect on the kids and families, and giving them something positive."

Castillo, who taught elementary school in his native Mexico for six years before coming to this country, says that most of the kids in Haiti aren't able to attend school regularly. But he feels that every contact they have with the educational system has a significant

impact on their lives. "The kids learn so fast and easily. They don't have the distractions kids here have like TV, video games, the Internet. They love the music and just soak it up."

During their first trip, Castillo and Brown met individually with all of the participating kids (about 150, ages six through 12) and taught them

songs in several different styles. During the second trip, the UKOT ambassadors renewed contact with area children and taught them new songs to perform as a group, possibly even for this Fall's World Equestrian Games in Lexington.

UK singers are frontline workers in laying the foundation for the agricultural community Alltech is building in Haiti.

There will be houses, farm animals and crops, a hospital and a school. Before the school building is even constructed, this music education program is well under way. The touring children's choir is a long-term goal. While it's still too early to tell whether that will actually come to pass, young people are learning music and the joys it brings.

Castillo says that he has seen extreme poverty in Mexico, but never quite what he has found in Haiti. He believes that this is some of the most important work he has ever done. "It doesn't matter who you are — rich or poor. It's important to share your gifts with each other. Music is what brought me to where I am. I've been blessed to be able to share it with influential people all over the world; but to share it with these little kids



Eric Brown with a young student in Haiti this summer.

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

is so great – we plant a powerful seed that will germinate later.”

He is especially proud to be a part of a project which ultimately will enable people to take care of themselves. His part is to help establish music education in the schools, which may be continued by UK students, perhaps as a practicum site for future music education majors. He also speaks about how deeply music can touch the souls of Haitian children. And they’ve touched his soul. They’re “such a big part of my heart,” he said.

Castillo is a busy man. With the leading role in the UKOT production of *La Bohème*, he could make his own singing his entire focus, but he feels

“It ...feels like
I am doing
the most
important
work in
my life.”

Manuel Castillo

drawn to what is going on in the larger world. “Eric Brown and I found in Haiti a group that is always willing, always happy, always excited, always learning and absorbing what we bring them. We only bring music, though many people there need so much more, but they learn it and enjoy it; they make it their

own and at the same time make me feel welcome and make me one of them. What they do not have doesn’t affect their happiness. Ultimately we are, with this project, going to teach them how to make a better life for themselves.

“It ...feels like I am doing the most important work in my life.”

— By Anne Taul

Star judges announced for November Met Auditions

The Lexington Opera Society is proud to announce the distinguished judges for the Kentucky District Metropolitan Opera Auditions on November 20:

- Danielle Orlando, pianist, is a master vocal coach at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia and is the Principal Opera Coach of the Curtis Institute of Music. She collaborated with Luciano Pavarotti, worked with Gian Carlo Menotti and has served on the music staffs of many opera companies, festivals and young artist programs in North and South America and Europe.
- William J. Powers joined Pittsburgh Opera as Director of Artistic Administration and Artistic Operations in 2007. After serving as Administrative Director of Juilliard’s Department of Vocal Arts and the Juilliard Opera Center, he joined the Metropolitan Opera’s Artistic Department as Associate Director of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. He has also served as General Director of the Berkshire Opera Company.

- Samuel Ramey has reigned as one of the music world’s foremost interpreters of bass and bass-baritone operatic and concert repertoire for over three decades. His repertoire of over 50 roles includes operas by Mozart, Gounod, Puccini, Verdi, Floyd, Prokofiev, Donizetti and Berlioz. He has sung 291 times at the Metropolitan Opera and is the most recorded bass in history. Ramey resides in Chicago and maintains a schedule of more than 70 performances each season. He will also conduct a Master Class in Memorial Hall on Sunday afternoon.

Professor Cliff Jackson will accompany most of the singers.

The Kentucky auditions are renowned for our large and enthusiastic audience, and we hope to continue that tradition.

The winners of the Kentucky District, as well as winners of the Arkansas, Middle/East Tennessee, North Alabama and West Tennessee/Mississippi Districts, will progress to the Mid-South Regional Auditions in Memphis on February 5, 2011.

Lexington Opera Society Calendar

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER

La Bohème (Ticketed Event) Sept. 30 &
Oct. 1, 3, 7:30 pm; Oct. 3 , 2:00 pm
Lexington Opera House

Bo Skovhus In Concert (Ticketed Event)
Sept. 28, 7:30 pm
Singletary Center for the Arts , UK Campus

Schmidt Youth Vocal Competition (Free,
Open to the Public)
Oct. 23, 8:30 am, Singletary Center

God Bless Us Everyone
by Thomas Pasatieri
Co-production with DiCapo Opera
Theatre, NY, NY (Ticketed Event)
Dec. 21 & 22, 7:30 pm
Lexington Opera House

New Year's Eve Gala (Ticketed Event)
Dec. 31, 8:00 pm
Hilary J. Boone Center, UK Campus

Faculty, Student Recitals

November - December

Metropolitan Opera District
Auditions (Free, Open to
the Public)
Nov.20, 10:00 am
Memorial Hall, UK Campus

Metropolitan Opera Master
Class with Samuel Ramey
(Free, open to the public)
Nov. 21, 2:00 pm Memorial
Hall

Alltech Holiday Celebration
(Free, open to the public)
Dec. 12, 6:00 pm
Victorian Square Shoppes,
Main and Broadway

(Free, Open to Public)
Tenatively at 7:30 p.m. in the Singletary

Concert Hall:
Amanda Balltrip -Sept.
18
Dr. Angelique Clay - Oct.
5
Sarah Klopfenstein -
Nov. 30
Dione Johnson - Dec. 9
Julie LaDouceur - Dec. 4

COMING UP:
Undergraduate voice
majors will present The
Pirates of Penzance at
Memorial Hall the week-
end of April 15, 2011.



World Games Opening Ceremonies a vocal showcase

The Opening Ceremonies on September 25 will get the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games off to a “racing start,” according to Dr. Everett McCorvey. His company, Global Creative Connections, will produce the Games’ Opening and Closing Ceremonies.

McCorvey says “We will highlight both the best of Kentucky and the best of America, and begin these Games with incredible celebration and fanfare.”

The Opening Ceremonies will feature a star-studded lineup of American musical performers, including:

- Wynonna Judd, who will sing “My Old Kentucky Home,” in tribute to the first-ever American venue for WEG;
- Sarah Lee Guthrie, the daughter of famed folk music singer Arlo Guthrie and the granddaughter of Woody Guthrie;
- Metropolitan Opera star soprano Denyce Graves; and artists from Jazz from Lincoln Center.

Hopefully, the youngest singers in this dazzling array will be the children of Haitian Harmonies, a choir from the music program established by the University of Kentucky vocal music program under the direction of McCorvey at the Centre Educatif l’Union des Coeurs, Alltech’s new school in Haiti. At press time details were still being worked out to allow the young singers to travel to Kentucky.

The Ceremonies will also include performances

by Champion rider and equine competitor Stacy Westfall and other noted Western-style performers including Vince Bruce, Eitan Beth-Halachmy, Double Dan Horsemanship, Tommie Turvey, the California Cowgirls, and the Riata Ranch Cowboy Girls.

Chris McCarron, an American Thoroughbred Racing Hall of Fame jockey and founder of the North American Racing Academy, will represent the best of Thoroughbred racing tradition, and

the elite Black Horse Troop and Equestriennes from Culver Academies, (founded in 1897) will demonstrate their superb horsemanship with color guard drill routines.

The Games are the world’s most prestigious equestrian event, featuring world championships in eight equestrian sports. The 2010 Games, September 25-October 10, will be the first ever held in America.

The Opening Ceremonies will be September 25, at

7:00 p.m. in the Outdoor Stadium at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, the venue for the Games.

Closing Ceremonies will be celebrated in the same location, on October 10 at 4:00 p.m.

Tickets for the Games’ Opening and Closing ceremonies range from \$120 to \$150. They can be purchased at www.ticketmaster.com, through www.alltechfeigames.com, or via the Ticketmaster hotline at 1-800-745-3000.

— By Mary Powell



A wide array of American talent will be on stage when the world comes to Kentucky for the World Equestrian Games, including Denyce Graves, right, and Wynonna Judd.

Lexington Opera Society Lecture Series (Opera 101)

Fall 2010 Schedule

Dr. Tedrin Blair Lindsay, Musicologist

16 October
30 October
6 November
13 November
20 November
4 December

American Opera from Colonial Times through 1957
In Depth with Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Medium*
In Depth with Menotti's *The Consul*
In Depth with Menotti's *The Saint of Bleeker Street*
The Vocal Music of Thomas Pasatieri
Tedrin's Holiday Recording Spectacular!



TEDRIN'S CORNUCOPIA The Annual Lexington Opera Society Benefit Concert 2010

Dr. Lindsay, with Special
Guests Holly Flack
(Coloratura Soprano)
and Luther Lewis III
(Tenor), will perform
at the home of Clifton
and Rene Smith, 3105
Warrenwood Wynd,
at 5:00 pm on Sunday,
Oct. 24th. Wine, sodas
and light hor d'oeuvres
will be served. \$50 per
person. All who have
signed up, but not
yet paid, should mail
checks payable to LOS
to: Louise Shouse,
1208 Walkers Way,
Lexington, KY 40502.

Responding to requests by several long-time attendees of this series that I speak on the topic of my dissertation, "The Coming of Age of American Opera: New York City Opera and the Ford Foundation, 1958-1960," I have decided to devote this entire semester to subjects pertaining to American opera.

The first lecture will combine the first three chapters of my dissertation into a discussion of the gradual development of opera in this country, in two distinctly different strains – the more traditional works in opera houses, and the more theatrical works on Broadway. The talk will then focus on the founding and growth of New York City Opera as a high-minded proletarian institution to foster native operas as well as European ones.

In the spring semester, I will devote two lectures to the main substance of my dissertation, the teaming of New York City Opera and the Ford Foundation to stage entire seasons of only American opera, establishing once and for all an American voice in a genre hitherto inescapably European in flavor.

One artist figures prominently in that first lecture, and indeed throughout American opera – the great composer/librettist Gian Carlo Menotti. Just in time for Halloween, we will explore one of the spookiest and most dramatic operas ever written, *The Medium*, a concise and riveting thriller in which a half-crazed stager of phony séances comes fearfully to believe her own hocus-pocus. In the next two weeks, we will study Menotti's two works honored with Pulitzer Prizes, the bleak Cold War melodrama *The Consul*, and the fascinating study of mystical faith versus pragmatic agnosticism, *The Saint of Bleeker Street*.

With UK Opera Theatre presenting its second co-premiere of a Thomas Pasatieri opera this Christmas (*God Bless Us Everyone*, a sequel to Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, which has some of the characters emigrating to turn-of-the-century New York City), I thought it would be a great introduction to this exciting new work if we were to examine Pasatieri's many operas and songs for insights into his style and creative process, and the musical and thematic concerns that have attracted his attention. Since I have also served as vocal director for a couple of productions of *The Hotel Casablanca*, I have both a professional familiarity with Pasatieri's work and a personal friendship with him. This should be a fascinating opportunity to glimpse and understand a still-living, still-creating, well-respected composer of American opera.

The first weekend of December I want to play many fun and fantastic holiday recordings that make the season magical for me. Be forewarned: there will be a

lot of non-opera! In fact, I have a hunch it will be not only the most memorable and merry lecture to date in this ongoing series, but also perhaps the most well attended – let's jingle all the way!!

BRAVO!

- Tedrin Blair Lindsay

Tedrin's Recording Corner

by Tedrin Blair Lindsay, PhD

I just returned from a beach vacation on which I took three duffel bags of CDs (Very "old school" in this era of iPods). I got around to hearing lots of them. But there were two vocal recordings that I absolutely KNEW I would listen to, because they represent my romanticized idea of "the sea" perfectly, and no beach vacation would be complete without them – nor should any serious opera lover's recording shelf be!

Amilcare Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*, set in Venice, contains several fantastic sea-related numbers: in Act II alone are an extended fishermen's chorus with strophes sung by the baritone Barnaba (a villain, but one would not know it from this cheerful, rousing chantey), a gorgeous tenor aria "Cielo e mar" ("Sky and sea") in which Enzo scans the horizon for the boat bringing his beloved Laura to him, and an exciting mezzo soprano aria "Stella del marinar" ("Mariners' star") in which Laura prays for protection from her husband, the Doge Alvise (bass). Other famous excerpts are the contralto aria "Voce di donna o d'angelo?" ("Voice of woman or of angel?"), sung by *Gioconda's* elderly mother La Cieca after Laura saves her from a rabid mob, "O monumento" ("O monument") in which Barnaba boasts of his dark powers as a spy, and *Gioconda's* dramatic aria "Suicidio!" in which she contemplates ending her life of unrequited love for Enzo and sexual harassment from Barnaba. *La Gioconda*, premiered at Milano's Teatro alla Scala in 1876, is the opera I most often turn to when I'm in the mood for something like but not actually by Puccini or Verdi. Ponchielli's treatment of chorus and orchestra remind one of



Maria Callas

Verdi's grandeur, but the melodic lines and the inclination to be "over the top" are Puccini-esque. It is one of the rare operatic works with major roles for all six of the principal vocal categories (soprano, mezzo soprano, contralto, tenor, baritone, and bass). It requires huge performing forces, spectacular staging, and most of all, a magnificent dramatic soprano who can act with all her might.

The only recording of *La Gioconda* you will ever need is the one featuring Maria Callas. With *Tosca*, I consider *Gioconda* the most perfect fit of diva to character. Her interpretation is forceful, even stunning, and her singing is a master class in the difference between "head voice" and "chest voice," and how to blend the two to devastating artistic effect. The other singers render their parts with excellence and intensity, especially Piero Cappuccilli as Barnaba, and my favorite mezzo, Fiorenza Cossotto, as Laura. The orchestral and choral forces of *La Scala* are led in this 1959 recording by Antonio Votto. It is available on EMI Records CDS 7 49518 2.

The other recording I could not live without at the beach is a classic treasury of sea shanties recorded in 1960 by the Men of the Robert Shaw Chorale. It features such songs as "Blow the Man Down," "What Shall We Do With the Drunken Sailor," "Haul Away, Joe," and "Spanish Ladies," as well as the most beautiful rendition of "Shenandoah" you are ever likely to hear. Don't let this true musical pirate's treasure stay buried – *Sea Shanties* is available on RCA Victor 09026-63528-2.

I don't just save these recordings for the beach. I listen to each of them several times throughout the year, and so will you!

Ahoy, mateys!!



Dr. Michael Tick has been appointed Dean of the College of Fine Arts at U.K. Formerly chair of the department of theater at LSU, Tick has extensive experience

Who's New at UKOT

in theatrical and musical presentation. Tick's former dean at LSU described him as "an engaged, talented and passionate leader." LOS welcomes Dr. Tick and looks forward to a working with him!

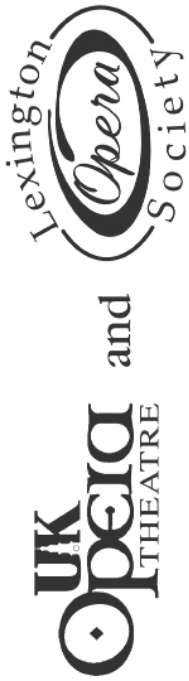
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