



BRAVO!

Lexington Opera Society Newsletter

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Fall 2007

Check in to the *Hotel Casablanca*

A Unique Collaboration: New Opera Unites UKOT, San Francisco Opera, Noted Composer

The collaboration between UK Opera Theatre and the composer of *The Hotel Casablanca* began with a question: Did Everett McCorvey, director of the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre, know composer Thomas Pasatieri?

The question came from a colleague interviewing for the directorship of the Singletary Center for the Arts. When McCorvey replied that he indeed knew Pasatieri's work, he learned that the composer was seeking a university partner for the premiere of a new opera.

McCorvey made sure Pasatieri received a packet of information and some UKOT recordings, including one of *The Tender Land*. Before long, the two men were in touch.

"In less than a week, I received a wonderful e-mail from Thomas Pasatieri which had in the subject line, 'Thomas Pasatieri Loves Opera!'" McCorvey recalled. "This was the beginning of a wonderful, ongoing conversation."

McCorvey invited Pasatieri to Lexington, and in the spring of 2006 the composer attended the UKOT production of *The Magic Flute* and also gave a master class to vocal students. During the visit McCorvey, Pasatieri, and the UKOT creative staff discussed *The Hotel Casablanca* project. Pasatieri suggested a partnership with the San Francisco Opera's Merola Young Artist program to present the

opera in two productions using separate casts but the same creative team. The Merola program offers 11 weeks of intensive training to a select group of young artists.

Not long after Pasatieri's visit, stage director Richard Kagey came to Lexington to see a performance of *It's a Grand Night for Singing!* "This was an opportunity for him to get to know our program, to meet our faculty, staff and students," McCorvey said. "Kagey was very excited by what he saw and voiced his excitement concerning working on *The Hotel Casablanca* project with UK Opera Theatre." Meetings with the staff from San Francisco Opera followed and an agreement was reached.

The Hotel Casablanca had its world premiere Aug. 3 in San Francisco on a set built by UKOT's David Steinmetz and Marc Schlackman. As part of the collaboration, 17 UKOT students and five staff members traveled to San Francisco to work with that city's opera on the production. The UK students had the opportunity to take master classes with Pasatieri and others.

"This is one of the very few times that one of the Big 5 opera companies has partnered with a public university in such a meaningful way," McCorvey said. "I am hopeful that, as the word gets out about this collaboration, there will be

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Composer Thomas Pasatieri

About the Opera

The Hotel Casablanca, Pasatieri's 19th opera set to an original libretto by the composer, is a two-act comedy set in 1948. It follows a wealthy Texan couple and their attempts to "toughen up" their 25-year-old nephew visiting from New York. The opera is based on the Feydeau play, *A Flea in Her Ear*, and set at the mythical Double-T Ranch and the seedy Hotel Casablanca, which is filled with assorted eccentric guests. *The Hotel Casablanca* is composed for nine principal singers and an orchestra of 17 musicians.

UKOT & Kentucky Opera Collaborative Studio Artist Program

A group of UKOT students is spending the fall semester in Louisville as resident apprentice artists in that city's professional opera company. David Roth, general director of Kentucky Opera, and Everett McCorvey, director of UK Opera Theatre, recently announced the new Studio Artist Program, which is intended to give students professional opportunities while offering opera companies budding talent.

Kentucky Opera has offered Megan McCauley, the top prizewinner of the Alltech Opera Scholarship Competition, a future role. The four UK studio artists for this fall's season at Kentucky Opera are Afton Battle, Chuck Chandler, Amelia Groetsch, and Mark Kano.

In September Battle was the understudy for *Turandot* while Chuck Chandler and Mark Kano sang tenor roles in an innovative Kentucky Opera/Louisville Orchestra/Louisville Ballet joint production of *The Magic Flute* as well as sharing the role of the Emperor in *Turandot*. Amelia Groetsch is the understudy for Leonora in *Il Trovatore* on Oct. 12 and 14.

In addition to participating in outreach programs for Kentucky Opera, the artists will perform small roles and serve in the choruses of other productions. The singers are full-time students with graduate assistantships at UK, returning to campus two mornings each week for nine hours of voice, opera, and independent study. However, they reside and work in Louisville.

At an Aug. 22 gathering held at Lexington's Tuska Gallery,

Roth elaborated on the win/win aspects of the Studio Artist Program. He noted that the program provides participants a collaboration with a professional company while they are still in school. For Kentucky Opera, the program provides an avenue to discover and promote talent at an early stage. For the state as well as the performers, this is an opportunity for artists to live and work in Kentucky. They do not have to leave the state to perform.

Roth said the Studio Artist Program will develop into a national model. He emphasized that the students deserve the platform Kentucky Opera can give them. Last spring while looking for tenors, he traveled to auditions in four states. He found Chuck Chandler and Mark Kano on his doorstep at UKOT's auditions for *Hotel Casablanca*.

Next fall, students from the University of Louisville's music school will also participate in the Studio Artist Program. On the opera stage, the Cats and the Cards have set aside their rivalry.

All Louisville performances will be staged at the Kentucky Center for the Arts. The Lexington Express bus will run from Lexington to Louisville for each matinee, returning after a post-performance dinner. For further information and tickets, call the Kentucky Opera Box Office at 1-800-690-9236 or visit the website at www.kyopera.org.

by Louise Shouse

A View from Backstage Kirsty McLean, visiting costumer for *Hotel Casablanca*.



When Bob Haven, UK Professor of Costuming, sent a message out to the Arts Institute at Bournemouth in Dorset, England, he knew he was plowing in fertile ground. Haven has spent time at Bournemouth in the past—enough so that Kirsty McLean could say, “Bob Haven is very much loved at Bournemouth!”

So, when the announcement arrived that the University of Kentucky was looking for a costumer for its production of a new opera, McLean responded, and she was selected. In an interview, Kirsty said, “This is brilliant for me to

come here now and do a design job where it's professional, but still relaxed. Absolutely a dream job for me!”

Kirsty is responsible for designing and building (or procuring) all the costumes for *The Hotel Casablanca*. She is an innovative young designer. In a sneak peek at some of her drawings for a hypothetical production of *The Nutcracker* for instance, we see a contemporary treatment in which Kirsty “was thinking of all kinds of dance: burlesque, hip hop, people on roller skates, Harajuku Girls...” Her designs are lush and beautiful, and we can all look forward to seeing them at the Lexington Opera House in October! Welcome Kirsty!

by Meriah Kruse

Tedrin's Recording Corner

by Tedrin Blair Lindsay



Ever since I discussed Renée Fleming and Cecilia Bartoli at the LOS Lecture Series this past spring, I can't get enough of three albums by each of these ladies. Interestingly, these six recordings are recent efforts by Fleming and Bartoli, who have gotten much better in the last 10 years - to an amazing degree.

I have already recommended one Fleming album in a previous column, her American opera arias CD *I Want Magic!* Yes, these other three are so good that I recommend having all four. I was playing Fleming's recording of Handel arias the other night when my good friend, Catherine Clarke, was over, and she had to ask who was singing. Catherine couldn't believe it was Renée, commenting, "She doesn't have any of her annoying Flemingisms!"

Indeed, Fleming has come into her own with such glorious, really perfect singing. Her "Let the Bright Seraphim" is simply the best. Then there's her fabulous *Bel Canto* album, with an interesting selection of bravura showpieces by Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini, performed in an appropriately over-the-top manner. Finally, the LOS opera class will confirm how stunning is her most recent recording, *Homage: The Age of the Diva*, devoted to favorite arias of the greatest sopranos a century ago. We all sat there in the Niles Gallery and cried as she sang ecstatically in the sensuous excerpt from Erich Korngold's *Das Wunder der Heliane*. (Catherine's comment about this one the other night was, "Just when you think it can't soar any higher, it just keeps going!") I am in awe of this soprano, who is to my mind the greatest by far of this generation.

Now on to Bartoli, who can sing 10,000 notes per second, it seems. The flexibility and precision of her technique are matched by her fiery interpretations and truly incredible three-and-a-half octave range. She also has stopped singing in that crooning, breathy manner that used to mar some of her artistry by overuse - she still does it sometimes, but for color not for laziness. Two of the albums I recommend are devoted to one composer each, *The Vivaldi Album* and *Dreams and Fables: Gluck Italian Arias*. They are both imaginatively programmed and flawlessly executed, and the Gluck album is also elegantly packaged as a hardcover CD-sized book, with the CD pocket inside the back cover - truly luxurious. Her album of Handel, Scarlatti, and Caldara arias, *Opera Proibita*, is a recording of breathtaking brilliance. Every musical gesture has been carefully crafted, but the performance gives a feeling of total artistic release - exciting, urgent, thrilling.

I am moved by how much these ladies have grown, both as technicians and as artists, from their starting points of excellence. We are lucky to be living during the height of their careers, because in 25 years or so, we will be the old fogies saying, "Yes, but I heard Fleming do that, or I remember when Bartoli sang such and such." These recordings are treasures, and I know they will bring you many hours of joy as they have me.



Renée Fleming

Handel (Decca B0003160-02) - Harry Bicket & Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, 2003.

Bel Canto (Decca 289 467 101-2) - Patrick Summers & Orchestra of St. Luke's, 1999.

Homage: The Age of the Diva (Decca B000HXDEV2) - Valery Gergiev & Kirov Orchestra, 2006.



Cecilia Bartoli

The Vivaldi Album (Decca 289 466 569-2) - Il Giardino Armonico, 1999.

Dreams and Fables: Gluck Italian Arias (Decca 289 467 248-2) - Bernard Forck & Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, 2001.

Opera Proibita (Decca B0005151-02) - Marc Minkowski & Les Musiciens du Louvre, 2005.

UK Opera Theatre 2007-2008 Season

The Hotel Casablanca - A New Comedic Opera by Thomas Pasatieri

October 12, 13; 19, 20, 2007 - 7:30 p.m.

Lexington Opera House

Tickets: \$12-34, Reservations: (859)257-4929 or www.uky.edu/scfa

Songs of Thomas Pasatieri

October 15, 2007 - 7:30 p.m.

U.K. Singletary Center for the Arts, Recital Hall

FREE

Metropolitan Opera National Council District Auditions

Sponsored by Lexington Opera Society

November 17, 2007 - 1 p.m.

U.K. Memorial Hall

FREE www.kydistrictauditions.org

Alltech & UK Opera Theatre's "Old Fashioned Holiday Sing-Along"

At Victorian Square

Dec. 15, 2007 - 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

FREE

Metropolitan Opera National Council Regional Auditions

Sponsored by Lexington Opera Society

January 19, 2008 - 1 p.m.

U.K. Memorial Hall

FREE www.kydistrictauditions.org

Hansel and Gretel - An Opera by Englebert Humperdink

February 29, March 1; March 7, 8, 2008 - 7:30 p.m.

Lexington Opera House

Tickets: \$12-34, Reservations: (859)257-4929 or www.uky.edu/scfa

Alltech Opera Scholarship Competition

March 2, 2008 - 2 p.m.

UK Singletary Center for the Arts, Concert Hall

FREE

It's A Grand Night for Singing!

June 6, 7; 13, 14, 2008 - 7:30 p.m.

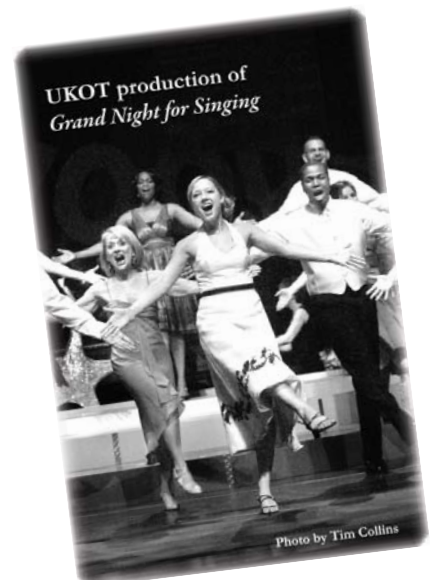
June 8, 15, 2008 - 2 p.m.

UK Singletary Center for the Arts

Tickets: \$12-34, Reservations: (859)257-4929 or www.uky.edu/scfa

UK Opera Theatre Office/Information: (859)257-9331

BRAVO!



What's New at UKOT

Angelique Clay begins her work at UKOT

Some say you can never go back, but Angelique Clay has, and she is creating a wonderful new space for herself in the UK School of Music. After receiving both her master's and doctoral degrees here, Dr. Clay joined the faculty of Oakwood College. Recently she was hired to be the newest member of the UK voice faculty, and she is being very well received by our students — including those in her Opera Workshop class. Her students are abuzz with excitement! In a recent interview, Dr. Clay described her approach to the class: "I want my students to learn to focus on process, as well as learn the fundamentals of acting and stagecraft so that when they get to do a full opera they will have an awareness of themselves, how they fit into the production, and a sense of the stage and the audience." The class includes a return to the basics: working on spoken monologues (stripping away the familiar structures of music), stage combat, makeup, costuming, and awareness techniques such as the Feldenkrais Method. The workshop culminates in applying these perspectives to a staged aria at the end of the semester. Welcome Dr. Clay!

Margo Buchanan joins the staff

Margo Buchanan, who many may know from her work in the past with UKOT's Lexington Opera Outreach Program (LOOP), has joined our staff on a project basis to spearhead the inaugural Kentucky-based Schmidt Youth Vocal Competition. She is leading a team of experienced competition organizers, including Colleen Lauve and Sarah Downs. She is also directing the newest LOOP production, *Sid the Serpent Who Wanted to Sing*. Margo has directed many other LOOP productions, including *Billy Goats Gruff*, *Three Little Pigs*, *Little Red's Most Unusual Day*, *Monkey See Monkey Do*, *Oh Freedom!*, and *Freedom Trail*. She and her husband Michael Friedman co-authored *Freedom Trail*, which will be back in production in Spring 2008. Welcome Margo!

Sid the Serpent Who Wanted to Sing now in rehearsal at K-House

After a lengthy search for a second tenor to join UKOT veterans Alicia Helm McCorvey, Sarah Downs, and Jason Vest to round out the cast of *Sid the Serpent*, Nicholas Provenzale, a baritone from Bloomington, Indiana, has agreed to join us for the fall tour. Welcome Nicholas!

Thomas Pasatieri Festival: 10 Days of Music Oct. 9 — 20

To celebrate the presence of this prolific artist in our community, UKOT is hosting a 10-day THOMAS PASATIERI FESTIVAL. In addition to the Kentucky premier of Pasatieri's *The Hotel Casablanca*, the Festival includes:

- **Opera Preview Luncheon**, featuring excerpts from *The Hotel Casablanca* performed by cast members, followed by a delicious three-course lunch with dessert at Portofino's Restaurant. Tuesday, Oct. 9 at noon. \$25 per person. By reservation only. Call 253-9300.
- **Songs of Pasatieri**, a FREE evening of art songs performed by the UK Opera Theatre at the Singletary Center Recital Hall on Monday, Oct. 15 at 7:30 p.m.
- **Meet Thomas Pasatieri**, an artist's talk and question/answer session focusing on Pasatieri's film career, at the historic Kentucky Theatre on Tuesday, Oct. 16 at 5 p.m. \$5 at the door.
- **Texas-style Gourmet Barbeque** with all the fixins! at Natasha's Café, Oct. 16 at 6:00 p.m. \$30 includes tax and tip. By reservation only. Call 259-2754.
- **Public Vocal Arts Master Class** Everyone is invited to observe the fascinating process of developing a fine singing voice as serious Central Kentucky singers receive feedback and coaching from Pasatieri. FREE and open to the public. Call for details.

Grantmakers supporting LOS!

LOS has received a \$7,500 grant from the Kentucky Arts Council to support the development of an opera based on the life of Abraham Lincoln and to explore Lincoln's roots in Kentucky. UKOT plans to present excerpts from the new opera in February at a Lincoln Bicentennial Celebration sponsored by the Kentucky Humanities Council and also to conduct audience feedback workshops using scenes from the opera in the Spring of 2008. The full stage production of *River Of Time*, as it has been titled by librettist James Rodgers, will premier as the Spring 2009 offering on UKOT's season calendar. Joseph Baber is composing the opera. Watch this newsletter as more details unfold!

by Meriah Kruse



We remember Luciano Pavarotti
October 12, 1935 - September 6, 2007

Lexington Opera Society Lecture Series

(formerly "Opera 101")

Tedrin Blair Lindsay, Instructor

Location: Niles Gallery, UK Campus

Remaining Schedule for Fall 2007

October 20	The Artistry of Joan Sutherland
October 27	The Artistry of Birgit Nilsson
November 3	No class this Saturday
November 10	The Artistry of Renata Tebaldi

"Metropolitan Opera: Live in HD" Broadcasts 2007-2008 Season

Saturday, December 15, 2007 - 1:00 p.m.	<i>Roméo et Juliette</i> - Gounod
Tuesday, January 1, 2008 - 1:00 p.m.	<i>Hansel and Gretel</i> - Humperdink
Saturday, January 12, 2008 - 1:30 p.m.	<i>Macbeth</i> - Verdi
Saturday, February 16, 2008 - 1:00 p.m.	<i>Manon Lescaut</i> - Puccini
Saturday, March 15, 2008 - 1:30 p.m.	<i>Peter Grimes</i> - Britten
Saturday, March 22, 2008 - 12:30 p.m.	<i>Tristan und Isolde</i> - Wagner
Saturday, April 5, 2008 - 1:30 p.m.	<i>La Bohème</i> - Puccini
Saturday, April 26, 2008 - 1:30 p.m.	<i>La Fille du Régiment</i> - Donizetti

In Lexington these broadcasts are carried by Regal Cinemas in Hamburg Place. If you would like to receive reminder notifications about these broadcasts via email please go to the LOS website at www.lexingtonopera.com and request to be placed on the Met Broadcast E-Mail List.

Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions

Once again, a stellar trio of opera notables will serve as judges for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions for the Kentucky District. Hosted by the Lexington Opera Society, the auditions will take place at Memorial Hall on the University of Kentucky campus in Lexington on Nov. 11, 2007. Judges are Charles Anthony, Bruce Donnell, and Ashley Putnam.

Tenor Charles Anthony has sung more performances than any principal artist in the history of the Metropolitan Opera - 2,910 performances with the company as of the end of the 2006-07 season.

He is well known as a character singer, appearing in such roles as the Innkeeper in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Spoleta in *Tosca*, and Ruiz in *Il Trovatore*. He has also been heard at the Met in lead roles such as Almaviva in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, and Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*.

Bruce Donnell has been a stage director at the Metropolitan Opera since 1975. His work at the Met includes *Die Frau ohne Schatten* with Birgit Nilsson, *La Gioconda*, *Die Meistersinger*, *Parsifal*, *Don Giovanni*, *La Fille du Regiment*, and many others. A winner of two Emmy Awards, his television credits from the Metropolitan include *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Joan Sutherland and Alfredo Kraus, *Der Rosenkavalier* with Kiri Te



Charles Anthony as Spoleta. Courtesy Metropolitan Opera.

Kanawa and Tatiana Troyanos, *Billy Budd*, and the *Aida* that marked Leontyne Price's farewell to opera.

American soprano Ashley Putnam is an artist known for her broad range of repertoire. She has received particular acclaim for her Mozart heroines, including Donna Anna from *Don Giovanni* in Brussels and at the Metropolitan Opera; Electra from *Idomeneo* in Lyon, and others. Acclaim for her portrayals of Mozart heroines has been matched only by her success with Strauss' Marchallin, a role which she has sung at Deutsche Oper Berlin, Santa Fe Opera, Opera Colorado, Portland Opera, Seattle Opera and San Diego Opera.

The winners of the district auditions will compete at the Tri-State (Indiana, Southern Ohio, and Kentucky,) Regional Finals, also hosted by the Lexington Opera Society, on Jan.19, 2008 at Memorial Hall.

Judges for the regional auditions are Mignon Dunn of the Manhattan School of Music, Charles McKay of the St. Louis Opera, and George Dunn, vocal coach for the Metropolitan Opera.

Anthony and Putnam will also conduct public master classes over the district auditions weekend. For additional information on MONC auditions in Kentucky visit our new website at www.kydistrictauditions.org

by Pat Trotter

Hotel Casablanca cont'd from page 1

more opportunities of this nature with other companies."

The Hotel Casablanca will have its Lexington premiere Oct. 12 at the Opera House. Pasatieri and Kagey auditioned and selected the cast. After the

production, UKOT will record the opera for national and international release through Albany Records.

by Everett McCorvey



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