

## Lyrical simplicity of *La Bohème* resonates

*La Bohème*, one of the most frequently produced operas in the world, is set in Paris around 1830. It portrays the bohemian lifestyle (known in French as "la bohème") of a poor seamstress and her artist friends. The University of Kentucky Opera Theatre's production of *La Bohème* is March 3, 4, and 5 at the Lexington Opera House.

By Dorothy Carter

Even if you are not familiar with this wonderful opera, la bohème is all around us. In addition to the most common meaning – an unconventional lifestyle associated with artists and writers, as in Giacomo Puccini's opera – "bohemian" retains its resonance with a very wide range of applications. Originally, Bohemia was once an independent kingdom, with an ancient name based on that of a Celtic tribe called the Boli; it is now a region of the Czech Republic.

Shakespeare used it as a setting in "The Winter's Tale," wrecking a ship on the seacoast of Bohemia. Sherlock Holmes investigated "A Scandal in Bohemia."

Freddie Mercury of Queen wrote a complex song called *Bohemian Rhapsody*. Patrick Swayze once played a drag queen named Vida Bohème. Jonathan Larson's Broadway musical, *Rent*, is based on the opera (to see a comparison of the two, visit <https://www.hawaiiopera.org/news-events/la-boheme-vs-rent-role-comparison/>). Boho chic is a popular style for fashion and décor, mixing brightly colored patterns.

Certainly, the opera gives us a look at bohemian life, but that is not where its heart and soul lie. The last time I saw it on stage was at the Teatro Massimo in Palermo, and, at first, I thought that the experience was going to be a disaster. I was shoehorned into a tiny, stuffy box, behind two elderly Italian ladies who kept putting their heads together to whisper, blocking my view of the stage. I was

tempted to say something, but I was afraid that my Italian wasn't up to it. And besides, I was also afraid that the ladies' family name might be Corleone. So, I

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(<https://www.lexingtonoperahouse.com/events/detail/uk-opera-theatre-presents-la-boheme>)

## A La Bohème reflection: When the 'shoe' must go on!

By **Cacey Nardolillo**

In the fall of 2006, I was invited to sing the role of Violetta in University of Kentucky Opera Theatre's production of *La Traviata*. Everett McCorvey introduced me to John Nardolillo at that time, and I will admit that the first time I saw John my heart skipped a beat and I saw stars! Because John was attached at the time, I nursed my crush from afar.

Fast forward to 2008 when I began a doctorate and was cast as Musetta in UKOT's *La Bohème*. Working with John again was very exciting. During an Act II staging rehearsal, an incident occurred that forever changed the direction of our lives.

Our *Bohème* was set in the 1920s and my Musetta was a fiery flapper. Director Michael Ehrman had given me all kinds of "business" to do in the café scene, from smoking a cigarette and flirting seductively with every man on stage, sitting in the lap of my sugar daddy older boyfriend in a very provocative way, spilling a martini on the head of my ex-lover Marcello, to smashing plates to make him jealous.



One evening, the chorus was called for the first time to be inserted into the scene which we had carefully choreographed. The first time we ran it with music, the room was electric! During the climax of the scene, I was directed to sit down-stage center and kick my foot up on two high notes, as I complained of my shoe hurting

my foot. It created quite a scene, and as the energy of the chorus swelled around me, I kicked with such verve that my high heel shoe flew off of my foot, hit the ceiling above where John was conducting, landed square on his head, with dust flying from the panels above.

The room erupted with laughter, John kept conducting, handed me my shoe, the men in the scene carried me off stage as directed, and our director called it a night. The next night John and I had our first date at Portofino's and were married nine months later. A dramatic opera, turned real life!

*Cacey Nardolillo is chorus master for UKOT and a voice instructor at Centre College. She is director of the Kentucky District Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and head of voice area for the Prague Summer Nights Music Festival.*

### La Bohème

From Page 1

concentrated on just the sound—the Teatro Massimo has some of the best acoustics in the world. I had never before focused as intently on the purity and lyricism of the perfectly matched words and music.

In this opera, there is never bombast, never arias that strain after heightened emotional effect, no sign of impressive massed choruses. There is a lyrical simplicity that touches the heart and carries the audience along with the singers. Right at the start, Puccini gives us a moment of great beauty: When Mimi first meets Rodolfo, in her aria, *Si, mi chiamano Mimi, ma il mio nome è Lucia*, the words are normal conversation, but Mimi's voice soars upward at one point. We do not think, "Wow! She can really hit the high notes." We are given, perhaps, a look at the first instant of an emotional connection between a consumptive girl with cold hands and a threadbare

writer, and Puccini goes on to show us these young people in moments of happiness. We learn to care about these bohemians and to appreciate and live along with them, their love and friendship, and grief. Wisely, Puccini also lets us rejoice with them—anyone who can leave the theater without humming *Musetta's Waltz* has more resistance than I do.

*Editor's Note: It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Dorothy Carter. For several years Dorothy delighted newsletter readers with her witty, yet carefully researched*



*lead articles about UKOT productions. With a doctorate in French from the University of Kentucky, she also studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and at Oxford University in the United Kingdom. She retired in 2013 from Eastern Kentucky University after sharing her love of French language and culture with countless numbers of students.*

## UK grad living 'wildest dreams'

For as long as she can remember, Greta Rosenstock has dreamed of living abroad. She has also always wanted to be a teacher. When offered the opportunity to do both, she jumped at the chance.

"It is absolutely fulfilling my wildest dreams – and even exceeding them," said Rosenstock, a 2018 graduate of the University of Kentucky's music education program.

Although she is trained to teach music and is a performer herself, Rosenstock is currently teaching English as a foreign language in a concertada, or semi-private, school in Madrid, Spain. She teaches students in the American equivalent of grades 4 through 12.

"I knew teaching English would be a perfect way to combine my passions for education and travel," Rosenstock said.

"So far, my career has been a bit all over the map – and that is exactly what I wanted in the years immediately following graduation," she added. "I have always known that in the long run I want to teach choir. However, I have also always known that I love to perform and travel.

So, I gave myself a few years after graduation to try the things I always wanted to try, the things I always dreamed about."

First, the St. Louis, Missouri, native moved to New York City, where she auditioned and fully focused on performing. She also "fell into another path with which I have fallen in love" – Jewish music. She became a song leader/ritual leader in Jewish communities and continues to do that work today.



Toledo, Spain, is just a day trip from Madrid, where Greta Rosenstock lives and teaches.

"And now, I am following my love for travel and learning about the world by living abroad," Rosenstock said. "It is especially perfect because I am an educator, and while I am not currently teaching music in the classroom environment I studied for, I am still gaining professional experience in my field."

While she focuses on teaching, Rosenstock is learning new things herself. Of course, she's honing her skills in the Spanish language; she was a Spanish minor at UK. And she's experiencing different cultures by traveling all around Europe in her spare time.

"I cannot wait to bring everything I have learned home, to share with my future students and communities for

the rest of my career – in whatever form it takes," said Rosenstock, who plans to return to the United States by June, after the school year ends.

Rosenstock credits her time at UK and her teachers and peers for shaping her as a young professional and preparing her for her current role.

"My teachers and mentors challenged me and brought out my greatest potential while simultaneously showing me how to do the same for my students," she said. "The faculty at UK care so deeply for their students in a way that fosters a beautiful environment to grow and develop. In it, I honed my leadership skills, learned how to use my voice (teacher's and singer's) in an effective, balanced way, and found so much confidence and strength, and joy in my field."

"I could not have asked for a better university experience to prepare me to chase my dreams."

**"I cannot wait to bring everything I have learned home, to share with my future students and communities for the rest of my career – in whatever form it takes."**

*Greta Rosenstock*

## UKOT moving opera performances back to Opera House

The University of Kentucky Opera Theatre is moving its yearly opera performances from the Singletary Center for the Arts on UK's campus back to the Lexington Opera House in downtown Lexington. The move, according to UKOT Director Everett McCorvey, means the student performers will have the opportunity to perform in a real opera house once again.

"We really missed being able to place our students in an opera house environment," McCorvey said. "The Singletary Center is not an opera house – or what they call a roadhouse; it is a concert hall."

UKOT staged its operas at the Lexington Opera House for several years, but McCorvey moved them to Singletary in an effort to save money. However, retrofitting the Singletary Center to look and act like an opera house proved to be as costly.

McCorvey said he is excited about being back at the Opera House. He worked with Bill Young, chair of the Opera House Fund, Luanne Franklin and Tom Habermann of the Opera House staff, and Mark Shanda,



The Lexington Opera House.

dean of the UK College of Fine Arts to bring it to fruition.

"*Grand Night* this past summer was our first test of being back and the students loved it. The staff is amazing. It's just great to be back there," McCorvey said.

The next UKOT opera there is *La Bohème* March 3, 4, and 5. (See front page for more information.) *The Magic Flute* will be presented there in the fall of 2022.

## Grand Night marks 30 years with June performances

When *It's a Grand Night for Singing* takes the stage June 11, the annual production will mark 30 years that the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre has been saluting Broadway and musical theater. To Everett McCorvey, that's reason to celebrate.

"Thirty years and *Grand Night* is still going strong," said McCorvey, UKOT director and co-creator of the musical revue featuring students and members of the community. "That's quite an accomplishment for a production to have that much staying power."

*It's a Grand Night for Singing* wasn't always the high-energy, high-impact production that delights audiences today, however. In fact, when it first took the stage in 1992, all the performers stood on risers and sang, as in a choral concert. There were no costumes, no dancing, no special

lighting. Only singing – good singing, no doubt, but minus all the frills that now characterize the performances.

"The big difference between *Grand Night* now and *Grand Night* 30 years ago is just the grandness of it," McCorvey said. "It evolved from more of a choral concert to now more of a Las Vegas- or New York-type, high-energy revue. It is something similar to what you see on a Broadway stage."

Still, audiences showed up for that first night of *It's a Grand Night for Singing*, so much so that officials had to hold the show for 20 minutes while tickets were being sold.

"Our very first show was Rodgers and Hammerstein," McCorvey said. "We had no idea what type of audience we would have since we didn't sell advance tickets. Not only did they show up; they loved it. We have

several who have come every year for 30 years."

McCorvey, along with the now-retired director of the UK Theatre Department, Jim Rodgers, created the production to introduce students to the many career possibilities that awaited voice majors.

"Plus, I wanted something that they had to put together in a very short amount of time, because that's another requirement of musical theater. You don't have the luxury of having a whole semester to learn a show," said McCorvey, adding that they now put it together in about five weeks.

*It's a Grand Night for Singing* will feature eight performances at the Singletary Center for the Arts on UK's campus. There will be two shows on June 11 and 18, and one on June 12, 17, and 19. More information will be available at a later date.



## Message from the President: W. Harry Clarke

In spite of Covid and the limitations it has placed on OperaLex activities, we have had a marvelous first half of our year. Now we have the second half to anticipate and continue our work in restructuring our organization and putting it on a more secure and progressive platform. We have had the immeasurable talent and energy of new Development Coordinator Vicky Myers, (see page 6), who has been a valuable contributor to the mission of OperaLex.

OperaLex is continuing its development of a membership program that provides different levels of membership in OperaLex, with benefits that appropriately match each level. You will hear more about this new development this spring. The program will officially begin July 1 for the 2022-23 OperaLex year. We urge you to add your support for our organization and the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre by formally joining OperaLex through our new membership program later this spring.

One of the most exciting announcements that I can make in this issue is the selection of Trifecta, a website design company located in Lexington to update the OperaLex website. In the words of Kay Collier McLaughlin, Communication Committee chair, we were looking for "a company which would provide a professional, creative, and contemporary website." Trifecta will completely redesign our website, developing a new, refreshing approach to our mission, our activities, and our accomplishments, resplendent with photos and video of the UK opera program.

Under the leadership of the chair of our Student Development Committee, Cheryl Lalonde, OperaLex developed a program where vocal students were "adopted" by a member of the Board of Directors to share experiences and provide a kindly ear and voice for students away from home. We held a grand Holiday Reception at the King Alumni House for those students, our board, and the UK vocal professors. Several students sang for us, and Tedrin Lindsay provided his exceptional piano rendition of *Joy to the World*.

The death of Ralph Miller, husband of Pam Miller, former Lexington mayor and president of OperaLex, was a shock to all of us who knew Ralph and Pam. To honor them, OperaLex has established the Ralph and Pam Miller Outstanding Undergraduate Vocal Student Scholarship of \$1,000, to be presented annually at the School of Music's McCracken Award reception held each May. Pam's leadership of OperaLex played an important role in the progression of the organization to the position it holds today in its major support role for UKOT.

I am pleased to announce that we will have a new intern from UK's arts administration program this spring semester. Olivia Dotson, a senior, graduating in May, is from Paris/Bourbon County and has specialized in digital media and design, and community leadership and development as the focus of her major.

Serving as a board member of OperaLex is an honor for those who appreciate the contributions our organization makes to UKOT. But it takes special people who want to be part of a working board with an inspiring mission. We meet once a month on the second Thursday of the month, and members serve on one committee that best matches their interest. Are you interested? Please contact me at [hclarke@uky.edu](mailto:hclarke@uky.edu) or call me at 859-420-8844. I would be pleased to discuss OperaLex and board membership more fully.

I close by expressing my admiration for our Board of Directors and their willingness to work for the success of OperaLex and through it, the students and teachers of UKOT.

# ON BOARD

SPOTLIGHT ON OPERALEX BOARD MEMBERS

In each issue of BravoLex, we feature three of OperaLex's dedicated board members.



## CONNIE JENNINGS

Connie Jennings has been an internist at University of Kentucky HealthCare for more than 30 years. She served as medical director for UK Clinic South, UK's first off-campus clinic. Currently, she has a dual role as medical director of the CareBlue Service and Integrative Medicine and Health Clinic. She has been involved in a steady effort to build integrative medicine in the fabric of UK HealthCare.

Volunteer work has always been a part of Jennings' life. In addition to the OperaLex board, she serves on the board of the Lexington Public Library. She has also volunteered for the Hope Center, the Arboretum, and Salvation Army Clinic.



## STEPHEN LLOYD WEBB

Stephen Lloyd Webb is a recognized entrepreneur and industry leader with over 30 years in pharmaceutical, academic, and clinical research.

In 1997, he co-founded REGISTRAT, Inc., a contract research organization based in Lexington that later merged with Mapi Group to form the largest global contract research organization solely dedicated to late phase clinical research. Mapi Group was acquired by ICON plc in 2017.

Webb is also active in various arts, entertainment, and charitable organizations.



## NANCY WREDE

Nancy Wrede has, for more than a decade, been a homemaker and substitute teacher for Fayette County Public Schools, providing support as lead teacher, paraeducator, bookkeeper, registrar, and more.

While growing up in Minnesota, she was able to travel the world with her mother, who introduced her to museums, ancient history, and different cultures. Her mother also sang classical music and exposed Wrede and her siblings to opera, symphonies, and musicals at a very young age.

Before becoming a mother of three, Wrede spent 20 years as a marketing/advertising assistant, event planner, and executive assistant.

## OperaLex hires first development coordinator

Throughout the years, OperaLex has counted on its volunteer president to be the organization's chief fundraiser. Now, under current president W. Harry Clarke and board, a development coordinator has been hired to plan and execute a successful fundraising program to benefit the University of Kentucky Opera Theatre.

Vicky Myers, whose philanthropic experience spans 40 years, took over the duties Sept. 1.

"It was clear to me that we needed a professional with the experience and skills to fill that role and expand the tremendous potential of OperaLex to raise funds for the UK opera program," Clarke said. "We found that person in Vicky, and she is busy doing the work."

"An opera program of quality is expensive, and UKOT needs funding beyond what UK can provide and what ticket sales add to the budget," he added.

Myers, a native of Central Pennsylvania, has raised more than

\$600 million for causes in the environmental sector, academic medicine, social services, and the arts.

"I've spent my career building and growing programs, and I think I can help OperaLex create a structure and plan to deliver more resources to fund opera performances, scholarships, and meet other needs that are helping our students launch vocal careers across the country and world," Myers said.



Myers spent several years with UK HealthCare, serving as adviser to the executive vice president for health affairs and as chief philanthropy officer. Throughout her tenure, she: established a comprehensive clinical, hospital, and College of Medicine philanthropy program; raised more than \$180 million from annual gifts and alumni fundraising, and corporate/foundation philanthropy.

"I am so impressed with the passion and dedication of this all-volunteer-run organization," she said.

TalkingwithTedrin

# Tedrin's Recording Corner #43

By Tedrin Blair Lindsay

This spring I am teaching the vocal literature course for our upperclassmen and graduate students, which focuses on the beautiful art song repertoire of Western civilization, as opposed to the operatic repertoire. These miniature compositions represent a composer's response to a poem, rather than a tune and a lyric written together for popular consumption, and may stand alone as songs or be grouped together into song cycles around some theme. They usually require just a singer and a piano, or perhaps a lute or guitar, the music and poetry combining to form an intimate hybrid genre, like a shy, plainer sister of opera.

So, I would like to share with you a few art song recordings I have enjoyed over the years and which have re-inspired me while preparing this course.

Perhaps the two greatest composers of German art songs, called "lieder," were Franz Schubert, with his prodigious melodic gift, and Robert Schumann, who made the piano the equal partner to the singer in his songs. To me, the most outstanding traversals of Schubert's masterful song cycle *Die schöne Müllerin* (about an apprentice unrequitedly in love with the miller's daughter) and of Schumann's glorious cycle *Dichterliebe* (a poet's reflections about love) are by the Golden Age tenor Fritz Wunderlich. His effortless, shining voice assumes myriad colors in service of the poetry by Wilhelm Müller and Heinrich Heine, respectively. The Schumann recording also contains lieder by Beethoven and Schubert, and the pianist Hubert Giesen is Wunderlich's worthy collaborator.

One of my favorite countertenors is the Asian-American Brian Asawa, whose untimely death a few years ago saddened me greatly. The magnificence of his artistry is on full display in his album of 16th century English lute songs by John Dowland, Thomas Campion, and others, *The Dark Is My Delight*, with David Tayler providing stylish accompaniment on the lute. Another very interesting recording is *Vocalise*, in which he has curated a recital of highly embellished and florid art songs by Gabriel Fauré (French), Nikolai Medtner (German), Heitor Villa-Lobos (Brazilian), and Sergei Rachmaninov (Russian) – eclectic repertoire and stupendous vocalism, although the songs are presented with tasteful orchestral arrangements of the



original piano accompaniments, lovely but inauthentic.

Finally, I'd like to recommend two art song recital albums organized thematically. One is *Songs On Texts By William Shakespeare*, a highly intellectual yet accessible and engaging program covering four centuries of music and 15 composers, performed by tenor Ian Bostridge with pianist Antonio Pappano and others. The second is called *My Garden*, an anthology of 25 songs about flowers in German, French, and English, also culled from 15 composers. The singer is the British soprano Felicity Lott, whose bright, clear, piping voice reminds me of Julie Andrews if she had been an opera singer, and the legendary piano collaborator Graham Johnson is her partner.

These are but a few wonderful art song albums, which will surely whet your appetite for more.

Schubert, *Die schöne Müllerin* (Wunderlich 1966) – Deutsche Grammophon 447 452-2

Schumann, *Dichterliebe* (Wunderlich 1966) – Musical Heritage Society 514638A

*The Dark Is My Delight* (Asawa 1997) – RCA Victor 09026-68818-2

*Vocalise* (Asawa 1998) – RCA Victor 09026-68903-2

*Shakespeare Songs* (Bostridge 2016) – Warner Classics 90295 94473

*My Garden* (Lott 1997) – Hyperion CDA66937



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