

# Bringing opera to the masses

Festival's shows are varied, affordable

BY BENNETT CAMPBELL  
SENIOR WRITER

When opera is the topic of discussion, names like Wagner, Mozart and Verdi all come to mind.

But while Europeans have long dominated the art form, each summer Chapel Hill and Carrboro host an event that brings opera closer to home — and perhaps makes it easier for local residents to understand.

The Long Leaf Opera Festival, which began Wednesday and runs until June 29, presents its annual series of English-language operas, focusing on American composers. The events are hosted by UNC's Memorial and Gerrard halls and the ArtsCenter in Carrboro.

"Not only do we tell our stories in English, but we tell American stories," said Jim Schaeffer, Long Leaf's executive director. "The opera 'Regina' that we open with is about the post-Civil War South and the problems of greed and over-ambition that can tear families apart. That's something we still see today, with examples like Enron and Tyco."

The festival will feature the works of eight American composers whose stories all have the potential to hit home with audiences previously unfamiliar with opera.

Ricky Ian Gordon's "Orpheus and Euridice" is a prime example. His version of the classic Greek myth features N.C. native Elizabeth Futral as Euridice, who succumbs to a mysterious disease. Orpheus is played by Grammy-nominated clarinetist Todd Palmer, who originally asked Gordon to compose a piece for him.

"I was caring for a lover who was sick, so it was a difficult time, and I couldn't really come up with anything," Gordon said.

"But finally one night I was sleeping and I woke up at one in the morning and had an image of Todd as Orpheus. I ran to the dining



Grammy-nominated Todd Palmer performs as Orpheus (with clarinet) in "Orpheus and Euridice." The opera also features North Carolina native and soprano Elizabeth Futral, as well as Doug Varone and Dancers.

room table and started writing out this story with Orpheus as a reed player and Euridice dying of a mysterious virus."

Stories like that of Gordon's, along with the accessibility of the operas, are why organizers said attendance has climbed every year since the festival was founded in 1999.

"The festival is a very high brow kind of thing, all the European operas, that only the wealthy could attend — that was a major stumbling block for regular people," said Long Leaf's founding music director Benjamin Keaton.

"We felt that American and English composers were being neglected," Keaton said. "It's improving, and I think that's because we've been working on it."

This summer's operas, such as Mark Blitzstein's "Regina," are a way for the uninitiated to get a first taste of opera, Keaton said.

"I always think of the opening opera as the highlight, because 'Regina' is a very important opera about money-grabbing people after the Civil War. Eventually, it's their downfall," he said. "I really think 'Regina' is the best for first-timers. It's very accessible and it has some gorgeous music in it as well."

And Gordon is proof that not only can this summer's series bring opera to local residents, but that it's an opportunity for the composers themselves to bring new life to old works like "Orpheus and Euridice."

"One of the great privileges of being an artist in this world is that

## Upcoming shows

- ▶ June 13, 8 p.m., Memorial Hall
- ▶ June 14, 8 p.m., Gerrard Hall
- ▶ June 20, 8 p.m., Memorial Hall
- ▶ June 21, 8 p.m., Gerrard Hall

you get to channel your particular pain, your story, your joy, into your work, whereas very often people have experiences and they have nowhere to put it," Gordon said.

And Schaeffer said Long Leaf aims not only to bring accessible operas but to make the entire opera experience more comfortable.

"We're not your typical opera company," he said. "If you want to come and watch in Birkenstocks and shorts, you'll fit right in."

Contact the City Editor at [citydesk@unc.edu](mailto:citydesk@unc.edu).

# BOG to select next leader at Friday meeting

Also will discuss UNC Tomorrow

BY DEVIN ROONEY  
STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

The UNC Board of Governors soon will have a new leader. Jim Phillips, the current chairman, has reached the end of his term, and the board will vote Friday to elect his successor.

UNC Board of Governors member Steve Bowden said the election will mark the end of an effective tenure.

"He's been an excellent chairman," he said.

But Bowden and Phillips weren't strangers when they began working together on the board.

"The relationship working with him now is positive, I guess, because it was positive before," Bowden said.

The Friday election will follow Thursday's board meeting, which will feature policy discussion on the progress of UNC-system President Erskine Bowles' brainchild, the UNC Tomorrow program.

The program aims to focus the UNC system campuses on guiding future university development to meet the needs of N.C. citizens.

Norma Houston, executive director of UNC Tomorrow, said she won't be getting too in-depth with the board in her presentation.

"What the board will get on Thursday morning is an overview of the campus's Phase I reports from us and an outline of major issues that we've identified, and then an update on the proposed process," she said.

The discussion scheduled for the Thursday meeting won't necessitate any action by the board.

Houston said the presentation is intended simply to keep the board involved in the UNC Tomorrow process.

## ATTEND THE MEETING

**Time:** 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. today; 9:30 a.m. Friday  
**Location:** General Administration Building  
**Info:** [www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/bog/meeting\\_dates/index.htm](http://www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/bog/meeting_dates/index.htm)

Bowden said everyone on the board has been engaged in the process thus far.

Houston said that in addition to maintaining involvement, the presentation will be a way to get feedback from the board. They will be able to help her align the program's growth with the board members' vision.

Bowden said the UNC Tomorrow leaders have done a great job working to plan the system growth.

"The execution up to this point has been outstanding."

The presentation also will focus on the next steps for UNC Tomorrow.

Houston said the first step is to address concerns expressed by the schools in their responses to the program goals.

One issue most of the system campuses need to address is increasing reallocation of internal funds to keep spending low, she said.

She added that one of the ways they plan to resolve concerns is via video conferences.

The video conferences will address stumbling blocks that can come up on multiple system campuses.

Some of the topics were requested by system campuses, such as the inclusion of 21st century skills in the classroom and minority student achievement.

"We are still in the scheduling stage; we have worked on identifying the initial topics for those," Houston said.

Contact the State & National Editor at [stntdesk@unc.edu](mailto:stntdesk@unc.edu).

# Focus goes to general election

BY DEVIN ROONEY  
STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

Hillary Clinton's Saturday concession in the Democratic primary contest has opened the door for the general election to begin.

Barack Obama can now campaign directly against John McCain, unfettered by the throes of an epic primary contest.

Most experts expect the race to focus more intently on the political issues at the heart of the election.

UNC political science professor Tom Carsey said he thinks the campaign will change in two ways.

"The campaign will move forward on two fronts," he said. "It will focus on policy differences but it's also going to focus more — continue to focus more broadly on change versus not change."

The substantive policy differences between McCain and Obama will allow for a more digestible discourse about those issues.

"Obama will be speaking about these issues in terms of change in a

new direction and McCain's going to be talking about these issues in terms of knowledge," Carsey said.

Obama's campaign might even paint McCain's policy as outmoded, Carsey said.

"The policy differences will be used to highlight that and reinforce that message of changing direction," he said.

Carsey said McCain is trying to capitalize on his longer political resume.

"I think the McCain campaign is hoping to raise doubts about Obama, as either having wrong ideas or having not enough experience," he said.

Carsey said this boils down to a distraction from the candidates' policy positions.

"The McCain camp is trying to draw a little bit of the focus on the individuals."

The issues that consistently rank as highly important in polls include the economy and Iraq, and Carsey said that emphasis will be reflected in the campaign.

"I think there's going to be a great deal of attention on the economy. I think there will be a fair amount of attention on the war in Iraq," he said.

Another issue that cropped up during the primary was race.

Although the Obama campaign made efforts to keep the dialogue away from race, Carsey said it continued to reappear.

"I think it's going to be a subtext throughout the summer and fall campaign," he said. "I do not expect the Obama campaign to be making a big deal about race or focusing a lot of attention on being the first African-American nominee, but the press is certainly going to talk about that."

Carsey said even if the issue isn't talked about it will be there.

"It's going to be at or directly below the surface for the next five months," he said.

Contact the State & National Editor at [stntdesk@unc.edu](mailto:stntdesk@unc.edu).

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If interested, please contact: **Tiffany V. Hambright, RDH**  
Clinical Research Coordinator • Department of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery  
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Elizabeth Futral

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