

## She's Queen of the Night

It's "balls to the wall, give it all you got," says soprano Kathryn Blomshield Lewek '06E, '08E (MM) of the operatic role she relishes.

By Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

IT'S BEEN THE SUBJECT OF CONVERSATION on *Gossip Girl*. It's accompanied TV ads hawking everything from smartphones to sexual stimulants. And for singers, it's known as one of the most difficult arias in all of opera: "Der Hölle Rache," which translates as "The Vengeance of Hell," in the second act of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

It marks the moment when the Queen of the Night, wrapped in fury, hands her daughter, Pamina, a knife, making her promise she'll use it to slaughter the Queen's rival, Sarastro.

Requiring extraordinary range and dazzling vocal runs, it's a feat of vocal athleticism that **Kathryn Blomshield Lewek '06E, '08E (MM)** is known to perform exceptionally well.

"I don't think it actually has the highest written notes ever in an aria, but it's right up there," she says from her home studio in Fairfield County, Conn.

Lewek, who's sung in a variety of operatic roles, oratorios, and requiems during her still infant career, has sung Queen of the Night all over the world, including on prestigious stages such as the Deutsche Oper Berlin and at Austria's Bregenz Festival. In December, she makes her debut at New York City's Metropolitan Opera in that role.

She says the role still gives her butterflies every time she performs it.

"Every night, it makes me nervous. Ev-

**"If I'm doing another role, I try to make it different and exciting every night in a different way, and with Queen, you just have to sing it exactly how you know how to sing it."**



**AIMING HIGH:** Lewek's ability to sing coloratura soprano is considered unusual in younger singers.

erybody always says to me, 'Oh my gosh, Katie, it's always just right on, and I don't know how you do that, and it's great every night.' But I'm still worrying every night that it's not going to come out."

Like most singers, she'll often try to vary her performances. But not in this role.

"It's one of those things where you have to just let your body take over and you have to do what you know how to do," she says. "If I'm doing another role, I try to make it different and exciting every night in a different way, and with Queen, you just have to sing it exactly how you know how to sing it."

Queen of the Night is a prime example of coloratura soprano—the highest soprano voice, embellished with vocal runs and trills. Lewek sang in a lower soprano range for much of her time as a student at Eastman, and called her high notes her "party trick notes."

"I would only ever sing them when I'd had a glass of wine," she says.

In 2009, she had something of an epiphany as a fellow at the vocal program at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, Calif. Under the tutelage of Marilyn Horne, she was encouraged to sing higher and higher.

"She just kind of wanted to see how high I could sing," Lewek recalls.

Eventually, Horne made a suggestion Lewek found surprising. "She said, 'You know, I think maybe you should work on some coloratura repertoire.' And I said, in my very respectful way that you would only say to someone who was such a huge star, 'Are you crazy?'"

But she listened to Horne and began studying coloratura soprano with her current vocal coach, soprano Diana Soviaro.

Robert McIver, professor of voice at Eastman and Lewek's primary instructor during all six years of her residence, says he's not surprised Lewek is singing coloratura soprano. "She developed a facility fairly early on in her study to be able to run her voice very quickly and well," he says. That said, he adds, "I think the shock was that at such an early age she would do Queen of the Night."

Indeed, at 30 years old, Lewek's vocal chords are barely fully developed. "It's like the soft spot on a baby's head," Lewek says of the vocal chords of most singers under 30. She remembers McIver's words to her: "He'd say, 'That sounds great, but remember, you're still a baby. You're totally going to change in the next 10 years.'"

"All voices mature at different physiological rates, but generally for a soprano, all of their physical equipment doesn't arrive until they're about 29 years old," says McIver, noting that in both men and women, in all ranges, vocal development lags behind general physical development.

"That doesn't mean they don't sing beautifully before that, but the process is certainly made easier when all of the physical aspects of the instrument are in place," he says, referring to the muscular development of the vocal chords.

"People say I have vocal chords of steel," Lewek says. "I don't know if that's right."

"You do get to know your own voice. That's a really important aspect of being a singer. To know your limits and also to push yourself at times. You have to push yourself to see what you're capable of." **R**



**GRAND OLD OPERA:** Lewek, who performed as Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute* with the Nashville Opera in April, will debut at the Metropolitan Opera in the same role in December.



## Lessons of Lockerbie

This December marks the 25th anniversary of a terrorist act that cost two Rochester students their lives and sent an alumnus on an international legal mission.

By Scott Hauser

**MARK ZAID** '89 HAD ALREADY TURNED HIS attention to his upcoming spring graduation when he heard about the explosion of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in December 1988. The news caught him up short as the details emerged: the transatlantic flight from London's Heathrow Airport to New York was carrying 243 passengers, including 35 American students returning from a London study abroad program sponsored by Syracuse University.

Two of the passengers—**Eric Coker** and **Katharine Hollister**—were Rochester students, both from the Class of 1990.

Zaid, who had been in London during the spring 1988 semester as part of a British Parliament program, remembered making a similar flight just months earlier. He had met Hollister on a few occasions when the paths of Rochester schoolmates crossed. Long interested in history, politics, and the law, he found he couldn't let go of the notion that someone should be held accountable for what was soon demonstrated to be an act of terrorism.

"When I started law school in August 1989, I went in specifically to study how we could go after the terrorists," says Zaid. "I've been working on this since day one of law school."

This December 21 marks the 25th anni-

versary of the Lockerbie bombing, an act of terrorism that until Sept. 11, 2001, was the deadliest single attack involving American civilians. A total of 270 people died, including 189 Americans as well as 11 people in Lockerbie. Suspicion for the attack ultimately turned to Libya, setting off an international legal battle that in 2001 resulted in the conviction of one of two suspected Libyan intelligence officers. The Libyan died in 2012 after being released by Scotland on the grounds that he was terminally ill.

During the past 25 years, Zaid has been at the forefront of efforts to represent the interests of families whose loved ones died in the attack. In 1993, he helped set up a two-person law office whose clients included a widower of a Pan Am victim, at the time the sole Pan Am family member interested in pursuing a lawsuit against Libya. Zaid helped draft federal legislation that made it easier for United States nationals to sue countries that had been designated terrorist states. Zaid, who now heads his own law firm in Washington, D.C., eventually represented about 30 families of Pan Am victims.

Frequently asked to talk about the bombing, the lawsuits, and the changes to national and international law that have come about since Lockerbie, he makes a point of speaking to alumni audiences whenever he can, including University presentations to



mark both the 10th and 20th anniversaries. He was on campus for a Meliora Weekend ceremony and again in November to mark the 25th anniversary.

"I want Eric and Kate to be remembered," says Zaid, who started a scholarship to recognize Coker and Hollister and to support a current student who is interested in the

▲ **CEREMONY:** Eric Coker '90 (above, left) and Katharine Hollister '90 (above, right) are memorialized on a plaque near Morey Hall, where Jaclyn Reinhart '14 placed a wreath during a Meliora Weekend ceremony attended by Eric's father, Tom, and stepmother, Dorothy (couple on the path at left), and led by Mark Zaid '89 (podium).



study of history and international affairs. “I wanted to make sure I gave back to the University because that’s where it all started with me, with Eric and Kate.”

**Jaclyn Reinhart** ’14, a political science major from Williamsville, N.Y., who is the current recipient of the scholarship, says that although the Lockerbie bombing took place well before she was born, she understands the emotional, cultural, and political impact that such incidents can have.

She appreciates that Zaid wants to help students with an interest in global history. Her own experience studying in Australia has convinced her that most Americans should pay more attention to international news and events. “Other parts of the world

are very much concerned with what’s going on elsewhere and how their actions affect other countries,” she says.

Having a global perspective was important to Coker, says **John Iovieno** ’90 who met Coker during orientation activities in 1986. Outgoing and energetic, known for his love of practical jokes, Coker quickly became the center of a small group of friends.

“He was very much the glue of the group,” says Iovieno. “He was always the leader in keeping us close together and making sure we got together.”

Well versed in history and politics, Coker had traveled to the then Soviet Union on a high school program and paid close attention to international news. Iovieno imagines

that Coker might have channeled his interests into a career as a scholar focused on political or global affairs.

But he knows that Coker would have wanted his tight group of friends to stay close, something Iovieno has taken the initiative to do, and that he would have liked to know that other Rochester students continue to have opportunities similar to the ones he had.

“Perhaps they had an impact in ways that they never knew,” Iovieno says of those who died 25 years ago, particularly those who were just starting out in their lives. “Maybe things happened as a result of our knowing them that eventually turned out to be good.”



# Eyewitness to Error

Psychologist Brian Cutler '82 explores why well-intentioned eyewitnesses are often wrong.

Interview by Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

STUDIES THAT GAUGE THE RELIABILITY OF eyewitness testimony go back more than a century. So, too, does evidence that eyewitness memory is often unreliable.

Yet eyewitness testimony is used routinely in criminal trials, and experts count eyewitness misidentification as a major contributor to wrongful convictions.

According to psychologist **Brian Cutler** '82, inaccurate eyewitness testimony is

rarely the result of ill intent. "We can often believe, with very high confidence, in the accuracy of our mistaken identifications," he says. Yet the consequences of those errors are enormous. "Wrongful conviction is a real social problem, and it has been for decades."

According to statistics gathered by the Innocence Project, a litigation and public policy organization affiliated with Yeshiva University's Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, eyewitness misidentification has

played a role in the conviction of three-quarters of the more than 300 prisoners in the United States who have been exonerated through DNA evidence.

Cutler, who has consulted for the Innocence Project, has studied eyewitness memory for more than two decades. He estimates that he's provided expert testimony on the potential pitfalls of eyewitness accounts in more than 150 cases in both state and federal courts.

The author, most recently, of *Convicting*

▲ **MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE:** Certain police procedures may inadvertently encourage eyewitness misidentifications, says Cutler, a psychologist who has been a leader in state-level efforts to reform eyewitness identification procedures.

the ways that crimes often occur challenge these limits.

When somebody is robbed by a perpetrator, it often happens very quickly. It's by a stranger. There might be a weapon present. So the witness might be under high stress. The conditions don't facilitate accurate memory.

There are other factors. We know that people are less accurate at recognizing people of other races than people of their own race. The perpetrator might be disguised, might be wearing a hat, which covers some of the cues to recognition. Witnesses are still often accurate. But they're often mistaken.

#### **Do bystander witnesses tend to have more accurate memories than victims?**

There is some research on this. A victim might experience a lot more stress than somebody who's watching a crime take place. A victim might be right up close, whereas a bystander witness might be 30, 40, or 60 feet away. In that case, we'd look at the impact of distance on people's ability to perceive.

#### **What role can the personality of the witness play in mistaken identification?**

It's true that some people are just more confident based on their personalities. For example, do you know people who are always confident, whether they're right or wrong?

Do you know people who are never confident, even though they're often right? So sometimes witnesses are just confident on their own, and confidence is just another psychological variable.

#### **Can police procedures play a role in mistaken identification?**

Yes. Police can facilitate accurate recognition, or they can impair accurate recognition, in the way the police go about testing memories for perpetrators through things like show-ups, photo arrays, and lineups.

In cases in which police impair accurate recognition, the witness is being influenced by the police investigator. In these cases, there's a chain of events that can make less confident witnesses more confident.

For example, if a witness makes a tentative identification, and then a police officer says, "yeah, that's who we think it is," the witness becomes more confident.

And then if the police find more evidence against the person and bring him to trial, that could make the witness more

## **What Is to Be Done?**

The development of DNA testing in the early 1990s led to a wave of post-conviction exonerations, and in turn, focused attention on the factors leading to wrongful convictions.

Cutler says a key turning point came in the mid-1990s, when then Attorney General Janet Reno focused her personal attention on the problem of wrongful convictions and the role of eyewitness misidentification.

"A wave of reform began to happen, and since then, a number of states and many police departments have implemented real change," says Cutler.

Which of those changes would Cutler like to see universal? He offers six priorities:

1. Police should present witnesses with photo arrays or live lineups, rather than show-ups. Show-ups present the witness with only one possible suspect.
2. Witnesses should have no exposure to the suspect, or to a photo of the suspect, prior to seeing the photo array or lineup.
3. Eyewitnesses should receive cautionary instructions that indicate that the suspect may, or may not be, present in the line up or photo array.
4. Photo arrays or lineups should include fillers that match the witness's description of the perpetrator.
5. The person who conducts the identification procedure should not know which photo or person is the suspect.
6. Police should assess the confidence of the witness immediately after the identification and prior to providing the witness with any information that confirms or contradicts the witness's selection.

confident, so by the time they get to the stand, they think that everybody knows the guy's guilty.

In addition, if a witness mistakenly identifies an innocent person as a suspect, the police might then bring that innocent suspect in for interrogation. And the techniques they use for interrogation, which are very successful at getting guilty people to confess, can also lead innocent people to confess. Then if the witness learns that the suspect confessed, that makes the witness even more confident.

In other words, bad evidence often leads to more bad evidence. **R**

*the Innocent: Lessons from Psychological Research* (American Psychological Association), Cutler is an associate dean and professor at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, an institution founded just 10 years ago that he joined in 2008 to help establish its forensic psychology program.

#### **Your research suggests that well-intentioned witnesses, often certain of what they saw, still are often mistaken. Why is that?**

Humans, in general, have good memories. It's adaptive for us to have good memories. You don't have much difficulty, for example, recognizing people you know, such as family, friends, or coworkers.

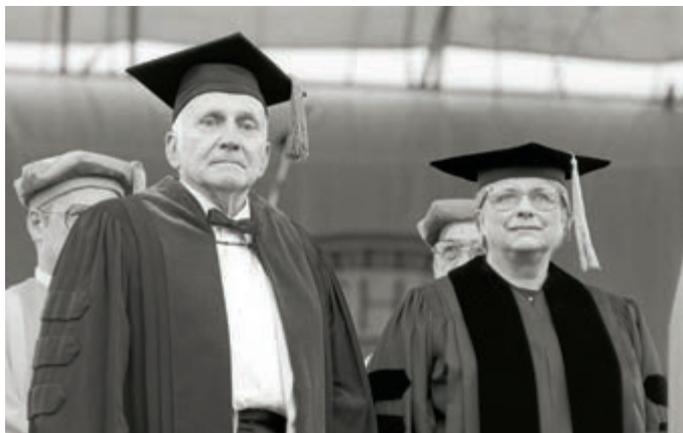
But there are limits to our memories, and

## Masters of Rochester

The late **William Masters** '43M (MD) is the subject of a new drama series on the cable television channel Showtime. *Masters of Sex*, which premiered in September, offers a dramatization of the life of one of the School of Medicine and Dentistry's most famous graduates.

Masters was an ambitious gynecologist whose mentor at Rochester, George Washington Corner, studied reproductive difficulties in humans and animals. Corner convinced Masters that the next frontier in understanding human sexuality lay in anatomy and physiology, rather than psychiatry.

The pioneering sex researcher,



**DRS. MASTERS & JOHNSON:** William Masters '43M (MD) and Virginia Johnson received honorary degrees from Rochester in 1987.

played by Michael Sheen, and his research partner and later wife, Virginia Johnson, played by Lizzy Caplan, entered the popular

lexicon in the 1960s as "Masters and Johnson." Their first book, *Human Sexual Response* (1966), became a best-seller

and was translated into several languages.

In an interview last July, Masters's biographer Thomas Maier told National Public Radio's Terry Gross, "Their empirical studies showed that women had a much greater capacity for sex" than men. "This came along right with the advent of the pill and helped spark the feminist view of sexuality of the late '60s and '70s."

Maier's 2009 book, *Masters of Sex: The Life and Times of William Masters and Virginia Johnson, the Couple Who Taught America How to Love* (Basic Books), formed the basis of the Showtime drama.

—Karen McCally

### EASTMAN'S COAST GUARD IMPRINT

## Director Bids Farewell

On September 1, the U.S. Coast Guard Band delivered its final performance under the direction of **Kenneth Megan** '73E. The event, held in Leamy Hall at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Conn., was part of a weekend celebration commemorating not only Megan's tenure as director, but his 38 years with the band.

Nearly three dozen former band members, including retired fellow clarinetist and Megan classmate **Dan Lukens** '73E, and Megan's immediate predecessor, conductor laureate **Lewis Buckley** '69E, who led the band from 1975 until 2004, performed with the band during the concert. In a written tribute, Buckley cited some of Megan's accomplishments before he became director, including creating a series of concert broadcasts on National Public Radio in the mid-1980s



**Kenneth Megan '73E**

that made the Coast Guard band not only "the undisputed king of band music on NPR," but gained it additional national, as well as international, exposure and renown.

As assistant director of the band in 1989, Megan organized the first tour of an American military band in the then Soviet Union. In 2008, Megan led the band on a tour of Japan to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Japan Coast Guard and 20th anniversary of the Japan Coast Guard band.



**Megan Sesma '02, '02E**

## Harpist Recognized for Service

Also this fall, **Megan Sesma** '02, '02E, who in 2003 became the first harpist ever to become part of the U.S. Coast Guard Band, was recognized with the Latina Style Meritorious Service Award. Presented during Latino Heritage Month at the National Latina Symposium in Washington, D.C., the award, sponsored by *Latina Style* magazine, honors Latinas in the armed forces.

A dual degree student at Rochester who earned a degree

in economics in the College in addition to her Eastman degree, Sesma serves as the band's education chief as well as harpist. She oversees the Coast Guard Academy school concert series and contributes to music education for Spanish-speaking students. She's also part of the Guatemala Harp Project, in which she's instructed students and teachers in harp and donated instruments, strings, and other supplies.