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**RICH COPLEY** | [rcopley@herald-leader.com](mailto:rcopley@herald-leader.com)

In honor of his late wife, Metropolitan Opera Hall of Fame soprano Gail Robinson, Henno Lohmeyer is launching a series of Lexington concerts by internationally acclaimed opera singers.

## COPLEY

From Page F1

a strong track record of bringing in marquee instrumentalists such as violinist Itzhak Perlman and cellist Yo-Yo Ma, but it has been light on high-profile singers who can give Lexington audiences an idea where area opera students hope to end up someday.

Lohmeyer plans to change that starting this week with the Gail Robinson Series, named in honor of his wife, who died in 2008 after a long battle with rheumatoid arthritis.

The lineup features three singers who developed relationships with Robinson as they came up through the Met's Young Artist and Auditions programs: soprano Christine Goerke, mezzo-soprano Michelle DeYoung and a name familiar to local opera fans, tenor Gregory Turay. The series launches Saturday with Goerke's performance at Transylvania University's Haggin Auditorium.

"When I started this thing, I said we want to present a few concerts, and maybe it's not a bad idea to also honor her," says Lohmeyer, 80, his voice starting to break when talking about his late wife.

The years immediately after her death were solitary for Lohmeyer.

He came to the United States about 40 years ago from Germany, where he was a journalist and eventually transitioned into a career as a television producer and artist agent. After moving to Lexington with Robinson in 1999, he retired and did things like work on the Kentucky District round of the National Council Auditions. Lohmeyer was instrumental in bringing in some high-profile judges from the Met such as baritone Samuel Ramey and soprano Anna Moffo.

After Robinson's death, there were temptations to leave Lexington. His and Robinson's children wanted him to move closer to them in Washington, D.C. Robinson was buried in her hometown of Memphis.

Asked what kept him in Lexington, he motions to walk to the back of his Lexington home.

"This was the room where she died," Lohmeyer says of the modest rectangular room with a small daybed and walls where numerous photographs of Robinson's Metropolitan Opera glory days hang, along with some of her favorite artwork and other sentimental items.

A glamorous black-and-white head shot of a smiling Robinson is on a stand in the middle of the room.

"I just did not have the guts to take these pictures down," Lohmeyer says. "This was our last home we created together — she created more than me, she had much more taste than I did — and I just couldn't pack this up and leave."

"But when Gail passed, I had a reclusive life. I didn't want to see anyone or talk to anyone. Clifton Smith (who partnered with Lohmeyer in presenting the Met auditions) was the only person I really communicated with, because I couldn't find any sense in what I was doing or planned to do."

Finally, UK Opera Theatre director Everett McCorvey

### IF YOU GO

#### Gail Robinson Series

**What:** Inaugural season of a series of concerts by internationally acclaimed opera singers

**Where:** Haggin Hall, Transylvania University campus

**Tickets:** \$30-\$50 single-concert tickets, \$75-\$135 series tickets. Available at Singletary Center ticket office, (859) 257-4929 or [Scfatickets.com](#).

**Learn more:** [Unitedartists](#) and [authors.com](#).

#### SCHEDULE

All concerts at 7:30 p.m.



**CHRISTIAN STEINER**

**Nov. 3:** Soprano Christine Goerke, pianist Bradley Moore



**UNITED ARTISTS AND AUTHORS AGENCY**

**Jan. 12:** Tenor Gregory Turay, pianist Cliff Jackson



**CHRISTIAN STEINER**

**April 19:** Mezzo-soprano Michelle DeYoung, pianist Kevin Murphy

encouraged Lohmeyer to get back into production and management. Lohmeyer now runs United Artists and Authors Agency, a firm with a small office in downtown Lexington's World Trade Center. The clientele includes a number of former UK students, including sopranos Amanda Balltrip and Patricia Adress, baritone Corey Crider and author Gregory King.

The agency gives Lohmeyer a chance to use his expertise to help young singers navigate the treacherous and murky waters of the opera world, particularly in Europe, where many singers have their best shots at work.

His Multigram Productions is the production division of United Artists and has staged two events, a tribute to legendary Kentucky musician John Jacob Niles in the spring and an August recital by arguably the company's highest-profile artist, baritone Anthony Clark Evans, known as the car salesman from Elizabethtown who won the Met Auditions.

The Robinson series represents Lohmeyer's biggest foray into presenting artists. He acknowledges it's a risk as even some of the most famous figures in the opera world can be relative unknowns outside of cultural hubs like New York and Chicago.

"The problem is, when Michelle DeYoung's management announced last year a recital at Avery Fisher Hall, they had to add a second performance because

it sold out," Lohmeyer says. "In Lexington, people don't know who the hell she is. The same goes for Christine Goerke. So I feel a little bit like I'm Don Quixote with the impossible dream, the man of La Mancha fighting the windmills."

Goerke, who performs Saturday, has appeared at most of the major opera houses in the United States and Europe, including the Met and La Scala. She is finishing a run in the title role of Richard Strauss's *Elektra* at Lyric Opera of Chicago; The Wall Street Journal called her performance "a triumph."

DeYoung has an equally impressive résumé specializing in dramatic work of composers such as Gustav Mahler and Richard Wagner. Her fall engagements include a performance of Sergei Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky* with the Philadelphia Orchestra in November.

Turay, a UK graduate who helped bring the school to Robinson's attention, has had numerous triumphs, including the world premiere of William Bolcom's *A View From the Bridge*. Recently he taken time off to study at UK and teach at Transylvania University and is starting a career reboot that January's concert is designed to launch.

Lohmeyer is hoping the series will launch a growing appreciation for world-class opera singing that his late wife wished for Lexington.

"I owe it to Gail," he says.

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## KIRKMAN

From Page F1

among viewers ages 18 to 49 were the highest of any entertainment series this fall, including all broadcast shows. Millions more will be able to watch the third episode Sunday because AMC recently worked out a contract dispute with Dish Network to begin airing the channel again.

Kirkman, 34, who moved to California about two years ago, has remained tied to his Kentucky roots. He was born in Lexington and grew up in Cynthiana, a setting in the comic-book version of *The Walking Dead* (although not the TV show, which has been set exclusively in Georgia).

He visits Lexington several times a year, he said, to see friends and family — and to eat at some of his favorite restaurants, including deSha's and Gumbo Ya-Ya.

"I have tried gumbo place after gumbo place here in L.A., and there is nothing that compares," he said.

Struggling to work long distance on *The Walking Dead* compelled Kirkman to pack up and move out West with his wife and kids when the show's first season premiered in 2010.

Since then, he and his family have acclimated to Hollywood life — mostly.

"It's been a fairly smooth transition," he said. "It's definitely a little strange coming out here and being in a much bigger, much busier city."

Sometimes he hears gunshots in the distance from his office, he said, a sound he never heard working in Central Kentucky. And L.A.'s stop-and-go-but-mostly-stop traffic presented a learning curve for Kirkman, who was used to driving on clear country roads.

"Now, I've gotten used to L.A. traffic, so it's a little bit strange to be on the road (in Kentucky) and be able to actually drive, which you can't really do here," he said. "Sometimes I find myself speeding because I'm not used to being able to control my own speed."

The event at UK is the first in what organizers say will be a series called "Behind the Lens," which will chronicle actors, directors and producers with Kentucky ties.



**JOHN SHEARER** | ASSOCIATED PRESS

At the Season 3 premiere party for *The Walking Dead*, Robert Kirkman, left, the Kentuckian who created the comic book on which the AMC series is based, greeted Chris Hardwick, who hosts *The Talking Dead*, a live show that airs after each new episode.

Gabrielle Dudgeon, vice president of promotions for the Student Activities Board, said the group contacted Kirkman after learning of *The Walking Dead*'s Kentucky connection.

Not only is Kirkman from here, but the main character of the show and comic books, Rick Grimes, was conceived as a police officer from Cynthiana who had never fired his gun in the line of duty before the dead came back to life.

In the comics, Rick and other survivors make several trips between Cynthiana, Atlanta and Washington, D.C. However, Rick's hometown is never specified in the TV show.

Kirkman said Tuesday that Grimes was not based on any particular Cynthiana police officer.

"I led a pretty boring life, so I didn't have a lot of contact with police officers in Cynthiana," he said. "Rick is pretty much wholly created in my head."

Tuesday's event is open to the public, and tickets are not required, but Dudgeon recommended that people show up early. She said the Student Activities Board expected Memorial Hall to fill to capacity quickly.

"It's a very popular event, and a lot of people are really excited for him coming to Lexington," she said.

Kirkman said he was looking forward to the talk and the trip home. His Kentucky heritage helps keep him grounded in the face of *The Walking Dead*'s massive critical and commercial success.

Kirkman said he's enjoying the ride, putting his stamp of approval on every aspect of the show's production, but he's preparing for the day when it ends.

"I'm having a lot of fun with it, but 15 or 16 years down the road, I could be in a very different place doing very different things," he said. "I try to always be aware of that."

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3D **HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA (PG)** 5:30 8:10  
3D **SILENT HILL: REVELATION (R)** 2:30 7:45 10:45

**ALEX CROSS (PG 13)**  
9:00 AM (SAT & SUN) 12:45 3:50 6:40 9:35  
**ARGO (R)** 9:00 AM (SAT & SUN) 12:00 3:00 6:05 9:15

**FUN SIZE (PG 13)**  
9:00 AM (SAT & SUN) 10:30 AM 1:05 3:40 6:20 9:00

**PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 4 (R)**  
11:00 AM 1:40 4:20 7:10 10:00

**SINISTER (R)** 11:10 AM 2:00 5:00 8:00 11:00

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