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Lawrence Opera Theatre – Company history

Lawrence Opera Theatre (LOT) was founded in 2009 by tenor Hugo Vera and Holly White, with ties to Lawrence and the University of Kansas. Their belief in the power of text, music, and great art in opera and musical theatre led them to create a program to fill a void in the performing arts scene during the slow summer season in the Lawrence/Topeka area. Their first endeavor was a program of opera scenes involving twelve singers. This program was recorded and sent to Eutin, Germany, one of Lawrence's Sister Cities. The Eutin Opera Festival took on and presented the program, thus establishing the partnership between the KU School of Music and the Festival, which still exists today. LOT has continued its mission to provide a broad spectrum of music, drama and cultural offerings to Lawrence, Douglas County, and the surrounding region.

Since its founding, LOT has experienced continued growth in programming, from performing opera scenes to offering fully staged productions, concerts of art songs and arias, as well as a musical theatre cabaret. Participants have increased from the initial twelve singers to as many as 70, coming from as far as New York, Connecticut, Florida, Arizona and Washington state. In addition to emerging professionals and university students, LOT also includes area high school students and members of the community, all of whom audition for a place in the ensemble. They have the opportunity to work with experienced professionals with national performing and teaching careers, including singers, stage directors, and lighting/set designers who work as Artist-in-Residence. Past Artists-in-Residence have appeared with the country's top opera companies and young artist programs, including The Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Washington National Opera, Minnesota Opera and Music Academy of the West.

Thematic and innovative programming have been trademarks of LOT under Hugo Vera's artistic direction. Recent seasons have featured the music of Mozart, capped with fully-staged performances of *Don Giovanni* (2014) and a contemporary take on Bizet's classic, *Carmen* (2015). The 2016 season celebrated the 400th anniversary of the passing of William Shakespeare by highlighting his influence in opera, art song and musical theatre, and featuring a staged production of Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. The 2017 season featured Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, which was updated and set in the Nevada desert at "Burning Man."

Building bridges and forming partnerships in the community are important to LOT, and the company continues to secure new partners and venues, enabling them to reach more people. Venue sponsors have included Theatre Lawrence, Lawrence Arts Center, Lawrence Public Library, Castle Tea Room, Lawrence Jewish Community Congregation, Signs of Life Books, and John Brown's Underground. With programs ranging from informal cabaret to fully-staged opera, LOT brings high-quality performances to its growing audience in Lawrence and beyond.

Lawrence Opera Theatre is a 501(c)3 non profit organization.