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OU alumnus performs on world stage

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Oakland University alumnus Joel Frederiksen has the world for a stage. Since presenting solo recitals of English and lute songs at OU's Varner Recital Hall and receiving a master's degree from OU in early music in 1990, he's performed medieval, baroque and modern works to critical acclaim in Europe, Asia and North America.

Frederiksen has appeared on stage as a solo performer and with leading ensembles from the United States and Europe. He also has sung and played on a number of recordings with widely respected ensembles such as the Huelgas Ensemble, Hudson Shad, Waverly Consort and Boston Camerata.

Speaking from the Netherlands, where he is preparing to sing early baroque compositions and play the lute in a music festival, Frederiksen said OU was a springboard that helped him catapult to stardom.

"My OU experience made all the difference for me," he said. "At OU, I discovered many excellent professors in the music department who challenged me in my classes. I came to OU to study lute with Lyle Nordstrom (now teaching at North Texas State). I was really lucky to find other great teachers as well, including (Professor of Music) John Paul White, who really mentored me in voice. He gave me a great deal of confidence as well as technical knowledge. He believed I could do things that sometimes I did not believe I could do myself and helped me to extend the range and scope of my voice and repertoire."

Frederiksen specializes in music of the late Renaissance and early baroque periods, dating from about 1580-1620. He initially was drawn to early music as a teen-ager in Edina, Minn., where he was a member of a madrigal ensemble in high school. Later he majored in voice at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minn., then studied at the Library of Congress and completed an internship at the Archive of American Folk Song.

"I learned a lot about American folk music, but at the same time, I was playing a great deal of Renaissance repertoire," Frederiksen said. "I was singing and playing guitar a long time. As I got into more repertoire from the Renaissance, I played it on the instrument I had – a guitar. One day there was a concert in a coffee house performed by a lute player. When I heard the lute for the first time live, I knew I had to have one."

In the mid 1980's, Frederiksen bought a lute and moved to New York where he studied with lutenist Patrick O'Brien at New York University and began performing with the New York University Collegium. Frederiksen also taught for four years as an adjunct professor of voice at the CW Post campus of Long Island University, but wanted to pursue the lute further. O'Brien recommended he study with Nordstrom at Oakland University.

"I was very happy to be at Oakland," Frederiksen said. "I came for my master's and also ended up designing programs for recitals and all events. I lived in married student housing and my daughter went to school in Rochester. We were very satisfied to be living there.

"After teaching full-time, I loved to take time off to focus on what I wanted to do. I was like a sponge in my classes and private lessons. I absorbed everything and wanted more."

Faculty members also enjoyed working with Frederiksen, partly because of his devotion to his craft.

"Joel was already a good singer when he came to Oakland," White said. "He was one of my favorite students. He was always so very interested. You didn't have to motivate him. He was always working at improving his voice.

"His technique strengthened, his range improved and his interpretive abilities grew. It takes more than just having the pipes, it also takes artistic soul. Joel has both."

Many things came together for Frederiksen in his final semester at OU. He directed the OU Collegium for a semester when Nordstrom was on sabbatical, auditioned and was accepted into two Doctor of Musical Arts programs in voice, auditioned and received an offer to join the Waverly Consort, and completed his master's recital.

"The recital was a real high point for me," Frederiksen said. "I was terribly nervous, but I had prepared so vigorously, with the help of my teachers, that it went really well. I am very proud of the comments and 4.0 I received. I also was proud to receive Oakland's Distinguished Musicianship Award in my last semester.

"My OU experience created options for me. I chose to join the Waverly Consort, which had at that time the best thing going in early music, including health benefits, a New York Concert series and a package of concerts and recordings that took me all over the United States and abroad."

It's no surprise to White that Frederiksen has experienced such success in his relatively brief career.

"He moved very quickly into the professional ranks with the Waverly Consort," White said. "Based on his appearances, Joel has a reputation in high standing. The biggest thing he's done is the Salzburg Festival, which is the biggest summer music festival in the world. It's a little bit like football's Pro Bowl – you get the best of the best. Those who sing there typically sing at places like the Metropolitan Opera.

"I'm very proud of Joel. The conservatory schools like Julliard or the Curtis Institute turn out world-class performers all the time. We don't turn out as many, but to have graduated a student like Joel is very gratifying."

Frederiksen's professional experiences have been so broad and varied, it's hard for him to pick a career highlight.

"There have been so many wonderful moments, and I have done many wonderful things," Frederiksen said. "The highlights often result from a mixture of great place, time and colleagues.

"I remember performing on the stage of the Seiji Ozawa Hall at the Tanglewood Music Center when it had just opened – a summer night with the back of the hall open and people sitting outside with candles. I sang a solo with the Boston Camerata and felt I had the entire space in my hand. My colleagues told me you could have heard a pin drop, and the 'Boston Globe' review was excellent. Other highlights include performing in the great halls in Salzburg, Dresden, Munich, Lincoln Center and Town Hall in New York, Hong Kong, Australia, Portugal and Spain."

Frederiksen took time from his hectic touring schedule to return to Oakland last April when he received the Alumni Arts Achievement Award in Music and performed at the 2003 Matilda Awards. He also was able to renew his friendships with music, theatre and dance faculty, including White.

"The biggest thing I noticed about Joel's performance at the awards ceremony was the incredible polish he has. You develop that by necessity in the professional world. He also never stops learning," White said. "During the time when he was here, we had ice storms that knocked out our power. He stayed with us in a motel, so we were closer than I had expected. But what we mostly wound up talking about was vocal technique."

Frederiksen currently is working, when he is able to get there, with a teacher/coach named Monika Lenz at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria. This summer he plans to take a master's class at the Mozarteum with a famous Polish teacher named Lazarska, who lives in Vienna.

"I feel like my academic background is not finished," Frederiksen said.

His future plans include working on a project in Germany next summer involving dance, readings and music that will take place on a stage built in the water at the back of a Renaissance castle. He also hopes to have more performances in his specialty area and work on opera repertoire.

"I also want to work with groups on interesting projects in interesting places with great people throughout Europe," Frederiksen said.

Frederiksen recently made a solo recording titled "Orpheus, I am," containing late Renaissance and early baroque music from England, Italy and France. Copies of the recording are \$15 plus \$3 postage and may be ordered directly from Frederiksen at joelfrederiksen@yahoo.de

He also can be heard on performances recorded with the Boston Camerata on the Erato label, including "Carmina Burana," "Farewell Unkind: Songs and Dances of John Dowland," "Simple Gifts: Shaker Chants and Spirituals," "Trav'ling Home: American Spirituals," "An American Christmas," and "Angels." He also appears on "A Waverly Consort Christmas" on the Virgin label and other CDs recorded for Angel/EMI, RCA and the Musical Heritage Society.

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