

It's all about the voice

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Michael McKelvey, left, a professor of practice in the Newcomb Department of Music, coaches Peter Balcke, a first-year musical theater major, during a private vocal lesson in Dixon Hall on the Tulane University uptown campus. (Photo by Ryan Rivet)

When Michael McKelvey was just 18, he first experienced the “thrilling and terrifying” rush of singing with a live orchestra, without a mic. When he discovered opera in the chorus of *The Merry Widow*, his life was changed forever.

Now, McKelvey hopes to introduce young people to that thrill and terror of live vocal performance, as the new artistic director of [Summer Lyric Theatre](#) at Tulane University.

"I liked the size of it. It's all about the voice, not the mic," says McKelvey, a professor of practice in the [Newcomb Department of Music](#), who arrived at Tulane just prior to the fall semester.

Like his predecessor, [B. Michael Howard](#), McKelvey has a love of vocal teaching.

An opera major who received his doctoral degree from the University of Texas, McKelvey also was active in pop, rock and musical theater projects. Before discovering his own voice, the lyric baritone was a bassoonist.

McKelvey previously was the head of voice and an associate professor of musical theater at the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University in Pittsburgh, and the coordinator of music and an associate professor of music and musical theater at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas.

McKelvey has served as musical and/or vocal director for more than 80 different shows.

As a stage and music director, McKelvey has worked with organizations such as Austin Musical Theatre, the State Theatre, Austin Playhouse, Austin Shakespeare, Austin Playhouse, Penfold Theatre and the Mary Moody Northern Theatre. He is producing artistic director for [Doctuh Mistuh Productions](#) and the co-founder of Summer Stock Austin.

As the 50th anniversary of Summer Lyric Theatre approaches in 2017, McKelvey says he is planning to do something special ? perhaps staging a show from the company's first season.

"I also would like to infuse titles that SLT hasn't done yet," he adds.

In addition to developing service-learning opportunities for Tulane students, McKelvey also would like to launch initiatives to bring more families and young people to SLT, to "initiate the next round of theatergoers."