



KCUR 89.3 [\(L\)](#)

[Donate \(http://bit.ly/2cS8bPr\)](http://bit.ly/2cS8bPr)



Listen Live · KCUR  
Up to Date



# UMKC Fairy Tale Production Captures 'Epic Nature Of Opera' With Paper

By [LAURA SPENCER \(/PEOPLE/LAURA-SPENCER\)](/PEOPLE/LAURA-SPENCER) • OCT 25, 2017



[Share \(http://facebook.com/sharer.php?](http://facebook.com/sharer.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tinyurl.com%2Fy29689u9&t=UMKC%20Fairy%20Tale%20Production%20Captures%20%27Epic%20Nature%20Of%20Opera%27%20With%20Paper)

[u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tinyurl.com%2Fy29689u9&t=UMKC%20Fairy%20Tale%20Production%20Captures%20%27Epic%20Nature%20Of%20Opera%27%20With%20Paper](http://facebook.com/sharer.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tinyurl.com%2Fy29689u9&t=UMKC%20Fairy%20Tale%20Production%20Captures%20%27Epic%20Nature%20Of%20Opera%27%20With%20Paper)



[Tweet \(http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?](http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tinyurl.com%2Fy29689u9&text=UMKC%20Fairy%20Tale%20Production%20Captures%20%27Epic%20Nature%20Of%20Opera%27%20With%20Paper)

[url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tinyurl.com%2Fy29689u9&text=UMKC%20Fairy%20Tale%20Production%20Captures%20%27Epic%20Nature%20Of%20Opera%27%20With%20Paper](http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tinyurl.com%2Fy29689u9&text=UMKC%20Fairy%20Tale%20Production%20Captures%20%27Epic%20Nature%20Of%20Opera%27%20With%20Paper)



[Email \(mailto:?](mailto:?subject=UMKC%20Fairy%20Tale%20Production%20Captures%20%27Epic%20Nature%20Of%20Opera%27%20With%20Paper)

[subject=UMKC%20Fairy%20Tale%20Production%20Captures%20%27Epic%20Nature%20Of%20Opera%27%20With%20Paper](mailto:?subject=UMKC%20Fairy%20Tale%20Production%20Captures%20%27Epic%20Nature%20Of%20Opera%27%20With%20Paper)



([http://www.kcur.org/sites/kcur/files/styles/x\\_large/public/201710/10.jpg](http://www.kcur.org/sites/kcur/files/styles/x_large/public/201710/10.jpg))

*Paper is used for props and costumes in UMKC's 'Hansel and Gretel.' (left to right) Director Fenlon Lamb, Hansel (Katherine Menke), Gretel (Lydia Bechtel-Edmonson), and costume designer Maureen Thomas.*

JEFF RIDENOUR



Listen

0:00

The opera *Hansel and Gretel* is based on a Grimm Brothers' fairy tale.

In this version of the story, the brother and sister are sent into the forest to gather strawberries. They get lost, encounter creatures like the Sandman and the Dew Fairy – and discover a mysterious gingerbread house where they're captured by a witch.

A new University of Missouri-Kansas City production creates sets and costumes out of paper.

"It is playful and fun," says scenic designer Jeff Ridenour (<http://www.jeffrdesign.com/>). "You are essentially building a large-scale toy paper theater. That was really the inspiration, in addition to Baroque opera portals, as well as the idea of just putting on a show and playing as a kid."

We asked some of the members of the creative team to talk about the process.

## On working in paper

"This has blossomed out of our work with paper in several other productions, and some necessity as well, since it's the 'Mother of Invention,'" says Fenlon Lamb (<http://conservatory.umkc.edu/faculty.cfm?r=1C2BE0>), director of opera at UMKC Conservatory of Music and Dance. Lamb's in her third season at UMKC, and she was a guest director for two seasons before that, when she met collaborator Jeff Ridenour.

Lamb says the recent budget cuts across the University of Missouri system led to some creative design decisions.

"There are always budget constraints and we want to meet them head on and just say, 'Hey, we're doing a fairy tale. This is in paper!' It's a great medium to work in. I think it's been a little bit of an exploration and a workshop here ... but we still wanted to keep that epic nature of opera."



([https://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kcur/files/styles/x\\_large/public/201710/hg\\_final\\_1\\_0.jpg](https://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kcur/files/styles/x_large/public/201710/hg_final_1_0.jpg))

*A set rendering for 'Hansel and Gretel.'*

CREDIT JEFF RIDENOUR

## On finding the right paper for scenery

"The first thing is figuring out how you're going to get massive scale out of paper, so I had to find the right kind of product: large rolls of paper. You can paint on them, you can draw on them, and if you layer them, you can do cut-Outs," says set designer Jeff Ridenour, who earned an MFA from UMKC in 2014.

Ridenour is now based in New York City, but he's continued to collaborate with Lamb. He estimates it's their 12th production together.

"When you find that connection you grab it and you keep it," he says. "And it's also very rare in the profession to find a director and a designer team that just works right off the bat. It's a rare thing and it's a treat to have it."



[https://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kcur/files/styles/x\\_large/public/201710/hg\\_final\\_2a\\_sandm](https://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kcur/files/styles/x_large/public/201710/hg_final_2a_sandm)

*A set rendering featuring The Sandman in 'Hansel and Gretel.'*

CREDIT JEFF RIDENOUR

## On creating projections on paper

"Really, it was kind of a shock, but in a good way, when I was able to come in and set up and start seeing what it looks like on the scenery. And start seeing how projections can add and lend light and breadth and movement to this beautiful space," says Kris Kirkwood (<http://kirkwoodk.wixsite.com/light/about>), projections designer for *Hansel and Gretel*. Kirkwood graduated with an MFA from UMKC and is based in Kansas City.

"It's not often as a projections or media designer that I get asked to make a chicken on a broomstick – and make it fly around the stage – or I get asked to make a giant woodblock sun smile at us. Just beautiful crazy things like that ... it's really been a joy."



([https://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kcur/files/styles/x\\_large/public/201710/hg\\_final\\_3-1\\_dewfairy.jpg](https://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kcur/files/styles/x_large/public/201710/hg_final_3-1_dewfairy.jpg))

*A set rendering featuring The Dew Fairy in 'Hansel and Gretel.'*

CREDIT JEFF RIDENOUR

## On creating wearable items out of paper

"It's that kind of idea of taking these giant sheets of blank paper and then creating wearable things ... the majority of the show is paper. All different kinds of paper," says costume designer Maureen Thomas (<http://maureenethomas.portfoliobox.net/otherwork>), who's collaborated with Ridenour before in Ohio. "It's more like wearable art, than it is garment at all."

"The skirts and pants and things are made out of this really durable Tyvek. And then, on top of that, we have all kinds of strange combinations that have been created. An apron that is actually just pleated craft paper that's been painted, but then it has applied Tyvek to give it a little more strength. And the top of the apron is made out of an old soda can box."



[https://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kcur/files/styles/x\\_large/public/201710/7\\_preview\\_1.jpeg](https://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/kcur/files/styles/x_large/public/201710/7_preview_1.jpeg)

*The singers in the chorus wearing paper costumes, with costume designer Maureen Thomas (at right) and director Fenlon Lamb (center).*

CREDIT JEFF RIDENOUR

UMKC Opera (<http://info.umkc.edu/cmاد-opera/>) presents Engelbert Humperdinck's 'Hänsel und Gretel' (in German), October 26 - 28, 7:30 p.m. and October 29, 2:30 p.m., White Recital Hall (<https://conservatory.umkc.edu/content.cfm?cont=1F28>), 4949 Cherry, Kansas City, Missouri. Tickets available at the Central Ticket Office (<http://tickets.cto.umkc.edu/shows/hansel%20und%20gretel%20-%20umkc%20conservatory%20artist%20series/events>), 816-235-6222. The Friday, October 27 performance will be live streamed (<http://conservatory.umkc.edu/streaming/livestream.cfm>).

Laura Spencer is an arts reporter at KCUR 89.3. You can reach her on Twitter @lauraspencer (<http://twitter.com/lauraspencer>).