



LUKE JORDAN/UNIVERSITY THEATRE

In November, University Theatre and the Department of Music and Dance staged the American opera “Street Scene,” based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning play by Elmer Rice, with lyrics by poet Langston Hughes and a Tony Award-winning score by Kurt Weill.

## A night on the town

### More than 50 donors helped build a new fund for student theater tickets.

As an undergraduate at Indiana University, David Ambler wasn’t much interested in theater-going. “I had to be pushed,” he said.

Urged by his wife, Mary Kate, and his sister, Sharon, to give it a try (getting free tickets through his residence hall helped, too), he got hooked. Later, he helped plan a dinner for members of the visiting Metropolitan Opera. He rubbed elbows with the opera elite, an experience he carried with him to Kansas.

Throughout his career at KU, where he retired in 2002 as vice chancellor for student affairs, he and Mary Kate took in the shows at the University Theatre. They wanted to give students the chance to go, too. As a retiree, David Ambler received two free tickets to each performance, and the couple

donated them back to KU for students.

“Undergraduate education ought to prepare students for more than just a career,” Ambler said. He believes it should introduce them to the fine arts so they can develop a lifelong appreciation for them.

The Amblers’ next step was to make free student tickets a permanent thing. To honor theater professor Jack Wright, they created the Jack B. Wright Student Ticket Endowment Fund. Wright, a faculty member since 1976, has been artistic director and director of the University Theatre.

Students at KU and nearby Haskell Indian Nations University are eligible for tickets. Priority goes to students who have never attended a performance or who have received university financial aid.

In April, Friends of the Theatre held a benefit auction and concert, raising more than \$65,000 for the Wright Fund, with gifts from more than 50

donor households. The Friends and KU Endowment are seeking additional gifts to increase the fund to \$100,000.

Kathy Pryor, managing director for KU theatre and film, worked with the Amblers to create the Wright Fund. She said watching someone perform on stage gives people a way to reflect on their choices and recognize something of themselves in society: “Theater isn’t just entertainment. It’s the study of who we are.”

This story’s coda speaks to David Ambler’s decades-long commitment to student well-being: This fall, KU named the David A. Ambler Student Recreation Fitness Center in his honor.

—Sarah Aylward



### SEND STUDENTS TO THE SHOW

To support the Jack B. Wright Student Ticket Endowment Fund, contact Jenna Goodman at [jgoodman@kuendowment.org](mailto:jgoodman@kuendowment.org) or 785-832-7417, or give online at [kuendowment.org/wright/](http://kuendowment.org/wright/).