

A Promise is a promise

The world premiere of an opera written by U of M professor John Baur that celebrates the life and times of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is scheduled for Oct. 22-23 and 29-30 at the Germantown Performing Arts Centre. *The Promise* is expected to draw not only national — but also international attention when it debuts.

"I wanted to educate people about Dr. King and to elaborate on what people already knew about him," said Baur when asked why he wrote the opera. "The project had to be done, especially in Memphis. I was surprised that no one had written something similar."

King's famous "Letter from the Birmingham Jail" is a key element of the opera. King wrote the letter from a jail cell in Birmingham, Ala., in 1963, and it is one of several periods in King's life that the opera touches on.

Baur is a professor of music at the U of M's Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music. He began working earnestly on the opera four years ago.

U of M opera coach Mark Ensley will conduct the premiere, Albert Pentalion will serve as producer and New York-based Keith Grant will direct the piece. U of M doctoral student Valetta Brinson will play the role of Coretta Scott King while student Todd Allen and professional baritone Nimon Ford will alternate in the role of MLK.

The University is planning to invite members of the King family for the premiere while other local and national civil rights leaders will also be asked to attend. For more information about the premiere and any schedule changes, call 901/757-7256 or visit www.gpacweb.com.



John Baur's *The Promise* debuts this October at the Germantown Performing Arts Centre. The opera focuses on the life and times of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.