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Children's Literary Classic Brought to Life in Family Opera

Charlotte's Web on the Copaken Stage featuring area children and professional opera singers

Area children get time in the Spotlight

KU Students Star in Charlotte's Web

Fun Time for the Entire Family

KANSAS CITY, MO. (April 15, 2009) –“Terrific!” “Some Pig!” E.B. White’s beloved children’s book *Charlotte’s Web* will come alive through opera for children and families in Kansas City. This exciting and touching musical version of *Charlotte’s Web* brings a new dimension to E. B. White’s literary classic. With music and lyrics by Charles Strouse (*Annie*, *Bye Bye Birdie*) and script by Joseph Robinette (national award-winning children’s playwright), professional opera singers from Lyric Opera of Kansas City and young singers from the Lyrikids program bring the story to life May 7th and 8th for area schools and Saturday, May 9th at 2:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. on the Copaken Stage in the H&R Block World Headquarters for the general public. These performances follow a run of the production in Lawrence at the end of March.

Area Children get time in the Spotlight

Children from across the metro will get their chance to shine on stage with professional opera singers in *Charlotte’s Web*. Twenty-one children from fourteen Kansas City area schools represent some of the most talented children in the area who represent school districts including Independence, Blue Valley, and Shawnee Mission. Many of the children have performed with the Lyric Opera in prior productions while there are 8 brand new faces on stage.

KU Students Star in Web

KU Alumnae **Sylvia Stoner** will portray Charlotte, the spider who helps save Wilber the pig from a terrible fate. Miss Stoner has performed across the country in opera and theater. Most recently, she debuted as Nedda in *I Pagliacci* with Kansas Concert Opera. Regional opera credits include the Des Moines Metro Opera, Kentucky Opera, Shreveport Opera, Union Avenue Opera, Lake George Opera, Aspen Opera Center, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, and the Kansas City Puccini Festival. Other performances include the role of Anna Maurant in *Street Scene* and the premiere of the opera *Picnic* with KU Opera, in which she sang the role of Flo Owens. Her acting credits include multiple productions with the Kansas City Repertory Theater, the Heart of America Shakespeare Festival, the New Theatre, and Quality Hill Playhouse.



KU Doctorial Student **Robert McNichols, Jr.** will bring the lovable pig Wilbur to life in this production of *Charlotte's Web*. Mr. McNichols recently made his professional debut with the Lyric Opera of Kansas City in May of 2008 as Jim/Daniel in the world premiere production, *John Brown*. His awards include the Monsanto Scholarship from Opera Theatre of St. Louis, the Scott Joplin Scholarship from Opera Theatre of St. Louis, 2nd Prize Winner in the American Institute for Musical Studies Meistersinger Competition, and 2nd Prize in the St. Louis Regional National Society of Arts and Letters Competition. Mr. McNichols has performed with Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Illinois Summer Music Festival, Kansas City Civic Opera, Kansas City Puccini Festival, and Union Avenue Opera Theater. Mr. McNichols is the University of Kansas Baritone Apprentice with the Lyric Opera of Kansas City for the 2008-09 season during which he will sing the role of Samuel in *The Pirates of Penzance*.

Other roles portrayed by current KU students include: **Joseph Hager** as John Arable, **Holly White** as Martha Arable, **Garret Lawson** as Templeton/Barker at the Fair, **Kerry Gotschall** as Sheep, **Ryan King** as Lurvy, **James Plante** as Gander/Uncle and **Amy Cahill** as Goose.

Fun Time for the Entire Family

The beloved literary classic tells the story of Wilbur, a very special pig who is the runt of the litter, is raised lovingly by Fern and befriended by an unlikely creature, a spider named Charlotte. Charlotte's miraculous spinning saves Wilbur's life and brings together a community of farm folk and farm animals. This story of loyalty, trust, and ultimately, sacrifice, captivates the young and those young at heart.

The musical score brings new life to the children's story with songs including "Eating," Wilbur the pig's humorous yet poignant song about growing up, "Who Says We Can't Be Friends," an enchanting duet between Wilbur and his new-found companion Charlotte, "Welcome to the Zuckerman Barn," featuring the story's unforgettable animals in a hand-clapping, toe-tapping hoe-down, and "Summer," a haunting, nostalgic chorus selection that evokes a time and place from everyone's childhood.

This production is appropriate for children in pre-school through 6th grade. The production runs 1 hour and 45 minutes including an intermission.

The May 9th 2:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. performances will be held on the Copaken Stage in the H&R Block World Headquarters in downtown Kansas City, Missouri. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children under the age of 13 years old. Tickets can be purchased at the door or in advance by calling the Lyric Opera ticket office at 816-471-7344. Seating is limited.

The Lyric Opera Education Department offers a variety of programs for elementary, middle and high school students to encourage opera knowledge and appreciation. For more information about the education programs or about the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, visit www.kcopera.org.



Cast:

Principals:

Charlotte: Sylvia Stoner
Wilber: Robert McNichols, Jr., KU Doctorial Program, Lyric Opera Apprentice
John Arable: Joseph Hager
Martha Arable: Holly White
Homer Zuckerman: Larry Greer
Edith Zuckerman: Denise Knowlton
Fern Arable: Sarah Hennessey and Annie Yungmeyer
Avery Arable: Jayke Scott Workman
Templeton/Barker at the Fair: Garrett Lawson
Sheep: Kerry Gotschall
Lurvy: Ryan King
Gander/Uncle: James Plante
Goose: Amy Cahill
Lambs: Sicily Jo Mathenia, Sophia Mauro, Christine Rosa
Owl: Ruby Dibble
Bat: Hillary Laaker
Reporter: Emma WitbolsFeugen
Photographer: Elizabeth Lacy
Baby Spiders: Francesca Mauro, Sarah Wheeler, Olivia Sabates

Fairgoers:

Brianne Cihak, Mallory Harrington, Katherine Kasckow, Joseph Valentino Mathenia, Remy Mathenia, Rachel North, Elizabeth Trites, Cami Wheeler, Elizabeth Wheeler

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