



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### CONTACT:

Jim DeGood, Director of Marketing and Communications, (816) 471-4933

Paula Winans, Director of Education, (816) 471-4933

### **Children's Literary Classic Brought to Life in Family Opera**

*Charlotte's Web in Lawrence featuring area children and professional opera singers*

*Lawrence 6<sup>th</sup> Grader Featured in Production*

*KU Students Star in Charlotte's Web*

*Fun Time for the Entire Family*

KANSAS CITY, MO. (February 19, 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 Lawrence. 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 March 27<sup>th</sup> for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders from 13 schools in the Lawrence Public Schools and for the general public Saturday, March 28 at Lawrence High School.

#### **Lawrence 6<sup>th</sup> Grader Featured in Production**

Jayke Scott Workman will star as Avery, Fern’s little brother in the production. Jayke attends a Lawrence elementary school and is no stranger to the stage. He has appeared with Lawrence Community Theatre as Jojo in *Seussical: The Musical* and as Colin Craven in *The Secret Garden*. He has also appeared with Kansas University Theatre as Winthrop Paroo in *The Music Man* and received rave reviews for his portrayal of Young Willy in the opera *Street Scene*. *The Lawrence World Journal* hailed, “Young Willie, played by young student Jayke Scott Workman, was excellent. As the mischievous son and neighborhood bad boy wannabe, his tough-guy attitude was right out of ‘The Little Rascals.’ Keep an eye on him.”

#### **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 Maurrant 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The production runs 1 hour and 45 minutes including an intermission.

The 2:00 p.m. performance will be held in the Theater at Lawrence High School. 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](http://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

###