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Classic Opera IWU Presents The Marriage of Figaro

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Illinois Wesleyan University will present Mozart's timeless opera The Marriage of Figaro on Oct. 5, 6, 7, 12, 13 and 14 at 8 p.m. at the McPherson Theatre, 304 E. Graham St., Bloomington. Written by Mozart in 1785, and based on Beaumarchais's satirical play about love and class presumptions, The Marriage of Figaro shows love and conspiracy all rolled into one.

Professor of Theatre Arts and director of the opera, Tom Ossowski said that the reason IWU decided to perform such a difficult production was because, "We don't get the opportunity to do a classical opera very often, and we really felt that it was important for the students to have an opportunity to do a classical piece, as well as perform recitative." Ossowski added that recitative is spoken music.

More than 100 students and faculty are involved in the production, making it the biggest show of the year. Ossowski said, "This opera is one of the biggest and most popular operas in the world. It's been played everywhere imaginable." Examples include the English National Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, and the Opéra National de Paris. In addition, music from The Marriage of Figaro was used in the movies Shawshank Redemption, Last Action Hero, and Trading Places.

The size of the production and the show's history add to the difficulty in staging the opera, added Ossowski. "It's a big challenge to live up to the expectations," he explained, "but the students are working very, very hard. They enjoy the challenge, and they're meeting that challenge very well."

Some other things that add to the uniqueness of the IWU production include a very elaborate set and a full orchestra of 50 instrumentalists. Ossowski also has chosen a contemporary setting, making it easier for the audience to relate to the characters.

Rick Kaminski, senior music education major from Lombard, Ill., who plays the male lead Figaro, says the reason he auditioned for the show back in the spring was because, "I thought it would be a rewarding experience. I want to take what I learn from the production, and use it to help teach my future students after graduation." Kaminski says his favorite part of the opera is, "All the plot twists. There are so many surprises...it always keeps the audience in suspense. It's also really amazing to hear all the powerful voices involved in this show."

As for the work involved to put together such a large opera in just five short weeks, Kaminski said, "It's tough, very stressful, and tedious at times, but I'm having a great time. It gives me an opportunity to really push myself to see what I can really handle."

Tom Magarian, sophomore political science and music major from Des Plaines, Ill., said that he decided to pursue a role in the opera because, "I did some music theatre in high school and really enjoyed it, so I thought that the opportunity to do a major opera would be a great experience, and I would learn a lot."

The opera is set on the wedding day of lead characters Figaro and Susanna, and unfolds with tales of mixed love, mistaken identities, deceptions, and confusion for the characters. Originally the opera was banned in France and other European monarchies because of its depiction of insolent servants who conspire to outwit their masters. The show was considered dangerous because it might inspire revolts.

For ticket information, call the McPherson Theatre Box Office at 309/556-3232.

Students involved in the production include:

- Rick Kaminski, a senior music education major from Lombard, Ill., plays Figaro.
- Erin Tchoukaleff, a senior vocal performance major from St. Louis, Mo., plays Susanna, Figaro's bride.
- Nathan Bramstedt, a senior music education major from Watseka, Ill., plays Dr. Bartolo.
- Sarah Sippl, a senior music education major from Plainfield, Ill., plays Marcellina.
- Suzanne A. Shields, a senior music education major from Riverside, Ill., plays Cherubino.
- Charles W. Clayton, a senior vocal performance major from St. Paul, Minn., plays Count Almaviva.
- Alfred Alan Hannon, a senior vocal performance major from Evanston, Ill., plays Basilio.
- Christina Kingen, a senior vocal performance major from Spokane, Wash., plays the Countess.
- Scott Moreau, a senior music theatre major from Litchfield, Maine, plays Antonio.
- Danielle Plisz, a junior music theatre major from Deerfield, Ill., plays Barbarina.
- Brent Smith, a junior music education major from Lincoln, Neb., plays Don Curzio.
- Elizabeth Anderson, a sophomore vocal performance major from Morton, Ill., is in the ensemble, and also is a dancer.
- Rodney Arnett, Jr., a senior vocal performance major from Indianapolis, Ind., is in the ensemble.

- John Michael Betz, a junior vocal performance major from Kansas City, Mo., is in the ensemble, and also is a dancer.
- Melanie J. Hall, a junior music theatre major from Lincoln, Neb., is in the ensemble, and also is a dancer.
- Penny L. Hansen, a sophomore vocal performance major from St. Charles, Ill., is in the ensemble.
- Jerome Johnson, a sophomore vocal performance major from Champaign, Ill., in the ensemble, and also is a dancer.
- Tom Magarian, a sophomore double major in vocal performance and political science major from Des Plaines, Ill., is in the ensemble, and also is a dancer.
- Nathaniel Marken, a sophomore vocal performance major from Danville, Ill., is in the ensemble, and also is a dancer.
- Gina McCormally, a sophomore vocal performance major from Dedar Rapids, Iowa, is in the ensemble.
- Sarah Jane Nicholas, a sophomore vocal performance major from Rock City, Ill., is in the ensemble.
- Stephanie Roeper, a sophomore theatre arts major from Mequon, Wis., is in the ensemble.
- Steve Rogne, a junior music theatre major from Dickinson, N.D., is in the ensemble, and also is a dancer.
- Kristin Stewart, a sophomore music theatre major from Martelle, Iowa, is in the ensemble, and also is a dancer.
- Justin D. Tuffy, a sophomore music education major from Hanson, Mass., is in the ensemble.
- Joanna Wernette, a sophomore double major in vocal performance and psychology from Hinsdale, Ill., is in the ensemble, and also is a dancer.
- Carrie Zimmerman, a senior music education major from Rockford, Ill., is in the ensemble.
- Stephani Seale, a senior theatre arts major from Chicago, Ill., is the stage manager.

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