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Opera Brings New Twist to Cinderella Story

November 10, 2006

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. - The Illinois Wesleyan University School of Music will perform the opera *Meanwhile, Back at Cinderella's* on Friday, Nov. 17, at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, Nov. 18, at 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. in Westbrook Auditorium of Presser Hall, 1210 N. Park St., in Bloomington. The 1 p.m. performance is designated as a children's matinee, although all are welcome to attend.

Admission is \$5 for the general public, \$2 for children and free for IWU faculty and students with a valid IWU ID. There are no advance tickets.

Running length of the show is about one hour.

Meanwhile, Back at Cinderella's, written by James Billings, blends the styles of opera and music theatre. The opera tells the familiar Brothers Grimm fairytale from the perspective of the two evil stepsisters. In this version, the sisters are considered "good" and Cinderella is very unlike her typical dainty character. The narrator is also often wrong about the story and the characters have to correct her. Linda Farquharson, director of the opera and professor of voice at IWU, describes the narrator's role as "very demanding," as she has to directly communicate the changing story line to the audience.

Some of the roles are double cast, with one cast performing on Friday and the other on Saturday. The two separate casts "create an interesting process that will result in two very different, but equally good shows," said Stuart Seale, co-stage director with Farquharson. "The two princes, for example, have different body types: one is tall and one is not. They also have different styles, which makes their roles different."

Seale, a junior music education major with a vocal emphasis, has been working on the operas since his first year at IWU. Based on his prior experience, Farquharson asked Seale to be her co-director, a role that includes assisting with blocking, interpretation and the overall fine-tuning of the production. Seale said that co-directing has been a "very pleasant" experience for him: "The cast is very responsive. The music is fun, the orchestra is great. Everyone is pulling together really well."

Billings will visit campus on Wednesday, Nov. 15, and stay through the weekend's performances. During his visit, he will meet with the opera's performers in class and over lunch and address the School of Music on Thursday, Nov. 16 at 4:00 p.m. in Westbrook Auditorium of Presser Hall, 1210 Park St., in Bloomington. All are invited to attend the event. The New York Post praises Billings as "one of the great singing comedians of our time," and Variety describes him as someone "around whom an entire opera company should be built." He has won ASCAP awards for Children's Theater as a lyricist and librettist, including one for *Meanwhile, Back at Cinderella's*.

For additional information, contact the School of Music Office at (309) 556-3061.

Cast Members: Christine White (narrator), David Mainer (Filbert Nabgratz), Glenn Radebough (Filbert Nabgratz+*), Sheerya Shivers (Almondine Nabgratz), Sara Longtin (Ariadne Nabgratz, Edna+*), Nola Richardson (Edna, Ariadne Nabgratz+*), Melissa McMahan (Beatrice+, Daphne Nabgratz*), Ariana Strahl (Daphne Nabgratz+, Beatrice*), Emily Meade (Cinderella Nabgratz), Dennis Gotkowski (Harold the Herald), James Horner (Fairy Godfather, Cascadine+*), Stuart Seale (Cascadine, Fairy Godfather+), Dan Cox (Prince Dimmly), James Stoia (Prince Dimly+*), Dr. James Matthews (Waiter), MaryAnn Matthews (Waitress), Sam Nelson (Duke of Bombay), Sara Kedzie (Esmerelda), Liesl Miller (Brunhilde), Elizabeth Sowatzke (Melisande)

+performing on Saturday, Nov. 18 at 1:00 p.m.

*performing on Saturday, Nov. 18 at 5:00 p.m.

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