

Culpeper Times

By Danica Low

***Charlotte's Web* Spins Joy at The State Theatre Next Weekend**

Radiant. Terrific. Humble. Some Pig. Everyone knows the story of *Charlotte's Web*, either from the original E.B. White classic novel which was published in 1952, or the animated feature that aired in 1973 – or most recently, the award-winning 2006 live-action film starring Dakota Fanning and Julia Roberts. Well, we have good news! The popular family feature has been adapted for a live-theatre performance, and you need not wait long for this musical adaptation, because it has come to Culpeper!

Next weekend, between Friday evening, May 20th – Sunday afternoon, May 22nd, in four performances, Culpeper's Piedmont Players Theatre Group will debut its rendition of the classic farm tale, *Charlotte's Web*, at The State Theatre on the Halsey Auditorium stage.

Director, Steven Barker, and Assistant Director, Michelle Josephs, auditioned and selected a cast of local men, woman and children to portray the story's characters, including Charlotte (spider), Fern (young heroine), Wilbur (pig), Homer Zuckerman (the Uncle who houses Wilbur in his barn) and the darling and humorous farm animals who push the story along towards one of friendship, loyalty, triumph and adventure.

Kimberly Shrader, who plays Charlotte, the wise and ambivalent spider who befriends Wilbur and miraculously saves the day, is a second grade teacher at Pearl Sample Elementary School in Culpeper County. She says, "This role is a lot of fun to play, but most of all, it is such a darling story for all ages that tells the tale of undying friendship. We live in a County that is full of agriculture, farmland and animal loving people – it's a perfect musical for our community."

The cast has rehearsed nearly every weekday evening for three months. Together, they built and painted the sets from morning to evening one Saturday in May. The scenes change from the Arables' kitchen, the barnyard, and the County Fair. The very talented Tina Freitas of Culpeper (who also plays Mrs. Arable, the mother of Fern and Avery) and the amazing Susie Clancy, also of Culpeper, stitched, sewed, painted and hand-crafted the elaborate and adorable costumes, puppets and props for the entire cast.

Many in the cast, such as nine-year old Samantha Low, who plays Fern, have a captivating singing voice that will move you to emotion. Samantha says, "I have been in musical theatre for two years, and have dreamed of playing a role like Fern. She is passionate and a hero. And *Charlotte's Web* is one of my favorite stories!" Samantha says she likes the way Charlotte and Wilbur's friendship makes you believe that anything is possible.

Charlotte's Web musical is adapted by Joseph Robinette, with music and lyrics by Charles Strouse. This is the Piedmont Players' return to stage since a sell-out performance last December of *A Christmas Carol*. Tickets are \$25/adult and \$15/student. The box office at The State Theatre is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10-2pm, two hours prior to each show, and tickets may be purchased online at www.culpepertheatre.org/events.

Steven Barker, who also directed *A Christmas Carol* and is Executive Director at The State Theatre of Culpeper, says, "Come out and support Culpeper and the Piedmont Region's newest community theatre! This is the Piedmont Players' first musical. The cast has worked hard since rehearsals began in February, and I'm looking forward to seeing them share this moving story with the community."

A parting word from the star of the show, Wilbur the pig, who is played by nine-year old Ryker Simpson. "Certain parts this story will make you cry, certain parts will make you laugh. My favorite part is when Wilbur meets all the farm animals because they all have funny personalities. I hope you enjoy the show!"

Textbox:

Piedmont Players present Charlotte's Web

Friday, May 20, 7:30pm

Saturday, May 21, 2:30pm & 7:30pm

Sunday, May 22, 2:30pm

Tickets are \$25/adults, \$15/youth

<http://culpepertheatre.org/event/>

Pull Out Quote:

"What I love about this show is that it brings people from within our community from all walks of life. It is fun to see the creative side of people you know from work, school church and politics," says Tina Freitas, who plays Martha Arable. Two of her children, Lillyana and Luke, are in the show with her.