

Opera vocalist hits high notes of success



Staci McKee/DN

Leah Miller sings during a rehearsal for "The Marriage of Figaro," a comical opera by Mozart. Miller will play a young boy named Cherubino.

By Kristine Long
Staff Reporter

Leah K. Miller said it takes an "eccentric person" to be an opera singer.

"Opera people are a strange type of people," she said. "They live in their own world and are constantly practicing."

Miller, a senior music and vocal performance major at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, spends most of her days preparing for opera auditions and competitions.

She won the Annual Nebraska District Metropolitan Opera Auditions on Jan. 12 at the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery. Seven people sang in the auditions, and two people were chosen as winners.

Miller and L. Scan Buster of Omaha won \$400 each and advanced to the regional competition Feb. 29 in Minneapolis.

Miller competed in the regional competition two years ago, but, she said, she wasn't as prepared as she is now.

The people who win opera competitions are the ones who are serious about their careers, Miller said.

"I am much more serious now."

In the last two years, Miller said, she has gained experience by working at opera companies in Omaha, Aspen, Colo., and St. Louis.

Besides preparing for regionals, Miller is preparing for two other competitions and an opera.

"I like the opera because it's a dramatic outlet. It involves acting, moving and having the whole body engaged."

Miller
UNL senior music and vocal performance major

One competition is with the National Association of Teachers of Singing, for which she must memorize 22 recital pieces. The other competition will be in Tulsa, Okla., in April.

Miller is preparing for "The Marriage of Figaro," which will be March 13 and 14 at Kimball Recital Hall at UNL. In this comical opera by Mozart, she will play a young boy named Cherubino.

She also is taking classes and

working at the music and math libraries.

But Miller still makes sure she has time for singing. She practices everyday whenever she has time — "a half an hour here and there," she said.

"Just like athletes have to exercise their muscles everyday, singers have to exercise their vocal cords," she said.

Miller said she always knew she had a great singing talent and a "dramatic vein."

As a child, she danced, sang and acted. She started singing solos in grade school where she was encouraged to continue. She went on to sing in high school competitions.

She didn't come from a musical family, she said, but her parents always encouraged her.

Originally from Portland, Ore., Miller came to UNL in 1988 because of the university's music education program.

Instead of pursuing teaching, Miller turned her talents toward the opera.

"I like the opera because it's a dramatic outlet," she said. "It involves acting, moving and having the whole body engaged."

"It takes a lot of force and projection to sing hard enough to hit the back of the room."

Miller said she also liked singing concert and recital music.

Budget

Continued from Page 1

the Environmental Protection Agency in May after an inspection of UNL's handling of its hazardous waste.

John Payne, chairman of the NU Board of Regents, also told the committee that he thought a hazardous waste facility needed to be built.

"It is very difficult to say when a situation turns into a problem, and a problem into a crisis. . . ." he said.

Payne said UNL produces 40,000 pounds of hazardous waste every year. In a written statement to the com-

mittee, Payne said asbestos needed to be removed from Burnett Hall "to protect the safety of students and staff."

Scott Moore, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, said because the Legislature is in the second year of its current session, UNL might have to prioritize its needs and decide what appropriation it needs most.

"There are a variety of questions," he said. "Should it (the \$520,000 CBA surplus) go somewhere else or stay in CBA?"

Moore said he would consider supporting the use of the surplus money for building the hazardous waste fa-

cility or repairing Burnett Hall if there was not enough funding to do all three.

But, he said he wanted to know more about how UNL intended to spend the \$520,000 on equipment for CBA before he made any decisions as to what appropriations he would support.

"There is some sound logic in keeping it (the money) in CBA," he said, "but you also have to weigh that against other campus needs."

The Appropriations Committee will make its budget recommendation to the Legislature on March 1.

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Award

Continued from Page 1

The new teaching awards "will recognize that the University of Nebraska puts the same importance on outstanding teaching in the classroom," he said.

Jones said both awards would be accompanied by a prize of about \$3,500, similar to the prize given with the ORCA awards.

Besides offering an incentive for faculty, Milliken said, the money awarded could be put back into the academic departments to enhance education programs.

A committee formed to develop criteria for the faculty awards is expected to complete a report on the criteria within a few weeks, Jones said. He said he anticipated a call for nominations sometime in February.

The process of forming criteria for a departmental award has not advanced as quickly, he said, because of the diversity of each department within the university system.

Search

Continued from Page 1

will have more responsibilities than the previous academic officer, Aigner said.

The new responsibilities include receiving reports from international affairs, graduate studies and computing activities, she said.

The vice chancellor of academic affairs serves as acting chancellor when the chancellor is absent.

About 65 candidates are being screened for the position of vice chancellor of research, said David Sellmyer, chairman of the position search committee.

The committee is in the process of reading the applications, Sellmyer said.

The vice chancellor of research used to be the dean of graduate studies, but now has fewer responsibilities, he said.

The main objective of the position is "to advance UNL in the area of research," Sellmyer said.

Retirees volunteer time

By Melissa Dunne
Staff Reporter

Through the newly implemented Retirees of the University of Nebraska program, retired UNL employees can continue their affiliation with the university through volunteerism.

"The idea behind the program is that retirees still have so much accumulated wisdom and knowledge that they are just a huge pool of untapped resources," said Clarice Orr, volunteer coordinator of the RUN program.

The RUN program is accumulating a database of all retirees.

Although many retirees already volunteer at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Orr said, only a few have volunteered through RUN. Orr said she would like to recognize individuals who already were volunteering their time, as well as allowing other retirees to do the same.

"We are just up and running and working as diligently as we can," she said. "We have already received several requests from both departments and retirees."

Possible volunteer activities include academic and career planning, consulting, helping landscape gardeners, book- or record-keeping and office-clerical support.

"What we are doing is defining jobs which are not being done and matching those needs with people who have had a longtime affiliation and want to continue with the university," she said.

Orr said she did not anticipate that volunteers would return to the department from which they retired.

"What would be better is if they

could choose an area which has always interested them, but because of employment they were never able to do," she said.

Orr, who earned her bachelor's and master's degree from the UNL College of Home Economics, has been an employee of UNL for 23 years. She worked with the College of Engineering for 18 years and now works for university relations.

The RUN program is Orr's brainchild from a class term paper she wrote on her "dream project" 10 years ago. The paper became the program proposal.

"It's been fermenting all along . . . gestating, growing," she said. "At the time, there were just no funds available."

Chancellor Graham Spanier approved funding for the RUN program until June 30, 1992, as a pilot program. Permanent funding will be considered after July 1.

"We are going to prove that we are a viable organization that can provide a great service to the university and help retirees adjust to retirement," Orr said.

Orr said that retirees, as well as departments, would benefit from the program.

"When a retiree leaves his job, the separation is a very difficult transition period," she said. "It takes away their whole existence."

"It's very important that they can continue relations with peers, friends and institutions," she said. "If they can be productive and do something of value, it gives them a reason to get up in the morning."

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