

# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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## NU laserist helps blind see 'stars'

By Paula Lavigne  
Senior Reporter

Kay Konz wanted to see the stars. Konz has a visual impairment, retinitis pigmentosa (RP), which prevents her from seeing the stars in the night sky.

"I'm an Iowa farmer's daughter, so I grew up being part of the weather and the natural cycle of night and day and seasonal changes," she said.

Her vision started slowly deteriorating, and in 1981 she was diagnosed with RP. As her sight became worse, she said she couldn't figure out a way to see the stars.

"It's just one of those little things about life we don't realize how much we appreciate until we don't have it," she said. "It's kind of like youth or hearing."

In May 1992, Konz approached Jack Dunn, coordinator of the Mueller Planetarium at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and asked him to re-create the galaxies for her.

With a bit of reluctance and a little luck, Dunn answered her request. He worked with different intensities and sizes until Konz saw a dot of light.

"I think I squealed and jumped," she said.

Dunn's experiment at UNL spawned a nationwide cooperative of laserists who wanted to use their technology to open the eyes of the visually impaired.

This concept, known as "Lighting Up the Night," will be discussed next week at the International Laser Display Association's international laser conference, which will take place at Mueller Planetarium.

This past summer at the Boston Museum of Science's Hayden Planetarium, Dunn presented his laser show "Zodiac" to children from the Perkins School for the Blind.

The show opened new technological possibilities for RP patients and caught the eye of other laser association members. Dunn devised guidelines for other laserists who wanted to offer similar laser shows.

Dunn said it was important to remember that every visually impaired person had a different degree of sight. Dunn remedies this by continually changing the size and degree of lasers.

Working with visually impaired people, Dunn said, was a fulfilling experience.

"They are very appreciative people, and that's the reward," he said. "You do it because you really enjoy it."

Dunn said laser association members agreed not to charge for the shows. Members donate their time and technology.

"I think it is the nature of the laser industry. We are all technologists. We believe in technology, but we don't think it can cure everything," he said. "What we're doing is not a cure. It's simply something to enrich someone's life."

Dunn said laser projects affected people on a personal and emotional level. He said it was a positive sign for the nation.

"We have a mandate to help people in this country, and it's sad you have to force everybody into it," he said. "We should be doing it anyway."

With Konz's help, Dunn's project reached out to students at the Nebraska School for the Visually Handicapped in Nebraska City.

William Mann, superintendent of the

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## Omaha graduate hits big time

By Paula Lavigne  
Senior Reporter

As a young girl, Joanna Young performed in dance recitals at the Orpheum Theater in Omaha. The 21-year-old actress returns to the Orpheum stage this week as a cast member of the Broadway musical "Les Miserables."

Young went from singing in her high school show choir to acting in "Les Miserables" in less than two years.

A graduate of Westside High School, she enrolled at New York University as a musical theater major. Last December, in the middle of her sophomore year, her life changed.

She auditioned for and landed a role with the touring cast of the Tony Award-winning musical "Les Miserables," which stops this week at Omaha's Orpheum Theater.

Young said she fell into the New York atmosphere with ease, and the people there didn't expect her to "wear gingham and ponytails."

"You just had to get used to people with blue hair and nose rings," she said. "Every kind of person you could find is in New York."

She said it would be exciting to return to Omaha, because her friends and relatives would be able to see her.

Young was drawn in by "Les Miserables"'s musical score, she said, even before she saw the 1989 Omaha performance. Young liked the show so much she saw it again at the Lied Center for Performing Arts and at the Imperial Theatre on Broadway.

Young performs regularly as a member of the musical ensemble. She also is an understudy for starring roles Eponine and Cosette.

She tried out for the role just for the experience, Young said, but she never thought she would land a part. As soon as she found out, Young called her high school vocal instructor, David Moore.

Moore, who still teaches vocal instruction classes at Westside High School, has been coaching Young for nine years.

"I guess it's every vocal teacher's dream their kids will hit the big time, and Joanna's certainly one who did it," he said. "She's definitely on the straight track and the right track to be on with this opportunity."

Moore said he was delighted when Young called him from New York, and he wanted Young to be sure of her future.

"I think the first words out of my mouth were 'What about college?' — being an educator," he said. "As I thought about it, though, I realized that's what she was going to school to do — get in a performance."

Moore saw Young in a "Les Miserables" performance in St. Louis and said he was confident she could "make it to the top."

"We all know show business involves a lot of luck and getting the breaks," he said. "Joanna's in the position where she will be seen by lots of people. ... Her work and her



Young

talent will carry her from there."

Since she is a success story, Young has become a role model for other Westside students, Moore said.

"The other students are kind of in awe of her at the moment," he said, "to think someone that recently out of high school is doing something that is legitimately the big time."

"I think she's given a lot of inspiration to kids who have those dreams," he said.

"Les Miserables" runs through Sunday at Omaha's Orpheum Theater, with nightly performances at 7:30. Two matinee performances will start at 2 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

Ticket prices range from \$15 to \$39.50, depending on seat location and performance date and time. Tickets are available through all Ticketmaster outlets.

### Quik Facts

Show: "Les Miserables"

At: Orpheum Theater, Omaha

Times: 7:30 p.m. today through Sunday, 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

Tickets: range from \$15 to \$39.50, available from Ticketmaster



James Meshling/DN

## Computer game leads players to 'Doom'

By Rick Roth  
Staff Reporter

A struggle raged on yesterday as politicians tried to win the remaining votes. Brutal advertising has stormed the media, slandering political hopefuls and incumbents alike.

This barbarism has taken control of radio and TV broadcasts. Luckily, one medium has remained unscathed by the political onslaught — the computer.

Don't be fooled, though; the computer is not devoid of barbarism. People are being sucked into cyberspace to battle demons in a violent blood bath rivaling the Kerrey-



Stoney race.

What is this terror? It's id Software's shoot-'em-up video games, "Doom" and its new sequel, "Doom II."

"Doom" has been available via the Internet since December 1993. In this game, the electronic consumer is treated to an exceptional 3-D experience with fierce mon-

sters, blood-curdling screams and gory special effects.

The story of "Doom" begins on a Martian moon base, where scientists have opened a gateway to another dimension. The inhabitants of this other dimension are not very friendly. They come through these portals and wreak havoc on the moon base, subverting the people, technology and architecture to their own demonic ways.

The "Doom" player's role is that of a futuristic marine, armed only with a pistol, who must single-handedly fight back the alien invasion.

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