

'Soul' of Cather's work at Plains festival

By DIANE BRODERICK
Staff writer

Her name is synonymous with great Nebraska literature, and tonight audiences will see Willa Cather's works connected to great music.

As part of the Great Plains Music and Dance Festival and Symposium, the School of Music is presenting "Voices of the Great Plains: Music Theater Adaptations of Willa Cather's Literature."

The presentation will consist of excerpts from three adaptations of Cather's literature by three different composers performed by about 15 University of Nebraska-Lincoln students.

Cather's connection to the Great Plains is an obvious reason her work was chosen for the festival, said Ariel Bybee, one of the organizers of tonight's event.

But Cather's affinity for music makes these musical adaptations a natural step, Bybee said.

"Eighty percent of Willa Cather's work has music in it," Bybee said, referring mainly to characters who play instruments in her writings.

"She loved music. She always said she had to have music in everything she did."

Of the three adaptations that will be presented, two are based on Cather's short story "Eric Hermannson's Soul," a love affair set against the backdrop of a



Focus on the Festival

A week-long look at highlights of the Great Plains Music and Dance Festival and Symposium

Culture The Facts

What: "Voices of the Plains: Music Theatre Adaptations of Willa Cather's Literature"

Where: The Johnny Carson Theater, 301 N. 11th St.

When: Tonight at 8

Cost: Free

The Skinny: Musical look at one of Nebraska's greatest writers

farmer struggling with his religious conviction and his love for music and other worldly pleasures.

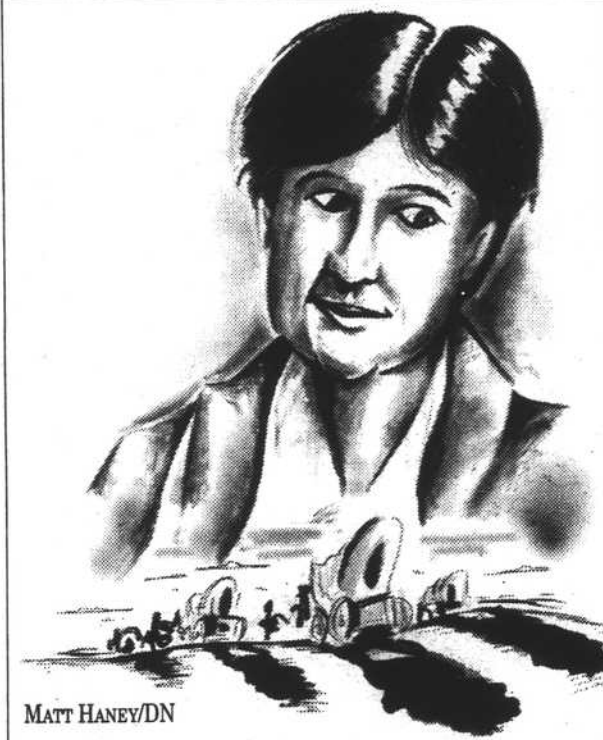
An opera and a musical, "Out to the Wind" by Robert Beadell and "Eric Hermannson's Soul" by Libby Larsen, have been based on this short story, and excerpts will be presented from each.

Bybee said the excerpt from Larsen's work, which premiered last year, is one of the best from her entire opera. It is one in which Eric

Hermannson, a violinist, is asked by his preacher to give up his music, which the preacher thinks is evil. If Hermannson doesn't, the preacher will condemn his soul to hell.

"The minute we got the score, we turned to that page and said, 'This is the one we've got to do,'" Bybee said.

To complete "Eric Hermannson's" representation, four sections will be shown from Beadell's "Out to the



MATT HANEY/DN

Wind," which was written in 1979.

In addition to these two pieces, excerpts from Assistant Professor Tyler White's partially finished opera "O Pioneers!" will be presented.

White said he got the idea 3½ years ago to adapt an opera from that popular Cather novel, and he will premiere the entire work this November at Kimball Hall.

In fact, one of the duets that will be performed tonight was just completed last weekend.

White said he chose "O Pioneers!" to adapt because it is one of the more linear tales Cather wrote, and it employs such traditional opera plots as adultery and tragedy.

"O Pioneers!" is the tale of a young woman who must take over her parents' farm when her father dies. The bulk of the story takes place 16 years later and has two main romantic plots.

One involves the heroine, Alexandra, being reunited with the love of her life, and the other concerns her younger brother and the love that develops between him and a married neighbor woman.

"There have been scholars that have suggested that aspects of the plot were actually inspired by opera," White said.

The recent interest in creating musical adaptations of Cather's work comes from a larger trend, White said.

"(It's) part of a larger interest in creating operatic adaptations of American literature," White said.

There have been several recently, he said, including versions of "The Great Gatsby" and "A Streetcar Named Desire."

This, coupled with an elevation of Cather's place in the canon of American literature, makes her work a natural choice for current operatic adaptation.

"It just makes sense," White said. Two excerpts, the opera's opening scene and an aria, will be performed from "O Pioneers!"

Professor William Shomos, the director of the opera program and overseer of tonight's event, said Cather's words and plots, and her beautiful descriptions of Nebraska landscapes, lend themselves well to opera.

"(Cather) tells a good story. She really captures the human spirit in her writings," Shomos said. "I think every composer's challenge then is to evoke the atmospheres with which she surrounds her stories."

'Ten Things' easy to hate

By DANELL MCCOY
Staff writer

Hollywood's infatuation with high-school love stories has brought another sickly coming-of-age story to the screen for the enjoyment of teenyboppers.

The story idea for "10 Things" was taken from Shakespeare's "The Taming of the Shrew" but falls quite short of the classic piece.

The movie (like the play) focuses on two sisters. Popular and naive Bianca (Larisa Oleynik), and her older, ill-tempered, argumentative and socially independent sister, Katerina (Julia Stiles).

Their father (Larry Miller), has made the rule that Bianca is not allowed to date until Kat does. Unfortunately for Bianca, Kat has no interest in dating.

Enter Cameron James (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) the new guy at school who falls for Bianca. With help from his brainy sidekick, a plan is hatched to get Kat to date and to remove Bianca from underneath her father's thumb.

From there the plot is basically predictable. A deal is made with the school outcast and rebel, Patrick (Heath Ledger), to get Kat to date, Kat falls for him and Bianca is allowed to go out. Antics and emotional scenes ensue.

Disappointing was the character of Kat, who seemed to be intellectual and able to survive without a guy in her life in the beginning. But by the end of the

Film Review The Facts

Title: "10 Things I Hate About You"

Stars: Julia Stiles, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Heath Ledger

Director: Gil Junger

Rating: PG-13

Grade: C

Five Words: Plot is overused and formulaic

movie, she turns out to be just like every other teen-age girl in every other movie.

The emotional revelations that are supposed to take place between the characters are shallow and bring nothing of interest into the movie. The sisters do not grow closer, and Bianca is continually shallow after her and Kat's heart-to-heart talk.

The movie would have been a complete flop if it had not been for the quirkiness of the adult characters. The dad speaks slang, the guidance counselor writes pornography and the English teacher has a quick-tongued attitude.

"10 Things" could've succeeded had it not used the same idea as so many other movies. It would have been nice to see Bianca's character expand emotionally and Kat's character stay independent of the high school social scale.

But in Hollywood, the guy always gets the girl, the girl always forgives the guy for putting bets on her emotions and the money always comes rolling in.

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