



Sharing his Voice

NU's Weber adds spark to opera program

■ The talented singer hopes to use his vocal training as a professional performer or teacher.

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

Editor's note: In this weekly series, we examine the exceptional work and accomplishments of individual students in art, dance, music, acting and design.

Oh, what it must be like to reap the benefit of the singing gene.

Bryce Weber has it.

Weber has a voice that would make the struggling shower singers of the world jealous.

"My whole family has always sang. My grandparents were music teachers, so I've grown up with it."

Bryce Weber senior music education major

Nobody knows this more than his professor and teacher

William Shomos.

"I think he's tremendously gifted in his singing, and has so much potential in whatever he does," Shomos said.

Weber said the good singing voice was in his roots.

"My whole family has always sang," Weber said. "My grandparents were music teachers, so I've grown up with it."

The UNL School of Music should send a thank-you note to his family because Weber has been involved in many of the program's opera productions, notably "Guglielmo Così Fan Tutte" and "Ivar."

"It's a fine opera program here," Weber said. "It has grown 1,000-fold in numbers since I arrived here. The growth of this program is a big reason why I came to Nebraska."

Weber found his way to UNL from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, after running into Shomos during a play production.

"I was directing a play of 'The Music Man,' and I ran across Bryce and we recruited him here," Shomos said.

"He's had a really fine voice, and he's grown technically over the years."

Since his arrival, Weber has established quite a list of activities to put on his resume.

He has spent time with the Varsity Men's Chorus, the University Choir and helps with the Westminster Presbyterian Church Choir in Lincoln.

The baritone singer also has won the Nebraska Association of Teachers state contest and then won the regional contest.

It's decision time now for the senior.

Perhaps, Weber will pursue a career in the opera through graduate school.

Possible graduate schools of interests to Weber are Indiana University, the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music and the Juilliard School.

Weber said he also would be content with becoming a music teacher and passing his years of vocal training down to the next generation.

"It all depends on what Bryce is driven to do," Shomos said.

"There is always room for good baritones out there, but I also think Bryce would be a really exceptional music teacher."

Weber does maintain a few concerns about pursuing a



Heather Glenboski/DN

Heather Glenboski/DN

ABOVE: Senior music education major Bryce Weber is a big part of the growing UNL opera program. Weber is considering either becoming a professional opera singer or a high school music teacher and "passing his years of training as a singer down to the next generation."

LEFT: Bryce Weber practices songs for graduate school auditions and future competitions with professor William Shomos. Weber sings songs in many different languages, including French, Italian, German, Italian and Russian.

career in opera.

"It's a harder life," he said. "It would probably require living in a foreign country."

Shomos doesn't doubt Weber could flourish though.

"There are many possible avenues in front of him," Shomos said. "If he's driven to pursue a career in opera, he can succeed."

If Weber decides to teach, he already knows what age group

he wants to work with.

"I want to work with high schoolers," he said. "I know what I liked in a teacher and what teachers I didn't like, so that would help me know what I want to do as a teacher."

And even though he is still a student and not a teacher, he's been one of the sparks in the growing UNL opera program.

He did the singing family proud.

Buzzard Billy's offers tasty Cajun fare

■ Buzzard Billy's offers full plate of Cajun flavor and atmosphere to adventurous diners.

BY LAURA DEWITT

Rarely do I want to eat at the same restaurant twice in one day, or twice in a week for that matter.

But a mere four hours after I had dined at The Original Buzzard Billy's Armadillo Bar-N-Grillo, I was tempted to return for another round of its Cajun cooking.

Buzzard Billy's simply has an awesome menu. From appetizers like Gator Fingers and Crawfish-Crab Cakes to poboys, jambalaya and gumbo, they have the Cajun food thing down.

The first of four Buzzard Billy's was opened in Waco, Texas in 1993 by Dan Massoth, his brother and two friends who wanted to create a fun and festive atmosphere in which to serve their Louisiana-inspired food.

Located in the Haymarket at 247 N. 8th St., the newest Buzzard Billy's brings the big flavor of Cajun cooking with a 1960s or '70s tavern atmosphere. Retro movie posters, 1970s Louisiana plates, old tavern signs and other relics adorn the walls. Most decorations are originals, unlike some other restaurant decorations in town, Massoth said.

My sister and I arrived here for a late lunch Saturday. The spacious dining area was nearly empty at that time, except for a number of people watching the Nebraska-Notre Dame game at the bar. This was not the norm for Buzzard Billy's, which is often

packed on weekends, our server said.

We decided to try the Gator Fingers (\$5.95) off the appetizer menu. This is a large plate of sliced, breaded and fried alligator tail served with a spicy Creole honey mustard sauce.

Alligator meat may sound scary or even inedible to some, but it has a flavor similar to shrimp, perhaps even milder. They were gone in a matter of minutes.

My sister ordered a Bushwhacker (\$4.50) off the drink menu, which is an icy, smooth concoction of Kahlua, rum and coconut flavoring mixed with ice cream and garnished with an orange slice.

The menu has all the bases covered with over 60 menu items including soups, gumbos, blackened and fried dinners, combination platters, sandwiches, steaks, salads, pastas, burgers, sides and desserts. For an indecisive diner like myself, it can be hard to choose just one thing with such a selection. But I finally opted for the Bayou Platter (\$9.95).

This combo meal consists of a blackened chicken breast, a half order of red beans and rice (a serving so generous that I cannot even fathom a person eating a regular order), two hushpuppies and a cup of chicken and sausage gumbo.

The gumbo had a spicy tomato base and was filled with chicken and Andouille sausage over rice. I had never tried gumbo and I loved it. The beans and rice were also superb.

My sister ordered the Chicken Czarina, one of the House Specialty Dinners and was very

satisfied. For \$11.95 you get a plateful of rice and vegetables with a fried chicken breast smothered in a Parmesan cream sauce filled with shrimp, mushrooms and green onions.

Along with the meal came a basket of sliced French bread and butter.

Although we were stuffed, we made room to try a traditional Louisiana dessert, Bananas Foster (\$4.50). Bananas are sautéed in a sauce of butter, brown sugar and cinnamon to which rum is added and ignited briefly. The bananas are then served smothered in the sauce and topped with vanilla ice cream. The texture of the soft bananas was pleasant with the cold, frozen ice cream and warm, sugary sauce.

Our waters came in huge 32-ounce glasses, which you'll need to quench the thirst brought on by the spicy Cajun seasonings.

The food ranges in spiciness from mild to medium denoted on the menu with jalapeno symbols. Vegetarian dishes are also marked.

Prices range from \$1.50 for side dishes and between \$2.95 and \$5.95 for many salads, appetizers, desserts and other items to \$15.95 for a 12-ounce New York Strip.

Our server said the house specialties and combination platters like the Crawfish Platter and the Cajun Combo are especially popular, as are the poboys.

Poboys are the New Orleans version of a hoagie, made with French bread split and filled with one of six different selections and served with a side. The Andouille Swiss and the Shrimp Poboy

Restaurant Review

The Original Buzzard Billy

Where: _____

What: _____

Meal: _____

★★★★ of 4 stars

(\$5.95) looked especially appetizing.

Other items I will be sure to try are the Tequila Jerk Shrimp and the Mean Green Buzzard Wings, which are chicken wings fried and coated with a jalapeno lime sauce.

Buzzard Billy's does take out orders but doesn't accept reservations. Hours of operation are 11 a.m. - 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 11 a.m. - 11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

I loved my experience at Buzzard Billy's. I was satisfied with my food and the service. Our waitress was friendly, helpful and on hand at all times. The atmosphere is friendly and casual, and the decor makes you feel like you're back in the '70s.

You are fed well for your money, and you'll likely have something left on your plate to bring home.

Buzzard Billy's has wonderful, stick-to-your-ribs, spicy - but not too spicy - Cajun food. I'll be back in there soon to try those buzzard wings.

'The Watcher' fails to see its way out of formulaic

BY GEORGE GREEN

"The Watcher," misses the poignant adrenaline scare that characterizes a solid psychological-thriller.

It does provide the classic and overused cop-movie cast comprised of a strung-out but valiant cop, a daring and seductive killer and a loving damsel in distress.

Joel Campbell (James Spader) is a burned-out ex-FBI agent who returns to duty once the serial killer, whom he once pursued, returns.

Campbell suffers from migraines and has weird flashbacks to strange scenes in his tormented life.

To deal with his mental miseries, Campbell pops more prescription pills than a medal-winning barbiturate junky.

The killer that Campbell hunts is David-Allen Griffin (Keanu Reeves). Griffin murders young women in what he believes to be a big game and feels an abnormal connection to Campbell.

Griffin sends pictures of his victims to Campbell before he kills them to entice the ex-cop to return to duty.

He plans his murders so that they remind Campbell of his past mistakes.

Eventually, Griffin comes to view their relationship as necessary, if not essential, to who they are.

The twisted relationship between Campbell and Griffin never completely solidifies.

Instead, viewers have a vague sense of what the film makers intended.

MOVIE REVIEW

"The Watcher"

Director: Joe Charbanic

Stars: James Spader, Marisa Tomei, Ernie Hudson, Keanu Reeves

Rating: R (Violence, language)

★★★ of 4 stars

But they are not scared. Reeves is probably the biggest fear deterrent.

His California-boy aura still haunts him and makes it difficult for viewers to squirm in fear when he lurks around the corner.

When he whispers a death sentence into his victim's ear, he sounds more like a stoner searching for another bowl than a violent murderer.

Also, the damsel/victim to the cop relationship never matures.

I assume that the film makers wanted viewers to sense a bond between Campbell the cop and Polly, the damsel (Marisa Tomei).

Their connection is supposed to enhance the viewer's fear near the film's conclusion.

However, when viewers reach the film's predictable end, they are not afraid of the damsel's life but regard her as another possible victim just like all the rest.

Some spicy pyrotechnics and car chase scenes save the film from disaster.