



'Rags to Riches' cast plays to packed house at Wadsworth  
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It was a packed house at Wadsworth Auditorium Saturday for the "Rags to Riches" show mounted by Newnan Cultural Arts Commission.

The new fall event, the brainchild of artistic director and soprano Courtenay Budd, brought an evening of song and musical theater to the historic hall. Featured was Warren Martin's comic oratorio "The True Story of Cinderella."

The arts commission is working to expand programming at the 1939-era, Art Deco-style facility now that the city's police department has moved down Jefferson Street to the newly-built public safety complex.

"It shows we can pack the auditorium on a weekend when there is no Georgia football," joked Budd as she introduced the operatic program. It was a bye week for the UGA Bulldogs.

In recent years Budd has taken the reins of the "Friends of Wadsworth" spring chamber music series, a continuation of the popular concerts originated by auditorium namesake Charles Wadsworth some two decades ago.

"Friends of Wadsworth" will return for spring 2016 with a March 12 concert date. Budd announced that the lineup will include internationally-known violinist Chee-Yun with a talented lineup of musicians for the evening of chamber music.

Coming soon are the premiere screening 7:30 p.m. Nov. 12 of the new commissioned documentary "The Wonderful Wadsworth," created by local filmmaker Jonathan Hickman; a "Yes Virginia" holiday event Nov. 17; and performances of ballet "The Nutcracker" Dec. 18-19.

Saturday's evening of opera and song included a first half of selections on a "Rags to Riches" theme from such composers as George Gershwin, Richard Rogers, Stravinsky, Menotti, Offenbach, Verdi and Rossini. Cast members strolled on and off stage as the performances blended into a seamless medley.

Budd with Newnan's Erin McGraw and Tina Milhorn Stallard sang Richard Rogers' "Sing for Your Supper," portraying "starving artists." Atlanta singer Timothy Miller, known best for his renditions of "God Bless America" at Braves baseball games, gave a rousing performance of Jay Gorner's "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?"

Budd joined world-traveled soprano Indra Thomas of Atlanta as they portrayed courtesans, singing the Barcarolle from "Les contes d'Hoffmann" by Offenbach. Thomas also performed "All That Gold" from Giancarlo Menotti's "Amahl and the Night Visitors" that will be returning during the holidays to Newnan's Centre for Performing and Visual Arts.

Budd, Thomas and Newnan's own Sarah Taylor showed their comic side, flashing jewelry and bold costumes in "Glitter and Be Gay" from Leonard Bernstein's "Candide."

The cast came together to end the first half with the Act I finale from Rossini's version of "Cinderella," "La Cenerentola."

The highlight was the second-half performance of Martin's "Cinderella" with the cast of 12 internationally-known and talented local voices along with pianist and musical director William Lewis, narrator JoAn Kinrade and Newnan Mayor Keith Brady chiming the midnight hour as Cinderella leaves the ball.

Budd earned a Master's Degree at Westminster Choir College of Rider University in Princeton, NJ, where Martin's 1955 "Cinderella" is a tradition for welcoming incoming freshmen. Faculty enter the stage dressed in formal gowns and tuxedos, and line up on the stage as if they are about to deliver a sacred oratorio. What follows is almost an hour of singing hilarity. Saturday night's rendition was no exception.

"Warren Martin was the conductor of the Westminster Choir, and unfortunately this wonderful work is rarely heard outside venues with Westminster connections," said Budd. "I have wanted to present it for a very long time, always dreaming up casts of my friends."

The all-star cast for "The True Story of Cinderella" included Budd, soprano (Second Stepsister) and Thomas, soprano (First Stepsister) along with: Candler Budd, baritone (the Herald); Emily Budd, soprano (Cinderella); William Killmeier, baritone (First Hermit); Adam Kirkpatrick, tenor, Atlanta (Prince); John LaForge, bass-baritone, Gainesville (King); Erin McGraw, soprano (Stepmother); Timothy Miller, tenor (Second Hermit); Christia Nastasi, soprano and Metropolitan Opera educational career grant winner (Queen); Marc Porlier, tenor, Atlanta (Third Hermit); Tina Milhorn Stallard, soprano, University of South Carolina (Fairy Godmother).

Seven of the talented singers in the "Rags to Riches" event had Newnan connections, including Budd herself, Budd's brother and sister-in-law Candler and Emily Budd, William Killmeier, and hometown girls Kat Duncan, Erin McGraw and Sarah Taylor. Continuing the family connection, Ms. Nastasi is Budd's cousin.

Newnan's Killmeier, as Budd, graduated from Westminster Choir College. Budd noted that his time at Westminster overlapped with Martin's time there. Killmeier went on to careers with the

U.S. Army Band in Washington, DC and later 13 years as an opera singer across Europe where he had more than 60 leading roles. He is now an associate broker with Keller Williams in Peachtree City.

Duncan studied voice at the Hodgson School of Music at UGA and just returned from a season of auditions in New York City. McGraw, daughter of Mike and Renee McGraw, now leads the Upper School Theatrical Arts program at Pinecrest Academy in Cumming and was 2015-16 Teacher of the Year. Taylor, who appeared in one of the Charles Wadsworth and Friends events in Newnan, holds a music degree from Indiana University and has performed across the country; she now lives in Williamsburg, VA with husband and fellow Newnan High grad Michael Umberger.

Newnan audiences may know Candler and Emily Budd from the popular performances of their original comedy cabaret series, "Craigslit Chronicles." Emily Budd is an adjunct professor at LaGrange College and Candler Budd is a regular theater, standup and improv performer with such credits as half the townspeople in "Greater Tuna," "A Tuna Christmas" and "Red, White & Tuna" as well as "Anything Goes" and "Chicago." They have appeared in Atlanta Lyric Theatre productions in Marietta: Emily as Jenny Lind in "Barnum" and Candler as Smee in "Peter Pan." The couple also had roles in the recent Newnan Theatre Company Production "Into The Woods."

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Photos by Ellen Corker

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Courtenay Budd, Indra Thomas and Sarah Taylor, from left, perform "Glitter and Be Gay" from Leonard Bernstein's "Candide" at the "Rags to Riches" program Oct. 24 at Newnan's Wadsworth Auditorium.

5630

The cast of Warren Martin's "The True Story of Cinderella," from left, narrator JoAn Kinrade; Queen, Christia Nastasi; King, John LaForge; Stepmother, Erin McGraw; First Stepsister, Indra Thomas; Second Stepsister, Courtenay Budd; back, Chime, Mayor Keith Brady, and pianist William Lewis; Cinderella, Emily Budd; Prince, Adam Kirkpatrick; Fairy Godmother, Tina Milhorn Stallard; First Hermit, William Killmeier; Second Hermit, Timothy Miller; Third Hermit, Marc Porlier; Herald, Candler Budd.

0351

Finale, the cast of Warren Martin's "The True Story of Cinderella," from left, seated, narrator JoAn Kinrade; standing, Queen, Christia Nastasi; King, John LaForge; Stepmother, Erin McGraw; First Stepsister, Indra Thomas; Second Stepsister, Courtenay Budd; back, Chime, Mayor Keith Brady, and pianist William Lewis; front, Cinderella, Emily Budd; Prince, Adam Kirkpatrick; Fairy Godmother, Tina Milhorn Stallard; First Hermit, William Killmeier; Second Hermit, Timothy Miller; Third Hermit, Marc Porlier; Herald, Candler Budd.

COMING IN SECOND EMAIL:

4717

The "Rags to Riches" cast at Wadsworth Auditorium ends the first half with a performance of the Act I finale of "La Cenerentola," Rossini's version of "Cinderella."

3738

Candler Budd, Emily Budd, Kathleen Duncan and Marc Porlier, from left, perform "Rich is Better," portraying the nouveaux riches in the song from Elmer Bernstein. It was a part of the first half of the "Rags to Riches" evening of opera and song at Wadsworth Auditorium Saturday, Oct. 24. At back is pianist and musical director William Lewis.

3031

Portraying courtesans in the Barcarolle from "Les contes d'Hoffman" by Offenbach are Indra Thomas and Courtenay Budd, in Saturday night's "Rags to Riches" sh