

# This one ain't over till the muskrat sings

By Gary Seman Jr.  
Special to SNP

It ain't over until the muskrat sings.

At 4 p.m. May 26 at Columbus School for Girls, 56 S. Columbia Ave., Opera/Columbus — along with CSG students in grades 1-4 — will perform *A Muskrat Lullaby*, an opera by Edward Barnes.

The event is free and open to the public.

"*A Muskrat Lullaby* is great show because kids actually participate in the opera," said Barb Seckler, director of marketing and public relations.

"It gives children a real hands-on feel for what operas are like because they're literally in the opera," Seckler said.

*Lullaby* will be presented because of its appeal to younger student audiences, she said., "I think because it's a fun and very interactive show where it's easy for us to have kids take part."

*Lullaby* is one of many programs facilitated by Opera/Columbus' Opera Education-Outreach Program, which has been in existence for eight years.

The purpose is to reach students in their early educational stage to teach "what operas and the arts are all about," she said.

"They get a real feel for what opera's like," she said.

Seckler said the program brings all elements of the arts — such as music, acting, costumes, sets and

make up — to the students.

She said she has attended performances.

"It was remarkable to see students, in their eyes, come alive as they were introduced to opera," she said.

A professional makeup artist will create masks out of paper mache for the children, she said.

Adult performers for the play include: tenor Kevin Wines, who will play Miles the Muskrat; soprano Stephani Bissinger, the Bird; mezzo soprano Roberta Gutierrez, the Spider; and baritone Peyton Dixon, the Alligator Boss.

It will be the first Opera/Columbus performance using CSG students, said

Christina Rak, CSG assistant director of development.

Susan DeGraaf, CSG after-hours Latchkey coordinator, said the children rehearsed for three days.

DeGraaf said most students have enjoyed the production.

"There's always one or two children who say, 'Opera, yuk,'" she said. "But I think they're finding out it's

a really neat experience. And the people who sing are neat."

She said culture isn't necessarily boring to children.

"The big thing they're learning is opera might be fun," she said.

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