

Campus Drama Troupe Spins a Heartwarming Tale in "Terrific" Charlotte's Web

By Joseph M. Sumbi
Staff Writer

“Charlotte's Web” is a timeless tale about finding companionship, and on May 4, I had the pleasure of watching the Cal State East Bay's spring family theater troupe bring the classic to life in the University Theatre.

E.B. White's story of a pig named Wilbur and his friendship with a barn spider named Charlotte has been adapted several times for television and film, yet seeing the story in a live-action production makes the other versions pale in comparison.

There were several families in attendance with children of all ages to take part on opening night. The size and make-up of the crowd provided for an exceptionally intimate atmosphere.

The stage design and costumes were fashioned precisely to accompany the classic tale: the actors were dressed in overalls, jeans and T-shirts against the backdrop of a barnyard with a white picket fence and cardboard cutout of a cow.

The director of the play was Ann Fajilan, who in her first year with the CSUEB Theatre Department was able to show she has a knack for children's theater. Fajilan's direction showed terrific style and excellent attention to detail.

The play began with Tatiana Soriano, a young girl who narrated

the story. Soriano did an excellent job as the storyteller but when she first entered the stage and began her narration, it was hard to hear her because of her gentle speaking voice.

The production crew soon rectified the problem by providing Soriano with a microphone and a crew mem-

ber to sit with her as she read her lines.

and the lamb while actor Emmelie Turner played the gander and the sheep. They did a great job of maintaining definite distinction between each of their characters' voices and committing to each voice throughout the play.

Other than Wilbur, the two characters that received the most reaction from the audience were Templeton the rat, played by Brian Turner, and Charlotte the spider played by Rachel Throesch.

Turner executed his role as the pesky, wise-cracking rat perfectly, giving the show great comedic relief. Whether it was a belly high-five shared with Wilbur or tending to his rotten egg, Turner was able to have his character connect with the audience perfectly.

Throesch also delivered a quality performance as the affectionate Charlotte. The audience was particularly attracted to Throesch's character because she carried out her role while climbing up and down the set weaving her web to save Wilbur.

While the show was quite enjoyable there was one glaring flaw that detracted from the story.

In the early part of the play there was an annoying feedback noise

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To portray the barnyard animals, student actors operated puppets of all sizes, giving the lifeless objects a great feeling of vivacity.

The lovable Wilbur the pig was played by Seth Thygesen, whose energy and tone convinced me he really was a pig.

When the audience was introduced to the other barnyard animals, we were treated to several grand personalities.

Wearing a puppet on each hand, actor Nancy Wong played the goose

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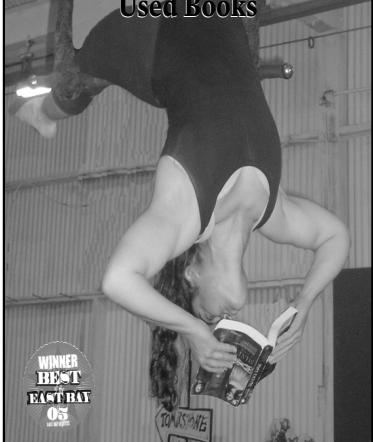
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