Creighton talent appears in ‘Aida’

BY CORY CLASEMANN
REPORTER

In early February, Opera Omaha will bring the classic opera “Aida” to life at the Orpheum Theater with the help of a Creighton student and Creighton faculty member.

“Aida” is set in ancient Egypt around 2000 B.C. Aida is an Ethiopian slave girl who falls in love with the Egyptian warrior Radames. When Egypt and Ethiopia go to war, Aida finds herself torn between her country and the man she loves. A love triangle develops and the truth about Aida’s past eventually is brought to light.

Robbie Valenta, Arts & Sciences sophomore, plays two parts in the opera. He is a ceremonial dancer and a member of the Ethiopian army.

Valenta was invited to join the production when two actors were injured and could not perform.

Valenta said the rehearsals were not only physically demanding but also were a little dangerous.

“I had bruises all over my body. In the battle scene, I keep falling to the ground a lot and we fight with spears,” Valenta said. “My muscles were really sore for a whole week.”

Valenta is no stranger to stage performing. He has been in many professional plays and has acted in musicals in high school and in plays at Creighton. He is now choreographing a play at his former high school.

The Rev. Charles Jurgensmeier, S.J., assistant professor of music in the Fine and Performing Arts Department, is a member of the chorus.

Jurgensmeier, who also is a member of the Omaha Symphony Chorus, was invited to sing in “Aida” by the conductor of the opera chorus, who also is the conductor of the Omaha Symphony Chorus.

The chorus also acts as the crowd in various scenes throughout the opera. Jurgensmeier acts as a priest of the temple and as a citizen in the crowd.

Script reading for “Aida” began in December, and rehearsals started this month. Jurgensmeier found a lot of help from fellow cast members in learning his parts so quickly.

“Everyone is pulling for one another. We help one another learn the music. People are there to go over things with you. That’s where you find the support,” he said.

Despite having to learn a lot of material in a short period of time, Jurgensmeier said he has really enjoyed the production. “It’s a wonderful experience because you get to see an opera from the inside out.”

Performance dates are Feb. 3 and Feb. 5 at 7:30 p.m. and Feb. 7 at 2 p.m. Ticket prices start at $12 and are available at the Orpheum box office from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call 346-7372 to order.

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