

OYP Spotlight

News from Oconee Youth Playhouse Spring 2010

From the directors

Children of Eden is a moving show about families, so of course it makes us think about our family – our Oconee Youth Playhouse family and our home-front family. As many of you know, we welcomed our third son, Chase Davis Hannon, in early March. He joins brothers Jack, who will be 5 in July, and Evan, who will be 2 in June. As you can imagine, we have our hands full at home! Helping us keep our sanity are two former OYP performers, Elaine Ely and Hannah Ellis, who are wonderful caregivers. Both sets of grandparents also pitch in with babysitting on weekends and in emergencies.



Still, we never would have tackled a show so soon after Chase's birth, were it not for Amy Coenen, who agreed to serve as director, working with Rachel Townes, OYP's amazing musical director, both of whom were involved in the previous 2003 production of *Eden*. Amy grew up performing with OYP (she was Eve in the original *Children of Eden*), but is now enjoying the transition to the directing side. Rachel has been with us almost from the beginning of OYP and we couldn't do without her!

We also knew we could rely on costume coordinators Karen Cobb and Diana Beckett (also still around since that earlier *Eden* production), as well as the tech crew at the Oconee County Civic Center and a LOT of parent volunteers, whose efforts were coordinated by Stacy Cail and Holly Wolfe. The OYP family always pulls together!

Terra and Shane

Terra & Shane Hannon

Children of Eden examines big themes

Composer Stephen Schwartz (*Wicked*, *Godspell*, etc.) has said that *Children of Eden* is his favorite among his many shows, even though it has never been produced on Broadway. On the Eden web site, he notes that the show covers themes that he returns to over and over – personal responsibility, rebellion, intellectual independence and overcoming family dysfunctions. It also includes three of his personal favorite songs: "Stranger to the Rain," "The Hardest Part of Love" and "In the Beginning."

OYP's 2010 production includes close to 100 local young people, ranging in age from first graders through college students. Several University of Georgia students have key roles, including **Joseph Hitchcock** as Adam, **Margot Hancock** as Eve, **Joe McNulty** as Abel, **Abbey Hufstetler** as Mama Noah, **Kelli Bull** as Afra and **Philip Peavy** as a Lead Storyteller.

Bryan Shaw, who played Father in OYP's 2003 production of *Eden*, agreed to reprise his role. Other community theater veterans in the show include **Daniel Fowler** as Cain and **Sam Hopkins** as Noah. **Collier Cobb**, a sophomore at North Oconee High School, has a featured role as Yonah. NOHS students **Tyler Beckett** and **Mitch Davis** play two of Noah's sons and Athens Academy student **Rachel Bonet** is Aysha, Shem's wife.

Rachel Wolfe, an 8th grader at Oconee County Middle School, and **Anna Cail**, an 8th grader who is home-schooled, are among the featured soloists. Younger cast members perform in several numbers, including "Let There Be" (where God creates the world) and "The Naming" (where they portray animals – from aardvark to zebra).

Besides **Bryan Shaw**, five other members of the 2010 cast also appeared in OYP's 2003 production: **Tyler Beckett** played Young Abel in 2003, while **Collier Cobb**, **Megan Duttlinger**, **Jordan Meeler** and **Madison Thompson** were members of the Youth Ensemble.



Father (Bryan Shaw) creates the world in the opening number, "Let There Be."

Congratulations seniors!

The following high school seniors have grown up performing with OYP (more than 10 shows each!) and continued to perform the past two seasons.

Tyler Beckett

North Oconee High School

1st OYP show: *Wizard of Oz* (1999) – Lollipop Guild

Most recent: *Children of Eden* (2010) – Ham

Total # of OYP shows: 19

What's next: Will attend Lee University in Cleveland, Tenn. as a Centennial Scholar, majoring in Creative Writing. He hopes to later attend grad school to work behind the camera in the film industry.

Kelsey Duttlinger

North Oconee High School

1st OYP show: *Annie* (2000) – one of the orphans

Most recent: *High School Musical* (2009) – Gabriella

Total # of OYP shows: 19

What's next: Will attend Lee University (along with Tyler), where she was accepted into the Vocal Performance program. She will work towards a Bachelor of Music degree, with an emphasis on Vocal Performance.

Wendy Hanna

Monsignor Donovan High School

1st OYP show: *How to Eat Like a Child* (1998) – ensemble (OYP's very 1st show!)

Most recent: *Grease* (2010) – Cha Cha, principle dancer

Total # of OYP shows: 12

What's next: Will attend University of Georgia. Auditioning for Georgettes.

Rebecca Parsons

Oconee County High School

1st OYP show: *Wizard of Oz* (1999) – Lullaby League

Most recent: *High School Musical* (2009) – Cheerleader

Total # of OYP shows: 14

What's next: Has been accepted to University of Georgia.

Hancock and Hitchcock pair up onstage/off

Margot Hancock and **Joseph Hitchcock**, who have played opposite each other in four OYP shows, have carried their onstage romantic roles into real life. Joseph, a senior majoring in vocal performance at UGA, recently proposed to Margot, a junior at UGA majoring in early childhood education, and they are planning a December wedding. In addition to performing with OYP, both teach at Oconee Youth School of Performance, where Margot works with the musical theater classes and Joseph gives private voice lessons. Margot, a longtime member of OYSP's dance and musical theater companies, is a graduate of Oconee County High School. Joseph was homeschooled before attending UGA.

Joseph and Margot met playing Tony and Maria in OYP's 2004 production of *West Side Story*. It was his OYP debut, her 8th OYP show.



They took on the challenging roles of Radames and Aida in OYP's 2006 production of Elton John's rock musical, *Aida*.



Joseph says playing the Beast to Margot's Belle in OYP's 2007 production of *Beauty and the Beast* was his favorite role.



As Adam and Eve in the current production of *Children of Eden*, the couple convinced audiences that they were "made for each other."





Let there be lights!

OYP launches campaign to equip black box theater



Oconee Youth School of Performance in Watkinsville serves as home base for Oconee Youth Playhouse. It's where auditions are held and rehearsals for shows take place, where costumes are stored, sets put together and tickets sold. But when it comes to putting on a performance, OYP has always had to rent theater space in locations ranging from Athens Academy to the Oconee County Civic Center to The Classic Center in downtown Athens. Paying for these performance spaces accounts for a significant portion of the costs of staging a show.

In order to provide a lower-cost alternative in the future, OYP is launching a campaign to raise money to equip the black box theater at Oconee Youth School of Performance with theatrical lighting.

"We already own the lights we need," says OYP director **Terra Hannon**, "but the cost to install them is around \$10,000. So we need a special campaign to raise that money."

With professional lighting available, OYP can stage smaller shows in the black box theater at the studio, while still using other venues for mainstage productions.

"This would give us an opportunity to produce some shows with smaller casts, which we simply can't afford to do when we have to pay a lot for theater space," she adds. "It would give us a lot more flexibility."

Anyone wishing to make a tax-deductible donation to the "Let there be lights!" campaign can use the donor form below and mark the check accordingly.

In the Spotlight!

Congratulations to **Collier Cobb**, who won the talent portion of the 2010 Miss Epic pageant held at North Oconee High School in March. Collier, the only sophomore among the top five finishers, was second runner-up for the title. A veteran performer, she made her debut as a 7-year-old froglet in OYP's 2001 production of *Honk!* and most recently played Yonah in *Children of Eden*. She is also a long-time member of the dance and musical theater companies at Oconee Youth School of Performance.



Megan Hodgson won the title of Junior Miss Access Broadway at the 2010 regional Access Broadway competition held in Atlanta in February, scoring 95 points or more for her solo vocal, acting and dance performances. A 6th grader at Athens Academy, Megan has already appeared in 11 OYP shows, starting with *Country Bunny* in 2005. She is also a member of the dance and musical theater companies at Oconee Youth School of Performance.



I want to help support Oconee Youth Playhouse. Enclosed is my check for:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25-49 Friend | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500-999 Gold Benefactor
(includes two season tickets) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50-99 Donor | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000-1999 Platinum Benefactor
(includes four season tickets) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100-249 Patron | <input type="checkbox"/> \$2000-up Grand Benefactor
(includes eight season tickets) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250-499 Silver Benefactor | |

Name (as you wish it to appear in playbill) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

E-mail address for notices of upcoming shows (optional) _____

Note: Checks should be made payable to Oconee Youth Playhouse, which is a non-profit organization, and mailed to the address below. Contributions are tax deductible, less the value of the tickets.

Oconee Youth Playhouse • 1050 Jamestown Blvd • Watkinsville, GA 30677 • (706) 769-2677

Oconee Youth Playhouse
1050 Jamestown Blvd.
Watkinsville, GA 30677

Do you know someone who would like to be on OYP's mailing list to receive notices about our upcoming shows? Please send name, mailing address and/or email address to Oconee Youth Playhouse, 1050 Jamestown Blvd., Watkinsville, GA 30677 or email oconeeyouthplayhouse@gmail.com.



Visit OYP online: www.oypoysp.com/playhouse

The new OYP web site was launched in August, with lots of photos from past shows. The site is being continually updated and expanded, so bookmark it and visit often. Former performers are encouraged to send news for the Alumni section.

Sing! Dance! Act!

Oconee Youth School of Performance is offering week-long summer musical theater camps June 7-11 and July 12-16 at the OYSP studio in Watkinsville. This year's show is *Willy Wonka Kids*. Separate sessions are held during each week for different age groups. More details and camp registration forms can be found on the OYSP web site under Camps and Shows: www.oypoysp.com/school.

Oconee Youth Playhouse will soon hold auditions for the final production of the 2009-2010 season, *Children's Letters to God*. Auditions will be open to 1st through 8th graders. The musical is based on the best-selling book by the same name. It's a show about kids and the events in their lives that lead them to ask a lot of questions. For more details, see the OYP web site: www.oypoysp.com/playhouse.