

Ridgetop Runner

Connecting the Farm School Community

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Muffin Man-ia

The world premier this Friday of the Chicken Coop's original musical production, *The Muffin Man*, has generated much anticipation along the ridgetop. Details have been tough to wheedle out of the secretive cast and crew, but the investigative reporting staff at the *Ridgetop Runner* followed a hot tip to an anonymous Chicken Cooper this week for a little Q&A.

RR: The sun is shining . . .

CC: . . . But the ice is slippery.

RR: You must be the kid who called. Thanks for meeting me here. I know you can't talk long, so let's get down to business. How has the work been so far?

CC: *The Muffin Man* has been a while in the making, so it has taken a lot of thought and effort. The class wrote it as a group project, which sometimes got pretty complicated, but even though it has been challenging it has also been really enjoyable. We've had a lot of help too, especially from Lily's dad on the set, Tristan's mom, Barb Richardson, and Richard Chase with the music.

RR: Has working on the play changed the way you think of professional actors and actresses?

CC: Hey, this is actually my sixth or seventh play, and there have even been a few Shakespeares in there!

RR: Sorry, sorry, I didn't realize you had so much experience yourself.

CC: No problem. Actually, it has reminded me how much work it is not just to memorize lines, but especially to give them expression.

RR: So do you think famous actors and actresses are really as ditzy and brainless as they sometimes seem in the tabloids?

CC: Ha, yeah probably!

RR: What has been the funniest moment on the set of *The Muffin Man*?

CC: There's an awful lot of lines with the word "rump," and that always makes it hard to keep a straight face.

RR: I know what you mean. Are there any surprises the audience should be ready for?

CC: Expect the unexpected. . . .

RR: Can do! I'll tell people to come ready for anything to either of the two performances at 9:30 a.m. or 7:00 p.m. this Friday, March 28th at the Royalston Town Hall.

Brundibár

Upland from Lincoln Center it's easy to forget that opera exists anywhere besides Manhattan and Venice, but our plucky little homegrown Commonwealth Opera of Western Massachusetts is remarkably good, and unlike her illustrious cousins she prides herself on accessibility and community engagement. This weekend, Commonwealth Opera is partnering with the Hatikvah Holocaust Education Center in Springfield and Robert Sternberg, the rabbi at Temple Israel here in Athol, to present *Brundibár: A Tribute to the Human Spirit*. The Czech fairytale pits two altruistic children against a miserly organ-grinder, but the simple story becomes a powerful political statement in the context of its first production: the Nazi concentration camp at Terezín. Performed entirely by the children in the camp, *Brundibár* dared to meet the challenges of a horrible reality with the indomitable virtues of beauty and truth. In our own times of African genocide and Middle Eastern war, the opera continues to force us to re-examine our own ideals. Ela Stein Weissberger, a survivor of the Holocaust who played in every performance of the opera at Terezín, will speak to that point after the performance this Sunday, March 30th, at 4:00 p.m. at Elms College in Chicopee, MA. See details at <http://www.commonwealthopera.org>.