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## 'Charlotte's Web' at Saint Mary's College a Pure Delight

By Sophie Braccini



Saint Mary's College students rehearse "Charlotte's Web" with director Will Huddleston Photo Sophie Braccini

Huddleston's direction, it was obvious that the audience will not be disappointed.

Charlotte the spider is a graceful dancer who spins her web with lightness and grace, singing along as needed. Wilbur in his pen is certainly the cutest pig one ever saw, buttermilk bathed or not. Templeton looks like a quite dangerous and selfish rat, and Fern has a heart of gold. None of the performers involved in the show are drama students, but their youthful energy, well directed by Huddleston, produces a very fresh and spontaneous rendition of the play.

"This is such a rich piece of work for all ages," says Huddleston. "We're aware that the story concerns natural death, which is a big heavy message. It is an animal show that children love." Huddleston points out that E.B. White was a professional writer who expansively revised the 1958 edition of the American English writing style guide, "The Elements Of Style," with William Strunk. "He loved words," says Huddleston. "What he also says in 'Charlotte's Web' is that what makes you a great writer is your choice of words. Charlotte only writes four words, but it saves someone's life." The story encompasses many different universal issues including friendship and nature taking its course.

"I see this as a wonderful opportunity to expose children to live theater at a young age," adds Huddleston. "There is something very unique and real about sharing an emotion with someone on stage, as well as with the people around you. It is amplified. Something happens in the room that cannot be reproduced on a screen. It's unique and it is very old!"

Since 1991, the Saint Mary's College has been producing a children's play during its month-long January Term. The program is so popular that local schools book seats ahead of time and by the beginning of January, the morning shows were almost completely sold out, and the afternoon and evening shows were 50 percent sold. The play will run Jan. 26-29. Show times are at 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 4 p.m. and 7 p.m., depending on the days. More information and reservations can be found at <http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/charlottes-web>.

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