

# Second Front

 SEPT. 10, 2010  
 THE INDEX-JOURNAL


## MOOCH THE MESSY

**ABOVE:** The members of the cast for "Mooch the Messy" take bows after the Marcus DeLoach written children's opera. From left are pianist Lynn Baker, Annalee Meredith Lethco, DeLoach and Keith Jameson.

**RIGHT:** Keith Jameson stars as Mooch in "Mooch the Messy."

STAFF PHOTOS BY  
JOSEPH SITARZ



"Mooch the Messy," a children's opera by Marcus DeLoach made its debut Thursday in the reception hall at the Arts Center at the Federal Building in Greenwood. The children's opera is part of the 2010 Greenwood Music Festival and was being presented in honor of the upcoming grand opening of the new Greenwood County Library.

There are five more performances at the Arts Center on Main Street in Uptown Greenwood. All the shows are free and presented by Greenwood Music Festival, Greenwood County Library and Friends of Greenwood County Library.

Shows are 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. today and Saturday and 3 p.m. Sunday. The opera is about 30 minutes long.

"Mooch the Messy" features Keith Jameson as Mooch, DeLoach as Mooch's father, pianist Lynn Baker and Greenwood's Annalee Lethco as the mail rat.

"Mooch the Messy" is based on the book about a messy mouse by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat with illustrations by Ben Shecter.

Jameson is the founder and executive director of Greenwood Music Festival.

For information, call 941-4650 or visit [www.greenwoodmusicfestival.org](http://www.greenwoodmusicfestival.org).

# MOOCH

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based on the "Mooch the Messy," a children's book written by Margorie Weinman Sharmat in the 1970s. The book tells the tale of a messy mouse living in Boston. When his father visits, Mooch cleans up to make his dad happy. When his father leaves, Mooch does something to make Mooch happy — he makes a mess again.

DeLoach wrote the children's opera, which was presented as part of the 2010 Greenwood Music Festival, created by



**MARCUS DELOACH**

Keith Jameson.

"It wasn't hard to write, primarily because I was very familiar with it," said DeLoach, who is a friend of Jameson's and who has worked with him at New York City Opera and other places. "I grew up with it."

DeLoach not only wrote the opera, he stars as Mooch's father and directs. Jameson is Mooch, Greenwood's Annalee Meredith Lethco is Mail Rat and Lynn Baker is musical director and pianist.

"It's very hard to direct the show and be in it at the same time," the baritone said. "That's hard. You have to do a lot to take care of yourself as a singer under normal circumstances. When you're the director, the singer gets put back a little bit"

"Mooch the Messy" the opera is like," DeLoach said. "Our interpretation is the very first and it's rare someone can do what Keith does — which is the very first time with the material is to make something vivid. That's unusual.

"I bet the audience thinks, 'Of course that's what Mooch is like,'" DeLoach said.

Among the items on the floor were children and some adults Thursday. Besides being full of smiles, the children laughed.

"That has been one of the biggest questions — how would children like it?" said DeLoach, who wrote "Mooch the Messy" in 2008 while working in Oklahoma. "I'm very happy that the ones that came, I heard them getting the jokes and understanding them. I was happy with the reaction."

"Mooch the Messy" is DeLoach's first attempt at writing opera. He decided to start smaller before venturing into other opera writing.

"Opera librettos have one-10th of the length of a play," said DeLoach, who is pursuing his doctoral studies at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music in Houston. "As soon as you add music to something, it stretches it out. Because it's a children's book, there's not many words in it, so you have a lot of room to write music in between what is said."

That's the reason DeLoach decided to write children's opera before embarking on adult opera.

"This gives me some room to experiment," DeLoach said, noting it

being the Festival being willing to produce it," DeLoach said. "That was a great gift."

Getting the chance to work with Jameson and DeLoach is Lethco, a Brewer Middle School eighth-grader who is in the ACTS program. She's also performed at Greenwood Community Theatre, most recently in "Alice in Wonderland." She's also been in "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" and "Fiddler on the Roof."

"She was great to work with," DeLoach said. "She's a very professional young lady. She was very happy to do anything I asked her to do. I'm only sorry that there was not more for her to do. I'm sorry there wasn't more for her to do because she's really on the ball."

Lethco's time on stage is very short as the Mail Rat.

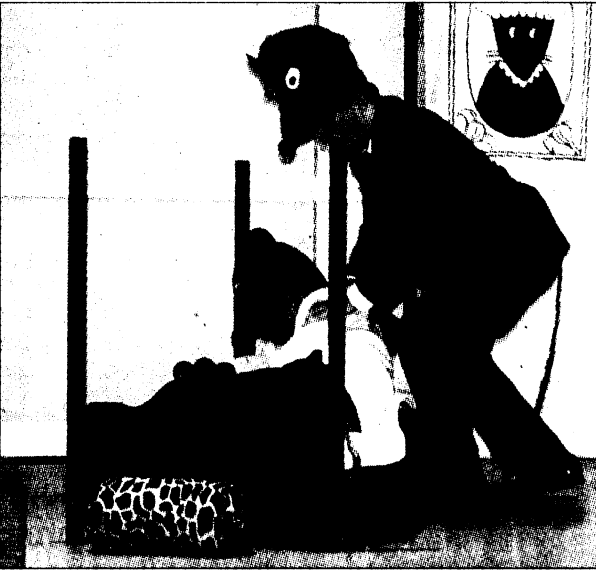
"In the book, the character just drops off a letter," DeLoach said.

The part, DeLoach explained, is designed to use any number of people from the community. There are plans for the show to be performed in other places.

"That part could be for an actor," DeLoach said. "That part could be the mayor of your town. It's very easy."

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STAFF PHOTO BY JOSEPH SITARZ

Marcus DeLoach tries to wake up Keith Jameson during the debut performance of the children's opera, "Mooch the Messy." DeLoach wrote and directs the opera, as well as starring as Mooch's father. Jameson, who is from Greenwood and is the founder and director of the music festival, is Mooch.

## ■ 'MOOCH THE MESSY'

# DeLoach thankful to present his opera

By **JOSEPH SITARZ**  
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Thursday was finally the time to get messy for Keith Jameson and Marcus DeLoach.

The mess played out on the floor of the reception hall at the Arts Center at the Federal Building during the debut of the children's opera, "Mooch the Messy." It could be any kid's room. Clothes sticking out of drawers, draped over the

stove and over the bedpost ... sneakers on the floor and on the chair ... paper wrappers everywhere ... things hidden under the covers ... wedges of cheese here and there.

It could have been any kid's room, but it wasn't. It was Mooch the Messy's house, and while Mooch likes mess, his father doesn't.

The children's opera is

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There are three more performances of "Mooch the Messy" at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. today and 3 p.m. Sunday at the Arts Center.

"Mooch the Messy" allows DeLoach to work with Jameson again in Greenwood. DeLoach performed during the 2008 Greenwood Music Festival in several roles in "Three American One Act Operas." Their history together gave DeLoach all the confidence in the world to use Jameson in the lead for the opera.

"It's great to work with Keith," DeLoach said of working the soprano. "He's dedicated to giving 100 percent both as the founder of the Festival and also as an artist. I knew he would give what I wrote the best chance it had with his performing talent.

"No one knows what

takes about two minutes to read while the opera lasts about 30 minutes.

DeLoach is thankful for having the opportunity to present the opera.

"I couldn't have done it

## **Thank You**

**The family of the late**

**J.W. Walker**

**wishes to thank those friends who were so supportive of us during our bereavement. Thank you for your cards, calls, food, visits and other acts of caring. We especially thank you for your prayers.**

**They helped us to get through this challenging time. Your kindness and thoughtfulness will never be forgotten.**

**Sincerely, Wife, Children,  
Sisters, Brothers and  
Grandchildren**

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