

# Popular opera on KSU stage

By IFAN PAYNE  
Music Critic

When *Susannah* takes the boards tonight in the first of three presentations at McCain Auditorium popular success in the operatic world will come alive at K-State.

*Susannah* is a musical drama in two acts, with music and text by American composer Carlisle Floyd, that was first performed in Tallahassee, Florida, in 1955. When the opera opened for the first time in New York, in a production by the New York City Opera in 1956, the opera became an instant hit and its composer a national figure in the musical world.

In the words of Mr. Floyd, the central theme of the work concerns "persecution and the concomitant psychological ramifications."

The setting for the opera is a farm in New Hope Valley, in the Tennessee mountains. The time is the nineteen fifties. *Susannah*, regarded with suspicion by the townsfolk because of her beauty, lives with her brother,

Sam. She is caught bathing nude in a creek one day and is thereafter victimized by the gossip of the neighborhood. Her spirit is destroyed by the constant viperous chatter.

Enter the priest, the Reverend Blitch.

*Susannah* both pours out her soul to the man of cloth while at the same time finding herself taking an interest in him.

Enraged by the goings on, Sam kills the preacher.

The neighbors turn in hatred on *Susannah*. (Editorial aside for those who are following this...Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* was written ten years earlier than *Susannah*...if you get my drift...)

*Susannah* holds back the crowd with a shotgun, and is left at the end a tragic and folorn figure, alone against the world.

The composer, weaving hymn tunes, hints of folk songs and dances, has composed a score with a decided "American" flavor that is immediately approachable and en-

joyable.

This evening and Saturday, Sam will be sung by Jacob Friesen, The Reverend Blitch by Richard Brunner, and *Susannah* by Wendy Sistrunk. Tomorrow evening, Friday, these three principal characters will be portayed by Brent Weber, J.V. Heffel and Stephanie Sikes.

Other parts on all three nights will be sung by Marcia Craft, Susan Graber, Roberta Scott, Diane Heerman, Glen Hughes, Jerry Hall, Phillip DeBolt, Randy Doerksen and Tom Commerford.

The music will be conducted by Ralph Winkler and the production is by Tomas Hernandez.

Tickets are \$4.50 and \$3 for the general public, \$3.50 and \$2 for students and senior citizens, and are available from the University Ticket Office in Ahearn Field House (phone 532-6920) or McCain Auditorium Box Office (532-6428).

*Susannah* is a co-production of the K-State Opera Theater and the KSU Departments of Music and Speech.