



Aerys Merrill, a UNCSA college sophomore who portrays the Snow Queen, and Garret McNally, a UNCSA high school junior who portrays Snow King, perform during a recent performance. Both take the roles on Dec. 19.

# African-American dancers take center stage at UNCSA

BY TORI P. HAYNESWORTH FOR THE CHRONICLE

The UNC School of Arts is underway with its production of Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker" this week. This year there are two African-American performers that will take the stage as Snow King and Queen.

Aerys Merrill, UNCSA college sophomore, and Garret McNally, UNCSA high school junior, will both take the roles on Dec. 19.

"We're so proud of what they're doing," said artistic director Jared Redick. "They work hard every day, and they really focus on the process of what they're doing, and because of that, they're extraordinary."

Aerys Merrill, native of Richmond, Va., recalls a family tradition of always going to see the Christmas classic,

which motivated her to become a dancer.

"The different choreography in every Nutcracker is nice. It's fun to learn different things," said Merrill. "It's also fun to do different parts, and even if you have the same part, you can come at it a different way."

Garret McNally of Charleston, S.C., mentioned that Michael Jackson was the motivation for him to become a dancer, reminiscing about him when he was younger, dancing by the television when Jackson performed.

"Going on stage and dancing to my best capabilities as the characters I perform as, and go out into the lobby to see the people's faces afterwards. It's amazing to see how you can affect people the way you move, and it's just so much fun to do and I love doing it," said McNally.

This isn't the first time that an African-American has been cast in these roles. A ballerina danced as the Snow

Queen years ago.

The two performers had a special message for any young and inspired African-Americans who want to pursue professional dancing.

"Keep going at it, because we're now having more African-Americans that are becoming principal dancers and really famous dancers. Look up to them because they're really great inspirations," said Merrill.

"Go for it, don't let anybody shoot you down. Do your best, you will be seen and you will be loved. You should never give up on your dreams," said McNally.

"The Nutcracker," performed by the UNCSA students, is going on until Dec. 20 at the Stevens Center, located at 405 W. Fourth St. For ticket purchase and more information, visit [www.uncsa.edu](http://www.uncsa.edu).

## BOOK REVIEW

# Children's book on voting considered for all ages

BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER FOR THE CHRONICLE

How many leaves are on the tree outside your window? That's a question you may not be able to answer. How could you even count them all? Would you ever get an answer that's right? It's a silly question, for sure, and probably not very important. In the new book "Lillian's Right to Vote" by Jonah Winter & Shane W. Evans, you'll see why someone would even ask.

Lillian stands at the bottom of a "very steep hill." It's Voting Day and she's going to take advantage of her rights.

As she looks up the hill, she sees things — not just a hill, but a slave auction. There are her great-grandparents: Elijah is wearing chains and Sarah is holding a baby. Lillian sees that they're standing near a courthouse where



only white men could vote. It's a long way up that hill and, as she climbs, Lillian sees more history:

once a baby at that auction, her great-grandfather, Edmund grew up to pick cotton. He didn't have any

more rights than his own parents did — at least not until after the Civil War.

Lillian can see Great-Grandpa Edmund, post-War, on his way to vote for the very first time. He

**"Lillian's Right to Vote"**  
by Jonah Winter & Shane W. Evans. 2015, Schwartz & Wade Books  
\$17.99 / \$20.99 Canada  
40 pages

approaches the polls, looking dignified in his finest clothes; Great-Grandma Ida is there, too, but she can't vote yet. That, as Lillian knows, is many years away.

Then the hill seems to become higher, and the climb gets harder. Lillian sees her grandpa, Isaac, but he's not voting because of a poll tax that he has no hope of paying. She hears her Uncle Levi, telling stories about impossible questions

that had to be answered before anyone with brown skin could step up to cast a vote. She sees the same angry faces that surrounded her when she was a child, and women finally were allowed to vote.

White women, that is. Not people like Lillian.

Stopping in the middle of the hill, Lillian remembers. Once, she registered to vote and had to take a test that she didn't pass. People were hurt and killed over votes. She starts walking again, soon reaching the voting place.

And Lillian steps to the door...

Did you ever buy a book for the kids that you ended up keeping for yourself? That's what could happen once you've found "Lillian's Right to Vote" — and that's okay. I think you'll understand it more than your children will anyhow.

There's no doubt in my

mind that kids will love this book. Sharp-eyed children, those who wonder what the presidential-candidate fuss is about, will get a basic history of the importance of voting. Children in this book's target age (3-to-6-year-olds) will appreciate the story that authors Jonah Winter & Shane W. Evans tell here. For sure, they'll all enjoy the illustrations.

The real goodness in this book, however, is that becoming a children's picture story doesn't at all diminish its power. Indeed, "Lillian's Right to Vote" is ten feet tall, and it's something neither you nor your child will be able to leave.

The Bookworm is Terri Schlichenmeyer. Terri has been reading since she was 3 years old and she never goes anywhere without a book. She lives on a hill in Wisconsin with two dogs and 14,000 books.

# Foundation announces November community grants

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The Winston-Salem Foundation announces 12 Community Grants totaling \$404,860 that will touch the lives of many living in Forsyth County. Grants were awarded to organizations in the following program areas: arts and culture, education, health, human services, and public interest.

- \*AIDS Care Service - \$10,360 for marketing and development assistance for a third year
- \*Associated Artists of Winston-Salem - \$12,000 for a membership and gallery coordinator for a second year
- \*Carolina Chamber Symphony Players - \$10,000 for a part-time manager for a third year

- \*Carter G. Woodson School of Challenge - \$20,000 for a student and parent liaison
- \*Children's Law Center of Central NC - \$17,000 to support a director of development for a third year
- \*Creative Corridors Coalition - \$100,000 for the capital campaign
- \*LAMB Foundation of NC - \$5,000 to provide funds to redistribute to Forsyth County organizations working with individuals with developmental disabilities
- \*Lowrance Middle School PTA - \$8,500 to fund summer respite care program for students with disabilities for a second year
- \*Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC -

- \$124,000 to support Collaborating for Clients in partnership with the United Way
  - \*The Forsyth Promise - \$50,000 to support the Forsyth County Cradle to Career partnership for a second year
  - \*Wake Forest University Health Sciences - \$40,000 to support additional design elements at Bailey Park
  - \*Winston-Salem Youth Chorus - \$8,000 to upgrade ticketing and development software
- The Winston-Salem Foundation is a community foundation that supports charitable programs in the greater Forsyth County area. Learn more at [www.wsfoundation.org](http://www.wsfoundation.org).