

HEATHER WILLIAMSON, 'ANNIE' HAVE QUALITIES IN COMMON

Lead Role In Musical Whets Youngster's Appetite For Stage

BY SUSAN USHER

Heather Williamson isn't stage-struck, but the acting bug has bitten. Fueling her growing interest in the stage: early success as the lead in the Opera House Theatre Company's current production of the Broadway musical *Annie*.

It's heady stuff being chosen for the lead in her first tryout for the stage. The show opened last Wednesday night at Thalian Hall in Wilmington to an enthusiastic reception for the little orphan, Annie, and her cohorts as they sang and danced their way through the familiar tale.

Briefly, here's the story line:

Left on the doorstep of an orphanage, Annie's bright spirit is sustained by two items: half of a silver locket and a note left by her parents promising to return for her someday, bearing the missing half of the locket.

It's enough to make Annie believe that she is different from the other girls. That belief instills the optimism expressed in the show's popular song, *Tomorrow*.

Annie makes a break for freedom and soon after befriends a foundling of another sort, a dog that she names Sandy.

Her real opportunity to escape comes shortly after her return in the custody of a policeman, when the secretary to a wealthy industrialist chooses Annie to spend the Christmas holidays at the estate of Oliver Warbucks, orphan and self-made billionaire.

What follows is an entertaining romp that includes collaboration with President Franklin D. Roosevelt in search of a "New Deal" to address the country's Depression-era economic woes, a hunt for Annie's parents, attempted fraud, and of course, a happy ending for all but the conniving mistress of the orphanage, the mean-spirited Miss Hannigan.

Still wet from a mid-day dip in the family pool at Ocean Isle Beach, Heather and her five-year-old sister, Love, discussed the show one day last week. They are the daughters of Jan and DeCarol Williamson.

Love, who plays one of the other 10 orphans in the show, gets to sing and dance and has one line as an urchin in a street scene.

As Annie, Heather appears in almost every scene, her buoyant spirit evident in each song and conversation. She and fellow cast members won a standing ovation at final dress rehearsal last Tuesday night before an audience of about 450 children and senior citizens, guests of Federal Paperboard Co.

"I thought it was going to be a lot of hard work," said Heather. "But it's not. It's a lot of fun."

A natural blonde, Heather has dyed her hair red for the show. It's a shade that she's having to get accustomed to, but one that goes well with her complexion and green eyes. In the final scenes, she dons a wig for Annie's trademark curls.

With rehearsals seven days a week with only two days off since June 1, the musical has required a commitment from the entire family. But Mrs. Williamson said no one's complaining; all are supportive of the girls' involvement.

While she's stayed for the 6:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. week-night rehearsals, Mrs. Williamson says she's strictly avoided offering advice.

"That's their job," she said, referring to the Opera House production staff for the show. "They are very professional and very good working with all the children in the show. And the children have handled themselves very professionally too."

Heather's 11, "the same age as Annie". And while she doesn't share little orphan Annie's "hard knocks" background, the two have some important qualities in common—self-confidence, a bright spirit and an eye for the future. Both are young charmers with winning smiles.

Heather is unusually articulate, poised and level-



AS ANNIE, Heather Williamson of Ocean Isle Beach shares the spotlight with another newcomer to the stage, Dick Davis, who plays industrialist Oliver "Daddy" Warbucks. They're shown with Sandy, the dog.

headed for her age. She credits that in part to the effort she's already devoted to personal development. These have included workshops, voice training, dance lessons, "a whole lot of stuff," she said. Heather also was tapped by a Wilmington booking agent to play a part in a promotional video for Marsh Harbour golf resort at Calabash.

Since age 6 she's traveled weekly to Wilmington for sessions with her voice coach, Sandra Bost, who escorted Heather to tryouts for the musical. She vied for the role of Annie along with 40 to 50 other youngsters.

She also takes dancing lessons in Wilmington, from Brad Moranz. He is director of *Annie* and with his wife, Jennifer, choreographer.

"He knows how to work with kids. She's great too. They really are good to work with," says Heather.

Work in pageants has resulted in more than a crown for the former Little Miss Brunswick County 1990. It has also increased her self-confidence and poise.

"I used to be really shy when performing in public," the former blusher admitted, "but not anymore."

Lou Criscuolo, founder and artistic director for

Want To See Annie?

Want to see the show?

All performances begin at 8 p.m. at the Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Tickets for *Annie* are \$12 and \$14, with weekday discounts available for students and seniors age 60 and older. Group discount rates are available for all shows. Tickets are available at the Center Box Office. Reservations are available by calling 1-800-523-2820, 763-3398 or 343-3664.

Remaining productions in the Opera House 1991 series include *The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas*, Aug. 7-11, 16-18 and 23-25; and *A Chorus Line*, Sept. 4-8, 13-15 and 20-22.

Opera House Theatre Company, said after Tuesday's dress rehearsal that Heather is doing "a great job" as Annie. "I love her," he said.

Those are encouraging words for a little girl with

big ideas. Tired of the pageant circuit, Heather says she wants to do more theater now. She plans to try out next year for the Opera House production of *The Sound of Music*.

"I'd like to play one of the older girls, around 12," she said.

Meanwhile she's enjoying her time on stage and is proud of having mastered the show's musical score, an upward stretch of several octaves for her mid-range voice.

Heather likes working with Dick Davis, who shaved his white hair and mustache to play "Daddy" Warbucks.

The feeling is mutual. "She's terrific to work with. She's a lot of fun," said Davis, who also makes his stage debut in *Annie*.

His favorite scenes are those that include the two of them, he said. "There's something there that comes across."

A true trooper, when friends and family see the show, Heather wishes only one thing: "I don't want them to think that's Heather Williamson playing Annie. I want them to think that's Annie."

Rust? Odor? Bad Taste?

Good water is a telephone call away.

Coastal Water Systems, Inc.

287-4022 or
1-800-252-0223

Ask for Jerry

Quality Water
Conditioning Equipment



Chiropractic Center

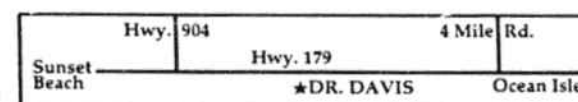
of Shallotte/Ocean Isle

Hwy. 179, Ocean Isle, 579-3502

Dr. H.J. "Skip" Davis

Most Insurances Accepted

Mon.-Fri. 8:30-12 & 1:30-5:30, Thurs. 8:30-12



POOLS JULY SPECIAL!

24-ft. octagon pool
with steps, concrete deck,
ready to swim.....

\$5,990

HALL'S CUSTOM POOLS

579-8828 • 17 YEARS EXPERIENCE • 738-5697

J. Mark Saunders, O.D.

Family Optometry

- Comprehensive Eye Examinations
- Ocular Emergencies
- Contact Lenses and Glasses Prescribed
- Diagnosis and Treatment of Diseases of the Eye

Suite 3, Promenade Office Park
143 Holden Beach Road, Shallotte

Office hours by appointment.
Evening and Saturday appointments available.

Phone 754-9687

Member American Optometric Association

©1991 THE BRUNSWICK BEACON



Re-Introducing Cypress Bay Golf Club

Remodeled Clubhouse - 19th Hole Restaurant
Deck - Cart Paths - Many More Improvements

Before 11 AM
\$27 Green Fee & Golf Cart
After 11 AM
\$20 Green Fee & Golf Cart

Free Sleeve Of 3 Golf Balls With This
Coupon To Play The Remodeled
Cypress Bay Golf Club For Each Customer

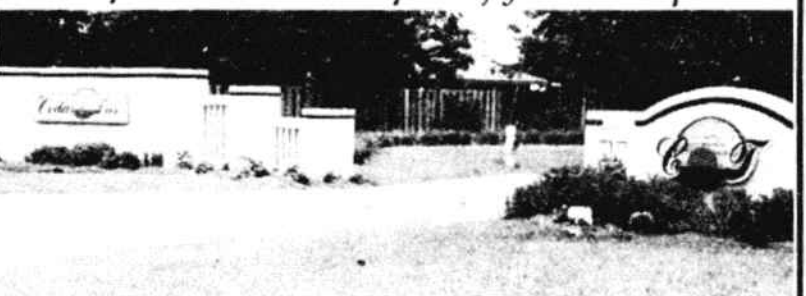
Hwy. 17, Little River, SC, (803)249-1025 Expires 7/31/91

10% Discount Off Merchandise In Golf Shop
With This Coupon

Memberships Available \$50 Off With This Coupon
Quail Creek Cypress Bay Indigo Creek

We salute Cedar Tree of Calabash

We're proud to have been part of your development.



From the concept to the finished product, we complete your job with pride in our workmanship and with respect for your property.

Helping Brunswick County Grow!
754-7177

Asphalt Plant—2 miles north of Shallotte on Hwy. 17