

Firestone Shines In 'Prodigal Daughter' At Chautauqua

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IN REVIEW

CHAUTAUQUA — The Hall of Philosophy, Chautauqua Institution's giant replica of a Greek temple, was the scene of a performance, Monday evening, of "The Prodigal Daughter," and original, dramatic musical production by Doreen Firestone.

The core of the production is the Biblical parable of "The Prodigal Son." Firestone has focused on a single part of that story: the time between when the prodigal "hits bottom," having wasted his father's wealth, and the moment when she returns home and is welcomed by her father.

The production is presented with three actors. Firestone herself portrays the child who strays from her father's ways and is nearly destroyed by having done so.

Christine Fitzgerald portrayed the guardian angel, who continually presented the prodigal with what she should do. Peter Quinones portrayed the prodigal's father, and also represented alternately God, and Jesus.

There are 11 musical numbers in the production. All are sung by Firestone, who is an accomplished operatic mezzo soprano, although the natures of the songs were widely diverse, and not just operatic in style. Her voice is so resonant and so strong, that she might want to consider performing without amplification, because the contrast between the speakers, who benefited from the amplification, and her singing were

so different in intensity.

Firestone's theme seemed to be that God is always ready to forgive and welcome home those who wander, but a prodigal can find numerous excuses why not to go home. She incorporated especially biblical stories about St. Peter, who is often shown as doing less than was expected of him.

On her way to return home to seek her father's forgiveness, Firestone's prodigal got work on a fishing boat, where Jesus provided a catch so huge, it threatened to sink the boat, so instead of going home to her father, she decided to live richly with the money from the vast supply of fish, and when Jesus suggested she should sell what she owned and give the money to the poor, since she had received it all as a gift from himself, she began to bargain with him. Perhaps she could tithe, but then 10 percent seemed a lot, and perhaps five percent was more fair, she reasoned.

Again and again, God gave her wealth, and she decided it was her own accomplishment, and she deserved to keep it and enjoy its benefits.

The hall was approximately two-thirds full. When the performance ended, the audience was invited to remain behind and enter into a discussion with the actors, and to hear Firestone's own story of a prodigal youth. Approximately 100 remained in the audience. All of their comments and questions seemed extremely positive and supportive. Several asked for information how they could book a performance of the show for a camp or a church or a theater from their own area of the country.

The performance of "The Prodigal Daughter" was sponsored by the Chautauqua Christian Fellowship, and co-sponsored by the Chautauqua Department of Religion.

METAL PRICES

GOLD

\$1287.70

SILVER

2019.4¢

*Prices are from NY Comex
per ounce*