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**Jacob Watson, 2011 OBU alum, performs in Broadway musical "Violet"**



*By Taylor Tomlinson*

April 25, 2014

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at [newsbureau@obu.edu](mailto:newsbureau@obu.edu) or (870) 245-5208.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. -- Jacob Keith Watson, a 2011 Ouachita Baptist University alumnus, made his Broadway debut last weekend in the award-winning musical *Violet*. Presented by Roundabout Theatre Company, the production opened April 20 at the historic American Airlines Theatre and will run through August 10.

"I think the importance of this for me, personally, is in the impact it will have on both my career and on my abilities," said Watson. "I have learned so much from this process, but even more from every single Broadway veteran that I get to see work every day. For my first time on Broadway, I seriously could not have invented a better experience and environment to learn and create in. It is the beginning of my dream coming true."

According to Roundabout, *Violet* chronicles the journey of a young woman as she searches for beauty "amidst the image-obsessed landscape of the 1960s." Violet, facially disfigured as a child, takes a

Greyhound bus to Oklahoma in pursuit of a televangelist she believes can heal her. Along the way she forms unlikely friendships with individuals who join her on the journey to be healed.

With music by Jeanine Tesori and book and lyrics by Brian Crawley, *Violet* is a winner of the Drama Critics' Circle Award and Lucille Lortel Award for Best Musical. In its Broadway premier, directed by Leigh Silverman, Watson will perform alongside recognized Broadway actors such as Colin Donnell, Joshua Henry and two-time Tony winner Sutton Foster.

"To land his first Broadway role in this production as a featured performer with the likes of Sutton Foster is a major accomplishment," said Dr. Jon Secrest, professor of music and chair of OBU's applied music department, and Watson's voice coach during his time at Ouachita. "Miss Foster is one of the three most sought after female performers in the Broadway ranks."

"Something I have learned from the incredible artists I am currently working with is that you have to always strive for more, to dig for more," said Watson. "Even when it seems the work may be done, that's when the real work begins. That is exactly what my teachers at OBU were constantly teaching me and I am so unbelievably thankful for them every single day."

Watson, a Wynne, Ark., native, has performed multiple roles prior to his Broadway debut. A few of these include: Feste in *Twelfth Night*; Horton in *Seussical the Musical*; Frederic in *Pirates of Penzance*; Naphtali/Calyпсо Soloist in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*; Iago (U/S) in *Othello*; Rodolfo in *La Boheme*, Corin in *As You Like It*; Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*; and Beppe in *Pagliacci*. Watson also made his European debut in 2013 with the Kurt Weill Festival, performing in a Broadway concert titled *New York, New York*.

In addition, Watson has received multiple awards for his performances in recent years including: second place in the prestigious international Lotte Lenya Competition, presented by the Kurt Weill Foundation; first place in the first annual National Musical Theatre Competition, presented by the National Association of Teachers of Singing; and Best Stage Presence/Regional Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.

"I definitely believe my experience at OBU was an incredibly important step toward the beginning of my career as an actor," said Watson. "OBU has some of the greatest and most passionate teachers that there are in theatre."

"It was an honor and a privilege to work with such a talented young artist," Secrest added. "His performance gifts are superior to most ... and I also recognized he possesses a drive and self reliance that would take him very far."

For more information about Ouachita's musical theatre program, contact Dr. Jon Secrest at [secrestj@obu.edu](mailto:secrestj@obu.edu) or (870) 245-5134.