

Colorado man goes from football star to opera singer

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DENVER - At the final dress rehearsal for Opera Colorado's first Spanish opera at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House, Keith Miller is showing off his powerful voice.

"It was a fluke," Miller said about how he ended up on stage singing opera.

Miller was a star full back for the University of Colorado Buffaloes. He played in several college bowl games and was a torchbearer for Colorado in the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta.

Then he saw "The Phantom of the Opera" at the Buell Theater.

"I took a girlfriend on Dec. 8, 1994 - thought it would a great date and walked in and was just blown away," he said.

Raised on a farm in Ovid, Colo. he is an unlikely opera star. But after seeing that show, he was hooked.

"I wanted to listen to as much musical theatre as I could so I bought 'Phantom of the Opera,' 'Les Miserables,' 'Beauty and the Beast,' 'Oklahoma,' and when I ran out of that I watched the 'Three Tenors,'" he said.

He was listening to opera while he kept playing football and it caused a few challenges in the locker room.

"I got razzed anyway because I came from a six-man football high school, so just starting with that, yeah, it was game on," he said.

A chance encounter in a spare rehearsal hall while training in North Dakota would change his life.

"I'm singing along and get a knock on the door and somebody says, 'What are you doing here?' 'I'm just goofing around.' 'No, I

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would like you to come here and **sing**. I'm giving you a scholarship," Miller said.

After that opportunity, he got on a fast track and has performed with the Metropolitan Opera.

"I will never forget, [Editorial Director] Jonathan Friend says there is a mirror on the side, make sure you take five seconds and look at the mirror before you go on stage because the next time you walked past the mirror you would have made your Met debut," Miller remembered.

Miller is performing in Florencia en el Amazonas at The Ellie Caulkins Opera House this week. For more information, visit www.operacolorado.org.

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