

PLAY

TALKIN' UGLY

Meet Greg Newman and Stephen Bennett, the musicians behind this literate, bad-joke-loving Wilmington duo. 7D



D SECTION THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 2010 | STARNEWSONLINE.COM



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WILMINGTON | *Young artist debuts work*

This is Charlotte



Budding artist Charlotte Armitage works on a watercolor painting under the instruction of Wilmington artist Deborah Cavanaugh during a lesson Thursday June 3, 2010. Photo by Paul Stephen

By BEN STEELMAN
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Eight-year-old Charlotte Armitage plays the violin and piano, reads Harry Potter books – “by myself,” she added, proudly – can sing “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” from memory, makes up poetry and, in her spare time, is writing what she calls “a big, thick book.”

“She’s been creating things since she was 2 or 3,” said her mom, Debbie Armitage of Wilmington. “When she was little, she took some tomato stands, made them into a horse and rode it around.”

Now, however, Charlotte’s creativity is taking a somewhat more structured turn.

For the past nine months or so, the second grader at the Friends School of Wilmington has been meeting after school with Wilmington artist Deborah Cavanaugh.

Cavanaugh has been helping Charlotte learn to paint, working slowly – “basically, doing a painting a month,” Cavanaugh said – and gradually expanding her repertoire.

The results will be on display beginning Friday when Cavanaugh mounts an exhibit of her student’s work – appropriately titled “This Is Charlotte” – at her gallery at 4113-E Oleander Drive, in the Anderson Square shopping center.

Cavanaugh is going all out for her protegee, staging a wine-

and-cheese reception from 6 to 8 p.m. Friday. It’s all very formal; Charlotte is getting hair done, her mom said, and her 6-year-old brother, Luke, will be dressing up in a tuxedo.

“This is Charlotte” will remain on display through July 17.

“This will give her a little taste of what it’s like,” Cavanaugh said. “If Charlotte chooses to be a real artist when she grows up, she can be.”

Already, the 8-year-old is making better pictures than most adults can. One of her paintings, an elaborate landscape, has carefully detailed trees, a pair of deer, a small frog in one corner and a curled-up fox in another.

This one, her mother said, was a commission, from a patron who specified the animals.

“Don’t tell me to do a deer one

more time,” Charlotte said.

Another painting shows a realistic pelican perched on a piling – an appropriate symbol, since Charlotte’s dad, Dr. Sam Armitage, operates Pelican Family Medicine on Wrightsville Avenue.

“I’m learning about the Cape Fear River at my school,” Charlotte said. “I live near a creek, so we see lots of water birds. We saw two great white ibises today.”

“The thing about her work is, it’s clear, it’s innocent,” Cavanaugh said. “Charlotte paints like a storyteller. She paints what delights her. She’s so happy to make a teapot. She’s so happy to make a fish.”

And, in fact, Charlotte did paint a teapot and tea cups in a still life, one of her first big paintings, “be-

GO

What: “This Is Charlotte,” paintings by 8-year-old Charlotte Armitage

When: Through July 17. Opening reception is 6-8 p.m. Friday, June 18.

Where: Deborah Cavanaugh’s gallery, 4113-E Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Hours are 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. weekdays and 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturdays.

Details: 297-5383 or www.DeborahCavanaugh.com

CHARLOTTE

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cause my mom is from England," she explained, "and this is another side of me."

She quickly advanced to "story" paintings. One of her favorites, "Linzy Makes a Friend," shows a little dog sniffing at a rabbit.

Another canvas shows a Viking longboat, with painted shields at the oar locks, and a mermaid in the foreground. "She's trying to hide from them," Charlotte explained.

A painting of a school of long, multi-colored fish, all swirling sinuously, was a big step forward, Cavanaugh said. It was the first that Charlotte did freehand, without drawing her picture with pencils first.

When Charlotte found out that pencils weren't allowed

for this exercise, "I went 'EE-EEE!'" she said. She quickly got the hang of it, though, Cavanaugh added, and was soon drawing an array of sea creatures. (Charlotte says she really likes crabs.)

Cavanaugh met Charlotte about two years ago. The young girl soon announced, "I'm an artist, too," and her mom arranged regular painting sessions.

"Now, these two, they e-mail all the time," Charlotte's mom said.

Visitors to "This Is Charlotte" will be able to trace how the young artist developed, Cavanaugh said. The last painting in the show will be a self-portrait, which will almost literally be done at the last minute.

"Like the day before," Charlotte said.

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