

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

A Moderately Successful Film that Became
a Beloved Classic Movie

When *It's a Wonderful Life* premiered in 1946, it was greeted by mixed reviews and achieved only modest box office success. Frank Capra's film finished No. 26 at the box office for the year and took in only \$3.3 million in ticket sales, covering about half the studio's production costs.

The contrast is stark between the original reception for the movie and the way it is viewed today. The Library of Congress in 1990 designated *It's a Wonderful Life* for preservation in the National Film Registry because of its cultural and aesthetic significance. It is consistently ranked among the best films in listings here and abroad. The American Film Institute ranks it among the top American fantasy films. It was even rated the 7th best movie ever in a poll conducted by Britain's Channel 4 in 2002.

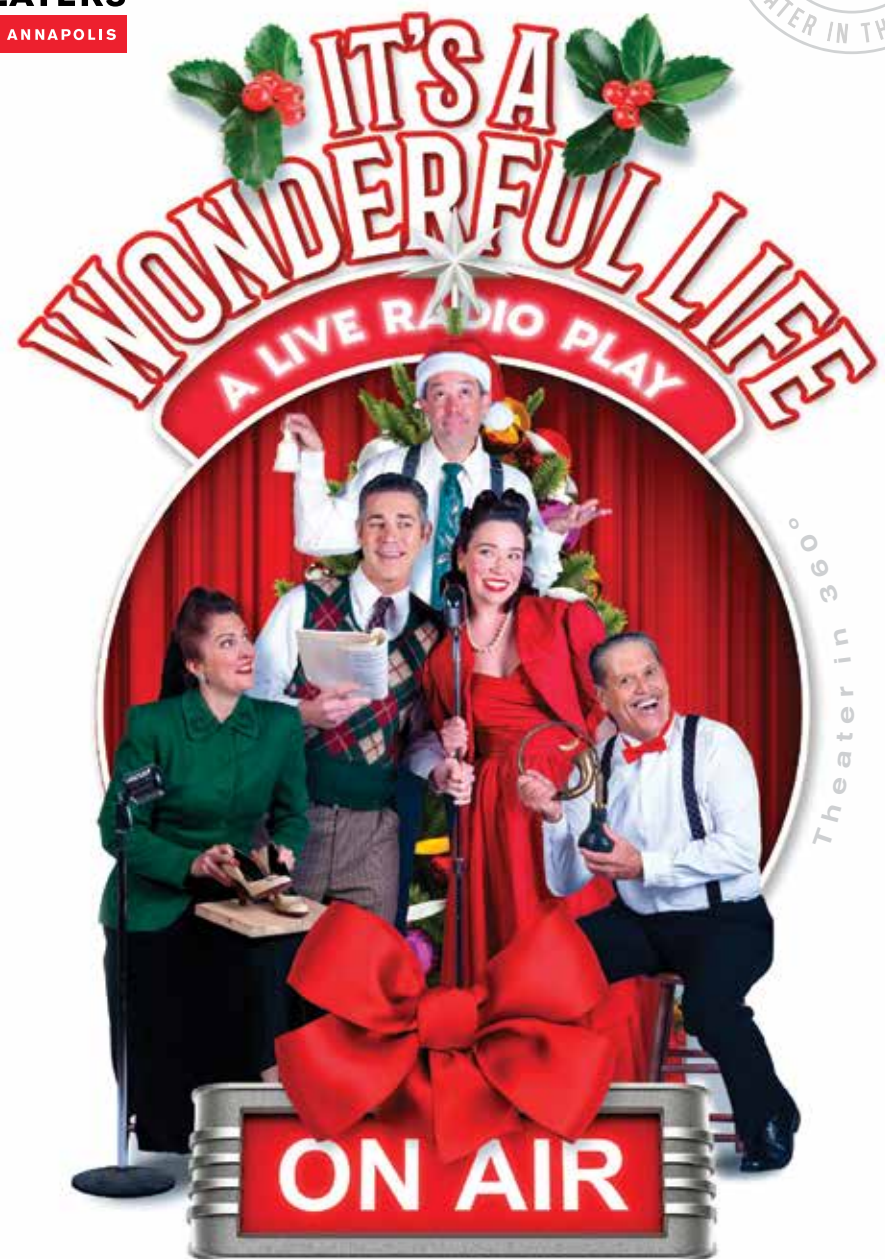
Here are some facts and tidbits about the making of the film, which Capra considered his best movie.

- Cary Grant was originally considered for the leading role of George Bailey, but when Capra took over as director, he chose Jimmy Stewart for the iconic role.
- Stewart recalled that after Capra laid out the plot to try to interest him in the film, he told the actor, "This really doesn't sound so good, does it?" Stewart's reply? "Frank: If you want me to be in a picture about a guy that wants to kill himself and an angel comes down named Clarence who can't swim and I save him, when do we start?"
- The movie's only Academy Award was for developing a new way of creating snow from water, soap flakes, foamite, and sugar. Prior to that, snow was made from crushed corn flakes painted white, which made so much noise when stepped on that actors had to redub dialogue for snowy scenes.
- The FBI in a 1947 memo alleged that by making Lionel Barrymore the most hated

character in the movie, Capra employed a common Communist trick to discredit bankers and demonstrated potential Communist infiltration of the motion picture industry.

- Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett are given writing credits along with Capra, but the husband-and-wife team quit when they were pretty far along in the script because of disagreements with Capra, whom they considered to be condescending. "We put down our pens and never went back to it," Frances said.
- Though he wasn't listed in the credits, the young prankster who pushes the button that opens the pool that swallows George and Mary was portrayed by Freddie Othello, better known as Alfalfa of the *The Little Rascals*.
- Capra, Stewart, and Donna Reed had about 200 movies in their combined filmographies, but the director and his two stars said *It's a Wonderful Life* was their favorite movie.
- While it is an iconic Christmas movie, *It's a Wonderful Life* was shot in the summer of 1946 in the midst of a heat wave with temperatures so high that Capra had to shut down filming for a day at one point. That also explains why Stewart is clearly sweating in some scenes.
- The set for the fictional town of Bedford Falls covered a full four acres of RKO's Encino Ranch in California, consisting of 75 stores and buildings, fully grown oak trees, and a 300-yard long Main Street.
- After years of relative obscurity, the movie found a new audience and a new life on television when the copyright lapsed in 1974, making it available for showing for the next 20 years with no royalty fee.

Sources: Mary Owen (Donna Reed's daughter), mentalfloss.com, wikipedia



DECEMBER 1 – DECEMBER 10, 2017 2017/2018 season



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy holidays!

This time of year brings to mind family and friends, wrapped presents, and the scent of pine trees in cold, crisp air. For me, it is also a time of reflection – contemplating the gifts I have been given, and those who haven't been as fortunate as I. For Colonial Players it is no different. We have been blessed by wonderful patrons and members who want to ensure that Colonial Players continues entertaining for many more years as it has for the past 69 seasons.

I want to thank you for joining us today – whether you have been coming here for years, or if you are joining us for the first time. Our mission is to share our passion for theater with you, and to continue giving back to the community that supports us. Each year we donate a portion of our holiday show proceeds to a local charitable organization, ensuring that good works can continue well past the holiday season.

I hope you enjoy the show, and wish you and yours a very merry holiday!

– SHIRLEY PANEK

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WHAT'S GOING ON AT CP.



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Colonial Players gratefully acknowledges the generous bequest from Roland Riley, a longtime patron whose gift helps ensure the future economic viability of our theater.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

What a joy it has been to get the chance to work on this heartfelt holiday classic, which has become a cherished holiday tradition for me. Along with so many other Americans, I am inspired by the story of George Bailey, an idealistic man who has given up his dreams in order to help the citizens of his small hometown of Bedford Falls. We suffer along with George, who is despondent because his life is falling apart as his attempts at good works seem to come to naught. And we rejoice with George when on a fateful Christmas Eve, just when things are looking at their bleakest, he learns a valuable life lesson. With the help of his personal angel, Clarence, George discovers that his life has not been wasted -- that he has helped so many people in ways large and small and that Bedford Falls is a better place because of him. It is this theme which resonates with people and makes this story so special. Our lives are filled with disappointment, failure, and crisis, and

often these are the only things we can see. But it is then that we need to take time to reflect on all the George Baileys who have had a profound effect on our lives and on those whose lives we have affected.

In Joe Landry's adaptation, this well-known story gets an interesting twist as it is set as a 1940 radio play where all of the characters are played by only five actors. Moreover, in the spirit of radio shows of the period, the vast majority of sound effects are created in the studio by the actors themselves. I especially like this way of telling the story as it not only illustrates the versatility and creativity employed by the cast and crew of these radio plays, but lets the audience in on the "pretend." Have a joyous holiday season, and may your guardian angels get their wings.

— SCOTT NICHOLS

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR



This is **SCOTT NICHOLS'** third time directing at Colonial Players, having directed *Boeing Boeing* in 2016 and *Rocket Man* the previous season. He also directed *Queen of the Northern Monkeys* and *Hamlet, Act VI* during CP's one-act festivals. Scott was seen on stage last year as *Babbybobby* in *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, and previously appeared as Sheriff Reynolds in *Bat Boy*, Wigs in *Enter the Guardsman*, Max in *Lend Me a Tenor*, Olf in *Incorruptible*, Birdy in *Terra*

Nova, and various roles in *Under Milkwood*. He was also in Dignity Players' productions of *Gross Indecency: the Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* and the two-person *Stones in His Pockets*. Other favorite roles include Linus in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* and Little Mary Sunshine in *Chicago* (both at Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre), Phillip in *The Lion in Winter*, Don in *Butterflies Are Free*, and various roles in *Jacqués Brel*. Scott would especially like to thank his husband, Jason, for always providing love, patience, and understanding.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

JOE LANDRY is a playwright, designer, and artist whose plays have been produced throughout the United States as well as internationally. He attended Playwright's Horizon/NYU, founded Second Guess Theatre Company in Connecticut, and is a member of the Dramatists Guild of America. His specialty as a writer is adaptations of famous works of stage and screen which are performed on stage as if the actors were doing a live radio broadcast. In addition to our current production, he has applied this formula to works such as *A Christmas Carol*, Alfred Hitchcock's *39 Steps*, and *Meet Me in St. Louis*. He even wrote

a live radio play about a real radio broadcast -- Orson Welles' famous 1938 *War of the Worlds* that convinced many Americans that the earth had been invaded by aliens from space. Landry believes the format offers limitless possibilities as each production develops its own approach to the lives of the radio actors and the way they perform sound effects and the musical score. "I love all these rich layers and the way they interact and combine to create a unique shared experience, one where each audience member is painting a picture of each scene in their own head," he said in one interview.



THE CAST



DANN ALAGNA

(Clarence, Martini, Sam Wainwright, and others)

Originally from New York but raised in South Florida, Dann first found the stage at age 12-ish after his mother tried virtually everything else to get him to focus. Dann has performed in dozens of community theater productions, including *Alone Together*, *Grease*, *Sly Fox*, and *Greetings* and is thrilled to be back in-the-round at CP, six years after his WATCH-nominated turn in *Cinderella Waltz* as Zed the Village Idiot. Yeah, you read that right. Other CP credits include *Earth and Sky* and *33 Variations*. Dann is the director of Free Range Improv in Annapolis and is beyond proud of his troupe, which has received three consecutive Rammie Awards from Rams Head for best comedy show of the year. They have a website. Dann remains grateful to be included on the stage with such an amazing cast and thanks Director Scott Nichols for including him on this fun and crazy holiday adventure.



ERIN LEIGH HILL

(Mary Hatch Bailey)

Erin is thrilled to be back onstage with some of her favorite people in *It's a Wonderful Life*. Erin was last seen in *Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll*, directed by Paul Vallaeu. Previous roles include Ms. Moriarty in *Sherlock's Last Case*, Jo Galloway in *A Few Good Men*, Sara in *Earth and Sky* (WATCH nomination), Babs in *Mrs. California*, and Alais in *A Lion in Winter*. A native New Yorker, she is so blessed to have formed a Maryland family at Colonial Players. Erin is a reading specialist with Anne Arundel County Public Schools, where she uses theater and performance as a teaching strategy to build life-long learners. By far, her greatest role is that of "Mommy" to her beautiful, inquisitive daughter, Teagan, who has clearly inherited her theater gene. She thanks Scott, the entire cast and crew, and all of her family for making life so wonderful. "I'm the smart one."



MARY C. ROGERS

(Violet Bick, Rose Bailey, Zuzu, and others)

Mary is thrilled to return to the stage of Colonial Players for the first time since her appearance six years ago in *The Diviners*. She has worked onstage, backstage, and everywhere in between with a number of area community theaters, including Prince George's Little Theatre, Greenbelt Arts Center, and Dignity Players of Annapolis. Some of Mary's favorite roles include Maggie in *Red Herring*, Aunt Bella in *Lost in Yonkers* (WATCH nomination), and Hilary in *Tribute*. Mary would like to thank Scott for trusting her with this challenging and wonderful role and the fantastic cast for being so insanely fun and talented. Finally, thanks to her amazing and supportive partner, Abner, for being awesome in every way. This performance is dedicated to Legs and Little Butterfly.



TIMOTHY SAYLES

(Mr. Potter, Joseph, Uncle Billy, and others)

This makes an even dozen appearances for Tim on The Colonial Players stage. CP regulars may remember him as a gifted but intimacy-challenged jazz trumpeter in *Side Man*, a Romanian bad guy in *Watch on the Rhine*, a Chicago bookie/thug in *Superior Donuts*, or Daddy Warbucks in the musical *Annie*. He has also performed at several other local theaters, and in 2014 earned a WATCH nomination for best cameo in a musical for the part of Rudolph in 2nd Star Production's much-decorated version of *Hello, Dolly!* Formerly editor in chief of *Chesapeake Bay Magazine* (1996 to 2014), Tim is now an editor at the *Bay Journal*, a monthly newspaper covering Chesapeake environmental issues since 1995. He thanks Scott Nichols for trusting him with such a marvelous multi-tasking role — and also stage manager Bernadette Arvidson for keeping this wonderfully wacky cast, all dear friends, on mission. And on tempo (inside joke). "To my brilliant children, loving siblings, and sweet,



THE STAFF (continued)



CONSTANCE ROBINSON

(Properties Designer)

Since 2003 Connie has volunteered as a public relations consultant, graphic designer, box office assistant, properties designer, and set decorator for Colonial Players. She also serves on the current Marketing Committee. Connie has collected props for more than 13 productions at Colonial Players and one play at Dignity Players. She is proud to have received three WATCH nominations for properties designing. Connie enjoys her volunteer hours because of the terrific people she works with, who also devote their time and talents to the theater. She thanks her husband, John, for his help, and also thanks her family and friends for loaning set props and for their enthusiastic support.



ANDY SERB

(Sound Designer)

Andy showed up at Colonial Players in May, 2009, and the following day found himself operating the sound system for *Over My Dead Body*. He went on to run sound and lights for *Wonder of the World*, *Little*

Women, *A Christmas Carol*, and *1776*, and to design sound for *The Curious Savage*, *Chapter Two*, *Wit*, *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You*, and *The Actor's Nightmare*. Andy's initial experience with sound systems was with churches and bands. While attending the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, CT, he managed sound for the academy's praise band and was lead sound tech and lighting coordinator for *Anything Goes*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Me and My Girl*, and *Oliver!*.



KRISZTINA VANYI

(Set Designer)

Krisztina is excited and happy to be back working at CP after returning to Maryland from spending a little over a year in California. Sunshine and ocean beaches were not enough to appease her need for the creative outlet and love of many friends The Colonial Players brings to her life. Encouraged by her first set design's success for *The Liar* -- Ruby Griffith Award for All-Round Production Excellence in 2015 -- she was delighted to be asked by Scott and Tim to help with this wonderful production's set. Theater is home and all the kindred spirits are family!

Best wishes from The Colonial Players

to all of our wonderful patrons.

We wish for you a happy holiday season

and a peaceful 2018.



THE STAFF



BERNADETTE ARVIDSON (Stage Manager)

Bernadette is overjoyed to be stage managing this year's Christmas production. She last stage managed with CP (and received a shared WATCH Award for Best Play) for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Bernadette has stage managed for Crystal Gayle, The Artie Shaw Orchestra, The Russian Ballet Theatre Company, Chesapeake Arts Center Opening Gala, The United Way Fundraiser, and an adorable Irish stepdancing troupe whose name temporarily escapes her. Bernadette has also stage managed a number of local community theater productions: "That's where the fun REALLY is! Merry Christmas, and enjoy the show!" As ever, Bernadette thanks God for all the good in her life. Nana dedicates this production to Molly.



ERNIE MORTON (Lighting Designer)

Ernie is thrilled to be working as a lighting designer for this Wonderful show. (You see what he did there.) Big thanks to Alex and Scott for giving him this opportunity. Ernie has served as stage manager at CP for a number of shows since starting off with the 2014 One Act Play Festival. When Ernie is not running around backstage at CP he drives back and forth to DC. There he works as an analyst for the Coast Guard, when he's not playing saxophone with the Coast Guard Headquarters Big Band, The Cutters. In his infinitesimal spare time he looks for golf balls, usually finding ones other people have lost, not the one he played last.



TIM BROWN (Producer)

Tim most recently was producer for *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*. He also has been involved in a variety of back stage roles for previous shows, including lighting assistant and programmer for *Nine*, stage manager for *A Christmas Carol*, lighting assistant

and programmer for *Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll*, and assistant producer for *Boeing Boeing*. Tim claims to have found that the perfect way to spend his retirement-enabled free time is to support his long-time favorite theater - Colonial Players. He sends thanks to all the wonderful people at this theater who have been so welcoming and fun to work with.



BEN CARR (Assistant Director)

This marks Ben's first production in a non-actor role. Previously he has appeared on stage at CP in numerous shows such as *Dog Logic*, *These Shining Lives*, *Death of a Salesman* and *Good People*. He would like to thank Scott for asking him to be a part of such a wonderful show and wishes everyone a joyous holiday season.



CHRISTINA MCALPINE (Costume Designer)

Christina is happy to be back for such a wonderful show working with such a wonderful cast and crew! Being an avid vintage lover, she has enjoyed all the research and sewing for this classic 1940's show. Last season she costumed *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, *God of Carnage* (Compass Rose Theater) and also helped design/sew the Grand Canal costumes for *Nine*. Previous costume design credits at Colonial Players include: *Boeing Boeing* (WATCH nominated for Hair Design), *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, and *The Curious Savage*. Christina holds a BFA in Theatre from the University of West Florida. By day Christina loves working in the veterinary field, while at night she designs and manages her own Vintage & Vintage Inspired shop on Etsy.com. "Many thanks to all my friends here at Colonial who always make this place feel like home. Love to Yanick for always being so supportive and patient with me! Love you babe!"



THE CAST (continued)

sweet friends, who helped me find joy again, I love you all beyond words. And, no, the irony — if that's what it is — of doing this particular play at this particular time is not lost on me. It is indeed a wonderful life."



JASON VELLON (George Bailey)

Jason is thrilled to be back at Colonial Players and in such a unique take on this classic tale. You might have last seen Jason as Guido Contini in last season's musical, *NINE*. Before that he was part of the cast of *Calendar Girls* in the dual role of Lawrence/Liam. Other CP roles have been Goat in *The Robber Bridegroom*; Shep in *Bell, Book and Candle*; and Clifford Glimmer in *Side Man*, which earned him a nomination for best actor by the WATCH Awards. He also has performed at other local

theaters, including Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre, Moonlight Troupers, Chesapeake Music Hall, Dignity Players, Standing O Theater, and was cast in Signature Theater's *Pacific Overtures*. Jason was trained at the American Music Dramatic Academy in NYC, which is where he performed professionally in commercials, stage, and film. He would like to thank Scotty for having faith that he could take on such a familiar role and make it his own. Special thanks also go out to Bernadette for keeping us all on track and to the entire production team. "You guys rock!!" Also, to his cast: "It has been such an honor to perform with all of you. I am honored to be on stage with you." Jason dedicates his performance tonight to his family, who have always been there, and to his friends, who always listen. "Love you all. To Mikey and Aunt Kathy, this one's for you. Merry Christmas everyone!!!"

ABOUT OUR NEXT PLAY

The setting for *Quartet* is a retirement home where three elderly former opera singers live a settled, if unexciting, life. Cecily, Reggie, and Wilfred spend much of their time recalling past glories and raging against the infirmities of old age in Ronald Harwood's funny, yet poignant, play. Their orderly routine is torn asunder by the arrival of Jean, an opera star with a long, but not necessarily happy, relationship with the other three. Jean, who was once married to Reggie, was a true diva and acts the part when she arrives at the retirement home in Kent, England. A concert is planned to commemorate the October 10 birthday of Giuseppe Verdi, and three of the quartet are keen to recreate their performance of the third act quartet "Bella figlia dell'amore" from *Rigoletto*. A solution to bring Jean into the fold is developed as the anniversary concert approaches. But will it work? Writing for *The Independent*, Paul Taylor described *Quartet* as "an unashamed – no, shameless – vehicle for four feisty old troupers whose task is to make us laugh a little, sigh a little, and cry a little as they take us into the bittersweet world of facing up to age and mortality." Harwood also adapted his play for a movie that starred Maggie Smith as Jean.

THE COLONIAL PLAYERS, INC.
presents



Adapted by
JOE LANDRY

From the Screenplay by
**FRANCES GOODRICH, ALBERT HACKETT,
FRANK CAPRA, JO SWERLING**

Directed by
SCOTT NICHOLS

THE CAST

George Bailey.....Jason Vellon
Mary Hatch Bailey.....Erin Leigh Hill
*Mr. Potter, Joseph, Uncle Billy,
 and others*.....Timothy Sayles
*Violet Bick, Rose Bailey, Zuzu,
 and others*.....Mary C. Rogers
*Clarence, Martini, Sam Wainwright,
 and others*.....Dann Alagna

TIME AND PLACE

The stage and auditorium
at Studio A in Manhattan, N.Y.
on Christmas Eve, 1946

This production will be presented without an intermission.

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