

PRODUCTION STAFF

Directors.....Erica Miller, Rowena Winkler
 Producer.....Kaelynn Bedsworth
 Stage Manager.....Emilie Holmstock
 Set Designer.....Bill Fellows
 Lighting Designer.....TJ Lukacsina
 Properties Designer.....Deborah Guy-Skriloff
 Sound Designer.....Richard Atha-Nicholls
 Costume Designer.....Amy Atha-Nicholls
 Lead Carpenter.....Ted Yablonski
 Carpenters.....Tom Dicken, Norm James, Ken Kaiser, Bob Mumper, Jim Robinson
 Stage Crew.....Hannah Housley, Holly Miller
 Set and Floor Painting.....Kaelynn Bedsworth, Dana Fishman, Beth Terranova
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 Projections and Fog Rigging.....Wes Bedsworth
 Videographer.....Brandon Bentley
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 Program Editor.....Tom Stuckey
 Program Assistant.....Nancy Long

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Captain Erik Kornmeyer
 and the Anne Arundel County Fire Department

ABOUT OUR NEXT PLAY

In *The Children*, two retired nuclear scientists reside in an isolated cottage by the sea as the world around them crumbles. Together, they are going to live forever on yogurt and yoga, until an old friend arrives with a frightening request. *The Children* raises profound questions about whether having children sharpens, or diminishes, one's sense of social responsibility and what, if anything, baby boomers owe younger generations. This taut and disquieting thriller by Lucy Kirkwood was nominated in 2018 for a Tony Award for best play and was a hit in London and New York. It opens at The Colonial Players January 10 and closes February 1. Tickets may be purchased online at thecolonialplayers.org.



THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER



DECEMBER 5 TO DECEMBER 15

2019/2020 season



THE COLONIAL PLAYERS, INC.

108 East Street • Annapolis, MD 21401

Telephone: 410-268-7373

thecolonialplayers.org

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to The Colonial Players!

As 2019 comes to a close, I wanted to say thank you for joining us here at The Colonial Players.

Whether you're a long-time patron, or this is your first time here – we're glad you've decided to share part of your busy lives with us.

Part of the mission of The Colonial Players is education and outreach. I like to think of our holiday productions as an opportunity to teach children about the theater. Other than the mock shows I used to put on in our basement, or school productions, I don't recall having an opportunity to see a theater production until I reached high school. I love that we're able to share the opportunity to budding actors to join us on stage. (Be sure to keep an eye out tonight – you might just be watching the next Broadway star!). I'm also pleased that young patrons have an opportunity to see kids just like themselves up on stage. Maybe it will spark an interest as they grow into young men and women, and at the very least it teaches them an appreciation of the arts.

Our mission is to share our passion for theater with you, and to continue giving back to the community that supports us. We've both long-standing traditions, such as donating part of the proceeds from our holiday production to a local 501(c)3 (charitable) organization. And we often invite you to join us in spreading holiday joy to a child in need. This year, we are an official drop off location for Toys For Tots. I hope you'll take the opportunity to bring a new, unwrapped toy and put a smile on a young person's face this holiday season.

Wishing you and yours a very merry holiday!

– SHIRLEY PANEK

TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Thank you for your support. Your generous gifts help us to continue to provide educational and training programs, encouragement and entertainment to all who are interested in dramatic arts.

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DIRECTOR'S NOTES

When we saw that *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* was selected for CP's 71st season, we both knew we wanted to be involved due to our own positive personal experiences with the show. Erica grew up listening to the book on tape narrated by Elaine Stritch, and Rowena played Gladys Herdman many years ago in a community theater production back home in Pennsauken, NJ.

Not only do we find the show to be incredibly funny, but we are also drawn to the themes of unconditionally accepting people who are different from you — a message that is needed today more than ever before. And with the Internet and social media making communication faster (but not necessarily clearer) between individuals, we felt it was important to infuse technology into our telling of this story. Although we're used to seeing the dark side of social media and how it drives groups apart, we wanted to

demonstrate how it can be used as a tool for gaining perspective and bringing people together. In Beth's case -- through Mrs. Bradley's example of showing patience, love, and acceptance toward the Herdmans -- she witnesses how being kind is the key to understanding the meaning of the Christmas story. Even if you don't necessarily consider yourself to be religious, we hope you are as humbled as we are by the honesty of the actors putting on this show and driving this message home.

We're excited you've chosen to come along for the ride to experience the Herdman's heartwarming transformation. We hope you find it as memorable and touching as we did going through this amazing process.

— ERICA MILLER AND ROWENA WINKLER

ABOUT THE DIRECTORS



ERICA MILLER is very excited and extremely grateful to be a part of this funny, yet thought-provoking, show. This is Erica's second time directing at The Colonial Players, although her last endeavor was just a three-minute play. She was last seen on the CP stage as Emily in *Late Nights In Cars*. Other favorite CP roles include Mistress Page (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*), Belle/Fred's Wife (*A Christmas Carol*), and Claudia (*Nine*). Offstage, Erica stays busy teaching performing arts for Drama-Pop LLC and chasing after her two-year-old son. Love and infinite appreciation to Rowena Winkler, Ian Miller, Britta Jureckson, and Kim Jureckson.



ROWENA WINKLER is so excited to make her directorial debut at The Colonial Players for such a fun and heartwarming show. You may have seen her on the CP stage as Anabella/German Reporter/Ensemble in *Nine*, but she's also been active in the theater community in the Washington region as an actor and as choreographer for *Guys and Dolls* and *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*, ASOB). Other favorite roles include The Fortune Teller (*Sideshow*, DCT), The Witch (*Into the Woods*, The Heritage Players), and Jolene/Ensemble (*Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, PGLT). Special thanks to Erica for entrusting her as a partner in this creative endeavor. Love always to Derek and to Baby Winkler debuting in March 2020.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

BARBARA ROBINSON was the author of the hugely popular children's novel, *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, which is ranked as a notable children's book by the American Library Association and was included by the School Library Association on its list of the top 100 novels for young readers. The story of the dreadful Herdman children and their impact on the annual Christmas pageant was made into a TV movie in 1983 starring Loretta Swit, and then into the play

that has become a staple Christmas-time offering by schools, churches, and theater companies across the country. Ms. Robinson wrote two other novels about the Herdmans -- *The Best Halloween Ever* and *The Best School Year Ever*. She also wrote dozens of short stories and articles that were published in magazines such as *Redbook* and *Ladies Home Journal*. Ms. Robinson grew up in a small Ohio river town and said that small-town atmosphere influenced most of her writing.

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



The Colonial Players gratefully acknowledges the recent gift from the Donald M. Reed Living Trust that made possible the critical upgrade of our stage lighting control system.



THE CAST



JERREL BARNES
(Ralph Herdman)

This is Jerrel's first production at The Colonial Players. He is a senior at Broadneck High School and has been in productions there since his sophomore year. Most recently he was seen in the roles of King Creon in *Antigone* and Philip Lombard in *And Then There Were None*. Along with various stage performances, he's acted in a number of student films, including *Myself*, which won best dramatic film at the Saul Zeantz film festival at Johns Hopkins University. After high school, Jerrel would like to pursue a career in film and theater acting. He thanks his parents for supporting all of his endeavors, his directors from previous and current productions, and all of his supportive friends who were there to keep his spirits up when times were tough.



NILSSON BENIL
(David)

Nilsson is performing in his first show ever after enjoying a musical theater camp during the summer. He is a first-grader at Key

School who loves Legos, playing with the kids on his street, and now performing! He sends his love to his Mama, who he gets to be onstage with for the first time, and his Mom, who will be coming to see the show more times than she can count!



SHANNON BENIL
(Mrs. Armstrong)

Shannon is thrilled to share the stage with her son in his first show ever. She herself started performing at The Colonial

Players at the young age of 16 (over 25 years ago!) and since has done five different productions of *A Christmas Carol* and a dozen other plays and musicals. Much love to her wife, Marcy, and they are both so proud of Nilsson for this show and everything he tries in life.



IAN BROWN
(Ollie Herdman)

Ian is a fourth-grader at West Annapolis Elementary, where he enjoys studying many subjects, especially math. The youngest of three brothers, he loves playing with Nerf guns and Legos. He also loves playing sports, with

baseball as his favorite (first home run this year!), riding bikes, and climbing trees. This is his second appearance at The Colonial Players, having played the role of young Ethan in *The City of Conversation* in 2017. He is very excited to be a part of this fun cast and thanks his family, his fellow performers, and the crew for inspiration and support.



MACKENZIE CURRIE
(Alice Wendleken)

Mackenzie, a freshman at Broadneck High School, is so excited to be in her third production at The Colonial Players and her first production with her brother! Past roles include Truly Scrumptious in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang Jr.* (Children's Theatre of Annapolis), Tiny Tim and Belinda Cratchitt in *A Christmas Carol* (CP), and Marta Von Trapp in *The Sound of Music* Broadway National Tour. She spends much of her time dancing, singing, and acting, but she loves to find time to babysit. She wishes to thank her friends, family, cast, artistic staff, and production team for their support and guidance. Special thanks to Erica and Rowena for this opportunity!



TYLER CURRIE
(Hobie)

Tyler is a first-grader at The Severn School and is so excited that his theatrical debut is at The Colonial Players with this talented cast! Tyler loves playing soccer, singing, reading, drawing, and making videos for YouTube. He is so lucky to be performing with his older sister, who is a huge support and inspiration. Tyler would like to say thank you to his family, the production team, and the artistic staff for this fun and valuable experience.



ALTHEA FRANCIOCH
(Gladys Herdman)

Althea attends West Annapolis Elementary School and is in the fourth grade. She loves acting, reading, writing, and playing with friends. This is her first time acting with The Colonial Players, but she has performed in productions with Children's Theatre of Annapolis. She is working toward her goal of becoming an actress and is very excited for this opportunity. She could not have done any of this without the support of her family.



THE STAFF

AMY ATHA-NICHOLLS
(Costume Designer)

Shazam! Maker of stuff, nonsense, and mischief by decree. Amy has worn many hats, including puppeteer, costumer, pyrographer, designer, playwright, archer, wench (when required), and assassin on occasion (specializing in heart attacks...). Mostly she acts as Polly Filler for all the jobs that need doing. Love always to R & P, evermore O.



RICHARD ATHA-NICHOLLS
(Sound Designer)

Richard is thrilled to be designing sound again for The Colonial Players. He previously engineered or designed sound for numerous productions, primarily at CP, Bowie Community Theatre, and Laurel Mill Playhouse. His sound design has garnered two WATCH nominations. Richard also has appeared on area stages, and in his spare time he helps run Discworld conventions. Occasionally, he has been known to direct. Love to C, A & P. Always in my heart, O.



KAELYNN BEDSWORTH
(Producer)

Kaelynn is delighted to welcome you all to The Colonial Players this holiday season! You may have seen Kaelynn grace the stage in *The Secret Garden*, *Annie*, *1776*, *Moonlight and Magnolias*, and several *A Christmas Carols*. Behind the scenes, she has produced, costume designed, sound designed, and scene painted for many shows over the last 11 years, and currently serves on the Board of Directors. May all your holidays be just as full of Herdmans as ours are!



BILL FELLOWS
(Set Designer)

Bill's first love is acting, but he can be found behind the scenes almost as much as onstage. He grew up in the home building industry, learning the construction skills that translated into set design and construction. Most recently, he co-designed and built the set for 2nd Star's production of *Gypsy* and was involved previously in the productions of *Chess*, *Ragtime* (both for 2nd Star) and *Frankenstein* (BCT). He

has also recently been a member of the casts of *Amelie*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, and *Mary Poppins* for 2nd Star; BCT's *Almost Dead* and *Frankenstein*; and The Colonial Players' *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.



DEBORAH GUY-SKRILOFF
(Properties Designer)

Deborah has truly enjoyed being welcomed into the CP family after 10 years of directing, producing, and acting in shows for children's community theater in Dutchess County, NY. Huge thanks to Connie Robinson for showing her the ropes.



EMILIE HOLMSTOCK
(Stage Manager)

Emilie is pleased to be a part of this lively holiday production at The Colonial Players. Though usually appearing onstage, she is often found working backstage on various projects. Her most recent credits at Colonial have been as assistant stage manager for *Arsenic and Old Lace* and onstage as Henrietta Leavitt in *Silent Sky*. In addition to performing in Annapolis, Emilie has appeared in various roles in Baltimore and DC, with recent favorites being Lusie in *A Shayna Maidel* (Strand Theater Company) and Abigail in *The Crucible* (Vagabond Players.) She wishes a warm holiday season to all, especially her CP Family who have truly given her a place to call "home"!



TJ LUKACSINA
(Lighting Designer)

TJ is happy to finally be working with The Colonial Players. Other credits -- DIRECTING: *Hairspray* with Rockville Musical Theatre; *Big Fish* and *Legally Blonde* at Silhouette Stages; *Into the Woods* and *Thoroughly Modern Millie* at Heritage Players; *Sweeney Todd* and *White Christmas* with Laurel Mill Playhouse. LIGHTING: *Jekyll & Hyde*, *An Immersive Experience*; *Striking 12*; *Always Patsy Cline*, and *Murder Ballad* with Free-Range Humans; *Cabaret* with Silhouette Stages. MUSIC DIRECTION: 12 shows with Hammond High School. He sends many thanks to his friends and family who have exercised amazing patience with his schedule.



THE CAST (continued)

CP productions of *A Christmas Carol* eight times, playing various roles, and is so glad to be able to share the stage again with her daughter Emma (Claudia Herdman). She has performed with many theater groups in the area over the years including ASGT, 2nd Star Productions, Bowie Community Theatre, Theater 11, and Dignity Players. She recently joined an adult band with Priddy Music Academy and is having a great time singing with them.



JACKSON PARLANTE

(Charlie Bradley)

Jackson is a 13-year-old eighth-grader at Crofton Middle School. He is thrilled to be back at The Colonial Players in *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* after appearing in the musical *Nine* two years ago. In his spare time, Jackson enjoys taking dance classes at Stageworkz Theater Arts, hanging out with friends, singing, and dancing. He would like to thank Erica, Rowena, Kaelynn, Emilie, Amy, Beth, and everyone who worked hard behind the scenes to make this show possible!



ZOË PRICE

(Maxine)

Zoë is a high-school student who very much enjoys theater! With her mama's love, she made her debut on the stage performing in elementary school talent shows. She advanced to theater productions during middle school, performing in *Beauty and the Beast Jr.*, *The Little Prince*, and *Aladdin Jr.* Zoë started as an enchantress and a dancing spoon, then became the little prince of a far-away planet, and then flew through the vast desert sands as Iago, an obnoxious and very loud parrot! She reached the ocean blue last year, diving under the sea in *The Little Mermaid*. "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." -*The Little Prince*.



KARA REESE

(Beverly)

Kara is a fourth-grader at West Annapolis Elementary School. This is her first theater production, and she is looking ahead to continue her pursuit of theater. Kara is a fan of comedy and art and enjoys hanging out with friends.



SEDONA SALB

(Beth Bradley)

Sedona is excited to be in her first production at The Colonial Players. She is a senior at Broadneck High School and has been a cast member in the Broadneck Dramatics Guild since her freshman year. Her favorite roles include Cookie Cusack from *Rumors* and Hero from *Much Ado About Nothing*. Sedona would like to pursue a career in theater and film whether it be acting, directing, or writing. She would like to thank Erica, Rowena, and the cast, crew, and creative team of *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* for making this such a fun and amazing experience. She also thanks her friends and family for supporting her in everything she does and for reminding her "what Christmas is all about."



JASON VAUGHAN

(Bob Bradley)

Jason is delighted to be onstage again at The Colonial Players and to be surrounded by an amazing cast and crew. Previous roles at Colonial include Howard in *Moon Over Buffalo*; Nicky in *Bell, Book and Candle*; and Reverend Mike in Durang's *Why Torture Is Wrong*. Jason has also appeared onstage with Dignity Players of Annapolis (*The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*) and Baltimore's Spotlighters (*The Man Who Came to Dinner*). During the day he works as a consultant in the historic preservation and heritage tourism field and currently serves on the board of the Maryland Federation of Art. Jason would like to thank Scott for all his patience and support.



GIN WHITE

(Mrs. McCarthy)

Gin is excited to be on The Colonial Players stage for the first time. Recent roles include Grandma Addams (*The Addams Family*) and Gwendolyn Holmes (*Shout! The Mod Musical*) at Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre. "Much thanks to my family for their encouragement to pursue the things I love."



THE CAST (continued)



KATHY GARRITY

(Mrs. Clausen, Firefighter)

Kathy is very excited to be in her first Colonial Players production! It has been years since she performed onstage. Kathy has been on the board of Children's Theatre of Annapolis for over 14 years and has served as producer, production manager, make-up coordinator, and more. She thanks Erica and Rowena for their direction and her family and friends for their support. "Thank you, Katie, for the role reversal. You inspire me!" Kathy is so impressed by this talented cast and learns new things from them every rehearsal. "Break a leg everyone, and Happy Holidays!"



DEBB HOLLINGSHEAD

(Mrs. Slocum)

Deb is making her stage debut with The Colonial Players and is very excited to be able to share the stage with her son and this amazing cast. While she has no previous experience onstage, she draws from her classroom experience trying to keep the attention of her fourth-grade students. Currently, she stays active with grad school and being an assistant scoutmaster with Ian's troop. When she does have downtime, she enjoys a good long nap or hanging out with her friends and family.



IAN HOLLINGSHEAD

(Elmer Hopkins)

Ian is making his debut with The Colonial Players as Elmer. He is very excited to be part of this amazing cast! His previous stage show was *Gypsy*, where he was a newsboy. Currently he is a PVA Vocal student at Brooklyn Park Middle School. He is active in soccer and Boy Scouts as well. His hobbies are car collecting, movies, singing, and being with his family.



KEITH IVEY

(Leroy Herdman)

Keith is extraordinarily happy to make his debut at The Colonial Players in this production. He is in the sixth grade and has participated in *Mini Rock 'N' Roll Revival* at Shipley's Choice Elementary School, in *Willie Wonka Jr.* at Stage and Screen Productions as Charlie, and in BCPE at Woods Church, also as Charlie. Llamas

are his passion. He enjoys sculpting and playing the tuba. He would like to thank everyone at The Colonial Players, his family, and especially his big brother, Gavin, for their support.



LAURA IVEY

(Grace Bradley)

Laura is thrilled to return to the stage after playing Meg in The Colonial Players 2017 production of *Shiloh Rules*. She is especially excited because she will be sharing the stage with her son, Keith, for the first time. Past credits at CP include Faye in *Chapter Two*, Helen in *Enchanted Mesa*, and Marisol in *Clean*. Her day job is with Edison Research. Laura is grateful to the cast and crew for creating such a special show and to her family and friends for their endless support. Much love and thanks to her husband, Kurt, and their sons Gavin, Nick, and Keith.



RACHEL LEONOVICH

(Imogene Herdman)

Rachel is excited to be in her first production at The Colonial Players. She is a junior at Annapolis High School and is 16 years old. She would like to thank her parents and grandparents for taking her to rehearsals and the whole cast for making this such a special experience. Enjoy the show!



EMMA MILLER

(Claudia Herdman)

Emma is enjoying being back on the CP stage after having performed in the last two productions of *A Christmas Carol* (Fanny in 2016 and the Ghost of Christmas Past in 2018), and having worked as stage crew for *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Generations* earlier this year. Emma is a seventh-grader at Severn River Middle School and enjoys playing violin in the school orchestra and singing in a rock band with Priddy Music Academy. She sends thanks to Erica and Rowena for this opportunity and hopes you enjoy the show. Go, Herdmans!!



LESLEY MILLER

(Reverend Hopkins)

Lesley is thrilled to be back on the CP stage, where she was most recently seen in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. She has appeared in

THE COLONIAL
PLAYERS, INC.
presents

THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER



Written by
BARBARA ROBINSON

Directed by
ERICA MILLER AND ROWENA WINKLER

THE CAST *(in order of appearance)*

Beth Bradley.....Sedona Salb
Charlie Bradley.....Jackson Parlante
Ralph Herdman.....Jerrel Barnes
Imogene Herdman.....Rachel Leonovich
Claudia Herdman.....Emma Miller
Leroy Herdman.....Keith Ivey
Ollie Herdman.....Ian Brown
Gladys Herdman.....Althea Francioch
Bob Bradley.....Jason Vaughan
Grace Bradley.....Laura Ivey
Mrs. Slocum.....Debb Hollingshead
Mrs. Clausing, Firefighter.....Kathy Garrity
Reverend Hopkins.....Lesley Miller
Mrs. McCarthy.....Gin White
Mrs. Armstrong.....Shannon Benil
Alice Wendleken.....Mackenzie Currie
Elmer Hopkins.....Ian Hollingshead
Hobie.....Tyler Currie
David.....Nilsson Benil
Maxine.....Zoë Price
Beverly.....Kara Reese

TIME
Present Day

PLACE
Any Town

This production will be performed without an intermission.
Produced by Special Arrangement with Samuel French, New York, NY.
Taking photographs and using any recording devices are strictly prohibited.
Smoking is prohibited throughout the building.