



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, November 25, 2009

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This Wonderful Life

1 Actor. 32 Characters. An Acclaimed Tour de Force of a Holiday Classic.



Written by Steve Murray
Conceived by Mark Setlock
Directed by Peter Amster
Featuring James Leaming

STORCH THEATRE at SYRACUSE STAGE

Running Dates: Dec 9 - Jan 3

Press Opening: Saturday, Dec 12 at 8:00 p.m.

(Syracuse, NY)—Every time a bell rings an angel gets his wings. Visit Bedford Falls this holiday season for a charming stage telling of Frank Capra's Hollywood classic. One brave actor plays 32 characters including George Bailey, Clarence, Mr. Potter, Mary, Martini and Zuzu and brings everyone's favorite family holiday charmer to wonderful life. *Hee-haw.*

This Wonderful Life runs December 9-January 3 at Syracuse Stage. Tickets can be purchased online at www.SyracuseStage.org, by phone at 315-443-3275 or in person at 820 East Genesee Street. *This Wonderful Life* is sponsored by Phoebe's Restaurant and Coffee Lounge. The media sponsor is WAER 88.3. Syracuse Stage season sponsors are *The Post-Standard* and Time Warner Cable.

"The story of George Bailey's journey from frustration to despair to understanding and happiness is one that celebrates the American ideal of community. The way to find value in this world as individuals is by looking more closely at the people who pass through our lives: our family, our friends, our town," said Director Peter Amster.

Amster returns to Syracuse after having directed Stage's production of *The Fantasticks* in spring 2008. Previously he directed *This Wonderful Life* for Florida's Asolo Repertory Theatre, where the production received the Sarasota Magazine Awards for Best Show and Best Actor.

Sarasota Magazine called the production "a tour-de force for its one-man cast and a real holiday treat for the audience." Actor James Leaming was praised for "bringing to life not just George Bailey, but all the main characters of the film classic... He was utterly convincing, enthusiastic and impressive..."

Leaming will be featured in the Syracuse Stage production. He notes, "*This Wonderful Life* reminds us that the world is full of Heroes and most of them go unnoticed; that we change the world right here, where we touch it. And we can never take that for granted."

Frank Capra's film classic *It's a Wonderful Life* was released in 1946. Featuring Jimmy Stewart as George Bailey, the film received five Academy Award nominations. It has been recognized by the American Film Institute as one of the 100 best American films ever made, and placed number one on their list of the most inspirational American films of all time.

"Why a one-man show of *It's a Wonderful Life*?" asks Director Peter Amster. "Well, of course it gives a very talented actor a chance for virtuosity. But more deeply, it gives us a chance to fall under the spell of the storyteller, the single voice of the community, the bard, the rhapsodist, who brings the story up from a shared past and bodies it forth, so that we may taste again, as we do almost every year, the sweetness of the holiday dish, and its savory, if paradoxical message: we can only find our best selves in selflessness."

LOCAL CONNECTIONS

- **Seneca Falls** - Is Seneca Falls, NY the real Bedford Falls, the fictional town where *This Wonderful Life* takes place? The many similarities suggest it's quite possible—the traditional New England main street, a steel truss bridge, many Second Empire Victorian homes, globe street lamps, both towns have a canal, both main streets are 300 yards long with a median, and history as a mill town. Visit www.therealbedfordfalls.com for more information.

SPECIAL EVENTS

- **December 10 - LGBT Pride Night**
Get IN with the OUT crowd
- **December 19 - Welch Allyn Signed Interpreted Performance**
In Memory of Susan Thompson
Signed matinee at 3:30 p.m.

*Special event programs are additionally funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation/The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and administered by Theatre Communications Group, the National Organization for the American Theatre.

TICKETS

Single Tickets: \$30-\$45

Children (under 18): \$16

Under 40: \$20 all tickets, all performances.

Rush: \$20-\$25 general public, \$9 with valid student ID, subject to availability

**Rush tickets available by phone (\$5 fee) or in person (no fee)*

**Discounts available for seniors, students, groups and subscribers*

Online: www.SyracuseStage.org

Call: 315-443-3275

In person: 820 East Genesee Street

Groups (10 or more): 315-443-9844

WRITTEN BY

Steve Murray (*Playwright*) is an Atlanta-based award-winning playwright and film critic. His plays have been produced at Portland Center Stage, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, The Lyric Stage Company of Boston, and many others.

CONCEIVED BY

Mark Setlock. For *Fully Committed*, a piece he helped create with playwright Becky Mode, Mark won the 2000 Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Solo Performance, and he received a Drama Desk nomination. He went on to perform this show in Los Angeles, Boston, Portland, Oregon, Sag Harbor's Bay Street Theatre, and London. He was privileged to be in the original Broadway company of *Rent*. He co-wrote and acted in *Pageant Play* (with Matthew Wilkas) which premiered in June, 2008 at the Berkshire Theatre Festival. His New York Theatre experience includes *Rent*, *Fully Committed*, *The Last Sunday In June*, *Roulette*, *Tea and Sympathy*, *The Safety Net*, *Never Tell*, and *The Umbrella Plays*, among others. Television credits include *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, *Law & Order*, and *All My Children*. In film he can be seen in *New Suit*, and *Life In Flight*.

DIRECTORS

Peter Amster (*Director*) is pleased to return to Syracuse Stage where he last directed *The Fantasticks*. He has directed and choreographed for most of Chicago's professional theatres and opera companies. He was nominated for Joseph Jefferson Awards for his direction of *Once on This Island*, *The Rothschilds* and *The World Goes Round*, all at Apple Tree Theatre, and *Pride and Prejudice* at Northlight Theatre. He has been a regular guest director at Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Asolo Repertory Theatre in Sarasota, and The Cleveland Playhouse. His opera direction credits include the Lyric Opera Center productions of *Die Fledermaus*, *La Traviata*, *La Cenerentola*, *The Magic Flute*; and on the main stage at Lyric Opera Center he choreographed *The Voyage of Edgar Allan Poe*, *Don Quixotte* and *La Traviata*. He has also directed for Skylight Opera, Light Opera Works, Chicago Opera Theatre and DuPage Opera. Other choreography credits include *The Grapes of Wrath* for Steppenwolf Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, London, and Broadway; *Four Saints in Three Acts* and *The Mother of Us All* for Chicago Opera Theatre; *The Winter's Tale*, *She Always Said Pablo* and *The Good Person of Setzaun* for the Goodman Theatre, all directed by Frank Galati. He has taught theatre, opera and performance studies at Northwestern University, CalArts, LSU, Columbia College and Roosevelt University.

Carmen Roman (*Assistant Director*) has directed at Madison Repertory Theatre, The Court Theatre, Victory Gardens Theatre, and at the American Blues Theatre where she is a 20-year company member and served as artistic director from 1993 to 1997. Later this season, she will appear at Syracuse Stage as Esther in *The Price*. Her acting credits include the national tour of *Angels in America*. Off Broadway: *The Iphigenia Cycle* (Theatre for a New Audience from The Court Theatre, Chicago), *The Mysteries* (Classic Stage Company), *Paradise* (Gary Allen Productions). Regional: *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Centerstage, Baltimore), *Orpheus Descending*, *The Homage that Follows*, *Toys in the Attic* (American Blues Theatre, Chicago), *Lost in Yonkers* (Coconut Grove Playhouse, Walnut Street Theatre), *Sonia Flew* (The Huntington Theatre Company), *Electra* (Hartford Stage), *Side Man* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company, The Galway Arts Festival in Galway, Ireland and Melbourne Arts Festival in Australia), *Wit*, *Black Snow*, *Brutality of Fact* (Goodman Theatre Company), *Master Class* (Northlight Theatre and Columbia Artists Tour), *Shadowlands* (The Alliance Theatre). Film/Television: *The Falcon* (a co-production shot in Soviet Georgia), *Marilyn* (a short feature by Kevin Spacey Productions), *All My Children*, *Early Edition*, *Law & Order* (Judge Einhorn, recurring), *Law & Order SVU*, *Criminal Intent*, and the upcoming feature *Savages* (with Phillip Seymour Hoffman and Laura Linney). Company Member: American Blues Theatre (Chicago), The Actors' Center (New York). Awards and Honors: 2002 Fox Fellow, Sarah Siddons Award, Florence Herscher Award, Joseph Jefferson Awards for *Master Class* and *Wit*.

CAST

James Leaming. Chicago: American Blues Theatre (Founder, 1985), Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Victory Gardens Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Fox Theatricals, Writers' Theatre, Canamac Productions. Regional: Asolo Repertory Theatre and Peninsula Players. Film/TV: *Prison Break*, *Early Edition*, *Running Scared*, and numerous commercials (on camera and voiceover). Training: American Conservatory Theatre (San Francisco), The Second City (Chicago). Awards: After Dark Award (Running With Scissors Theatre, Chicago), Best Actor for *The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon*, Sarasota Magazine Awards for Best Actor and Best Show for *This Wonderful Life* (Asolo Repertory Theatre, Florida).

DESIGNERS

Jeffrey W. Dean (*Scenic Designer*) is the Senior Property Master and Scenic Designer at Asolo Repertory Theatre. He has designed well over 200 shows in Florida including designs for television and film. For Asolo Repertory Theatre: *Miser*, *Darwin in Malibu*, *This Wonderful Life*, *Visiting Mr. Green*, *Nobody Don't Like Yogi*, *Laughing Stock*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Broadway Bound*, *The Smell of the Kill*, *The Front Page*, *Inherit the Wind*, *The Corn is Green*, *Broadway*, *You Can't Take it with You*, *Look Homeward, Angel*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and *I'm Not Rappaport*. For the Sarasota Opera Association: *Attila*, *I due Foscari*, *La Rondine*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Les Vepres Sicilienne*, *Ernani*, *Nabucco*, *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, *La Jolie fille de Perth*; and *L'arlesiana* and *The Hobbit* for the Sarasota Youth Opera. Additional credits include *Execution of Justice*, *Invictus*, and *The Sum of Us* for Florida Studio Theatre; *Gem of the Ocean*, *By the Waters of Babylon*, *Anna in the Tropics*, *Dracula* and *We Got Gershwin* for American Stage Theatre Company; *Moon for the Misbegotten*, *A Doll's House*, and *Vincent in Brixton* for Banyan Theatre Company. Jeffrey is a nationally recognized sculptor, a member of United Scenic Artists Local 829, New York and the recipient of two Florida Individual Artist Fellowship Awards for Set Design.

Kevin Kennedy (*Sound Designer*) is pleased to be working with Syracuse Stage for this season's production of *This Wonderful Life*. Kevin has designed, engineered, recorded, composed, and arranged for numerous artists and shows including Joe Popp's original musicals *Maxwell* and *Pericles* for the Jobsite Theatre; *Darwin In Malibu*, *Lady*, *This Wonderful Life* and *The Perfect Mendacity* for Asolo Repertory Theatre; *The Hellbound Heart*, *Bat Boy: The Musical*, *Hector and Greshika*, and *Ghetto* at the University of South Florida; *Sgt. Pepper Live* with Geoff Emerick and Cheap Trick; numerous cabaret shows at the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center; and numerous other professional acts. Kevin has also toured as Sound Engineer with two National Tours of *Mamma Mia*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Martin Guerre*, and Ralph Lemon's *Geography* Tour. Kevin is currently the House Sound Engineer at Ruth Eckerd Hall in Clearwater, Florida, and the Front of House Sound Engineer for the Alan Parsons Live Project.

Aaron Muhl (*Lighting Designer*). Regional theatre credits: *This Wonderful Life*, *Perfect Mendacity*, *The Perfume Shop*, *The Last Five Years* (Asolo Repertory Theatre); *Around the World in 80 Days*, *Trapezium*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Orlando Shakespeare Festival); *A Little House on the Prairie*, *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Orlando Repertory Theatre). Regional dance credits: *The Two Pigeons*, *Grosse Fuge*, *Las Hermanas*, *Elite Syncopations*, *Infernal Gallop*, *Checkmate*, *The Rake's Progress*, *Vespri*, *Anna Karenina*, *Lilac Garden* (Sarasota Ballet); *Shifting Phantoms*, *The Testimony of Matrimony*, *Stories* (Moving Ethos). Aaron is the managing director of production for the Ringling International Arts Festival and the technical director for the Historic Asolo Theatre at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art. Aaron holds a BFA from the University of Central Florida in theatrical design.

Gretchen Darrow-Crotty (*Costume Designer*) holds a MFA from the University of Connecticut. Previous Syracuse Stage credits include *Stones in His Pockets*, *The Woman in the Blue Dress* and various *Backstory!* characters including Harriet Tubman. Gretchen is also the costumer for Syracuse Stage and Syracuse University's Department of Drama, where she is an adjunct professor of costume design and technology. Designs for SU Drama include *A Little Night Music*, *Anything Goes*, *Damn Yankees*, and *Translations*. Gretchen has also worked regionally at Geva Theatre Center, Hangar Theatre, Kitchen Theatre Company, Connecticut Repertory Theatre and SUNY Cortland.

SYRACUSE STAGE

Syracuse Stage is Central New York's premier professional theatre. Founded in 1974, Stage has produced more than 220 plays in 36 seasons including a number of world, American, and East Coast premieres. Each season 90,000 patrons enjoy an adventurous mix of new plays and bold interpretations of classics and musicals featuring the finest theatre artists. In addition, Stage maintains a vital educational outreach program that annually serves over 30,000 students from 24 counties. A solid core of subscribers and supporters helps keep Syracuse Stage a vibrant artistic presence in Central New York. Additional support comes from the government, foundations, corporations and Syracuse University. Syracuse Stage is a constituent of the Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre, and a member of the Syracuse Chamber of Commerce, the Arts and Cultural Leadership Alliance (ACLA), the University Hill Corporation and the East Genesee Regent Association. Syracuse Stage is a member of The League of Resident Theatres (LORT), the largest professional theatre association in the country.

Fact Sheet:

This Wonderful Life

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Conceived by Mark Setlock
Directed by Peter Amster
Featuring James Leaming

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SPONSOR:
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SYRACUSE STAGE SEASON SPONSORS:
The Post-Standard
Time Warner Cable

ARTISTIC
Carmen Roman (*Assistant Director*)

CAST
James Leaming

DESIGNERS
Jeffrey W. Dean (*Scenic Designer*)
Aaron Muhl (*Lighting Designer*)
Gretchen Darrow-Crotty (*Costume Designer*)
Kevin Kennedy (*Sound Designer*)

STAGE MANAGER
Kerri J. Lynch (*Stage Manager*)

The names in bold are actors and stage managers who are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

TICKETS:

Single Tickets: \$30-\$45
Children (under 18): \$16
Under 40: \$20 all tickets, all performances.
Rush: \$20-\$25 general public, \$9 with valid student ID, subject to availability

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SHOW CALENDAR: December/January

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
			9 8:00	10 8:00	11 8:00	12 3:30 8:00 PO
13 2:30 7:30	14	15 8:00	16 8:00	17 8:00	18 8:00	19 3:30 S 8:00
20 2:30	21 8:00	22 8:00	23 8:00	24	25	26 3:30 8:00
27 2:30 7:30	28	29 2:30 8:00	30 2:30 8:00	31 8:00	1	2 3:30 8:00
3 2:30						

PO=Press Opening S=Signed D=Discussion

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Syracuse Stage | Producing Artistic Director: Timothy Bond | Managing Director: Jeffrey Woodward
 820 E. Genesee St. | Main: 315-443-4008 | Box Office: 315-443-3275 | www.syracusestage.org