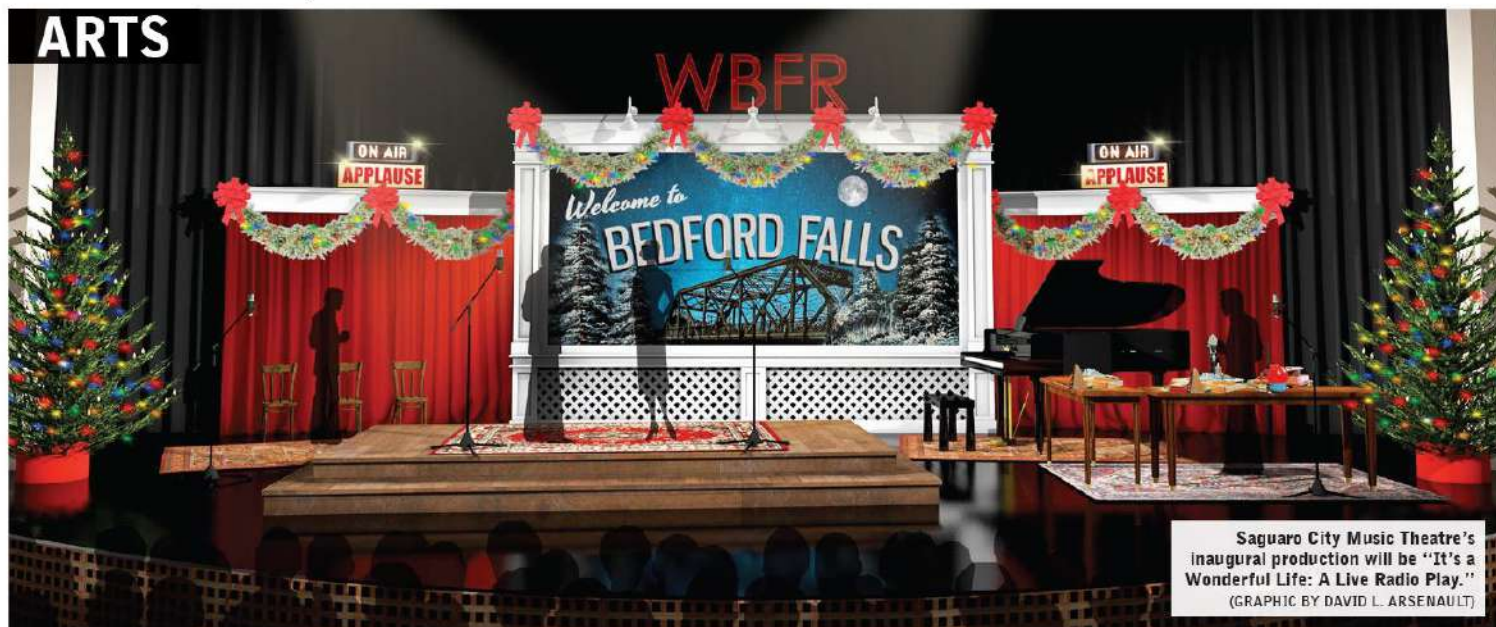


ARTS



Saguaro City Music Theatre's inaugural production will be "It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play." (GRAPHIC BY DAVID L. ARSENAULT)

SAGUARO CITY'S INAUGURAL SHOW IS 'WONDERFUL'

By Laura Latzko

BEFORE STREAMING AND

podcasts, compelling stories were told over the radio.

"It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play" captures a live radio broadcast while sharing a Christmas classic with audiences in different way.

Saguaro City Music Theatre will mark its first production with "It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play" from Friday, Dec. 9 to Saturday, Dec. 24 at the Berger Performing Arts Center.

Led by executive director Charlie Ingram, artistic director Drew Humphrey and director of outreach and education Dena DiGiacinto, Saguaro City Music Theatre boasts 60 years of combined professional theater experience.

The radio play is being directed by Humphrey, who grew up in Tucson and attended UA before moving to New York to pursue a career as a director, choreographer and performer.

The radio show takes place in New York in 1946 and tells the story of Bedford Falls savings and loan officer George, his wife Mary and their children.

The show, which draws from Frank

Capra's 1946 film and Philip Van Doren Stern's "The Greatest Gift," was adapted by Joe Landry.

It shares a similar message as the film about the power of goodwill and community and the importance of human connections. DiGiacinto said the ideals in the show fit with Saguaro City's mission.

Humphrey has a personal connection to "It's a Wonderful Life," which is his favorite Christmas movie.

"I love watching it every year, go on that journey with George Bailey and find myself a blubbering mess at that end. I'm not ashamed of it. It's exciting to work on this piece," Humphrey said.

DiGiacinto said the radio broadcast has a similar format as "Live from Here," a radio variety show once known as "A Prairie Home Companion."

"You see the special guests come on and off, and they set up different things. There's always so much going on," DiGiacinto said. "It's cool to see it in front of your eyes and visualize the chaos that goes on to get from one segment to another."

"It's designed to be performed for the

audience in the seats. It's as if they are being whisked back to Christmas Eve 1946 to watch a live broadcast," Humphrey said.

The production will have six actors voicing 51 roles. DiGiacinto said during rehearsals, it was important to find actors who could portray multiple characters. One actor has to jump between four voices in one scene.

"Those characters are having a conversation with each other. Finding the actor that is able to color all of those voices and switch between them effortlessly and instantly was a major part of finding an actor to play that role," Humphrey said.

"The actor who plays Harry does such an incredible job making it clear who's who with different accents and tones of his voice. It's just really impressive," DiGiacinto said.

Only two actors, who portray the George and Mary, will be voicing one character each.

George will be played by actor James Kelley Carroll from UA. Samantha Beemer, a Pima Community College student, is Mary. She was recently featured in SA-

PAC's production of "Fun Home."

The radio play has a show within a show feel.

This means that actors will be part of the radio show and the story of "It's A Wonderful Life."

Stewart Gregory, for example, will play radio host Freddie Filmore in the broadcast and Mr. Potter and Joseph in the play.

The show will also have a jingle singer, who will perform in a 1940s style.

Humphrey designed an original jingle for the show, which is used for the radio station.

Music has been added to the show, in the background during the radio play and during the "commercial breaks." It is a combination of jazz standards and classic holiday songs.

Matt Marcus, a sound designer and live foley artist, will be creating sound effects during the broadcast.

"He is lending his expertise on how do you make a wind machine? How do you make wind out of props that they would

SEE SHOW PAGE 17