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[Magic of theater, radio combine in 'Life'](#)

By Randall G. Mielke

For GO

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Part of the magic of theater is creating different worlds for audiences to explore. For the cast and crew of "It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play," being presented by Noble Fool Theatricals at the Pheasant Run Resort & Spa in St. Charles to Dec. 26, the magic of theater also includes the magic of radio.

"We are doing a radio show," said Director Rachel Rockwell. "It just happens to be the play 'It's a Wonderful Life.' But there is a performance element for the audience. The actors are reading from a script, and it is interesting how the sound effects are created."

Just as in the old radio plays, the sound effects are created on stage. Movie pioneer Jack Foley perfected sound effects in the first talking pictures. A Foley station, where sound effects are recreated, is named after him.

"The sound effects part is great," Rockwell said, "whether it is a car door closing, snow crunching, or a telephone ringing. With the use of the Foley station, the studio audience gets to see all the stuff as it succeeds and fails.

"What is also interesting is what the actors and actresses are doing when they are not on microphone," she continued. "They might be reading Life magazine, knitting or smoking between bits of dialogue."

"It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play" is adapted by Joe Landry from the screenplay by Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett, Frank Capra and Jo Swerling. The play is inspired by the 1946 holiday film classic, "It's a Wonderful Life," which starred James Stewart and Donna Reed.

In this radio play version, patrons become a part of the live studio audience and relive the beloved tale of regret and redemption told through insightful storytelling, familiar characters, engaging sound effects and musical commercial breaks by a children's choir composed of local singers.

By adding the children's choir of 10 performers, ranging in age from 8 to 13, the production takes on a more variety-show feel.

"We do some 1940s Christmas songs," Rockwell said. "There also are songs in the commercials of that era. The added songs gives the show more variety."

But Rockwell also thinks there is appeal in the simplicity of the performance.

“With a radio play, there is something charming and exciting watching these actors and actresses become the characters in the play,” she said. “Only two actors, those playing the leads of George and Mary Bailey, remain the same character throughout the play. The other six actors are playing more than 30 roles. At times, one actor may be playing dual roles, so the actor is reading against himself.”

Rockwell also believes that the fact that the movie “It’s a Wonderful Life” has been seen countless times by thousands of people over the years enhances rather than detracts from the staged radio play version.

“It is like spending time with old friends,” she said. “The audience members may very well want to say ‘Every time a bell rings an angel gets his wings’ along with the actors. There will definitely be an inner chuckle by audience members when people know that something is coming up.”

It’s a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play

When: Nov. 5 to Dec. 26. 8 p.m. Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays; 4:30 and 8 p.m. Saturdays; and 2 p.m. Sundays. Matinees at 2 p.m. Nov. 17 and 26; Dec. 2, 9, 16, 23 and 24. No show Nov. 10 and 25 or Dec. 25

Where: Pheasant Run Resort & Spa, 4051 E. Main St., St. Charles

How much: \$29.50 on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays; \$39.50 on Saturdays and Sundays

Contact: 630-584-6342, or visit www.ticketmaster.com

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