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Noble Fool Retells a Holiday Classic, Radio-Style

"It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play" brightens spirits at the Pheasant Run Resort Mainstage.

By **Tom Witom** November 16, 2010

Noble Fool Theatricals has ushered in the holiday season in style with "It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play," a clever stage adaptation by Joe Landry of Frank Capra's iconic film.

Wrapped around the "live" broadcast is the cherished, heartwarming story of how George Bailey fights the odds as he struggles to keep afloat a building and loan company vital to his small hometown of Bedford Falls.

The set-up works perfectly. In fact, seeing the behind-the-scenes flurry of activity adds an exciting extra dimension to the play.

Scenic designer Kevin Depinet has done wonders transforming the [Pheasant Run Resort Mainstage](http://stcharles-il.patch.com/listings/pheasant-run-resort) (<http://stcharles-il.patch.com/listings/pheasant-run-resort>) into a 1946-era broadcast studio, complete with vintage microphones, a spinet piano, assorted props to simulate stormy weather, clattering footsteps and other sounds plus a harried crew poised to air the Christmas show.

Members of the "studio audience" also are drawn in as participants each time the applause sign flashes out a request for their response.

Director Rachel Rockwell's deft seven-member cast doesn't miss a beat as it re-enacts "It's A Wonderful Life," often changing their voices and identities in midstream, depending on the situation. In between, they serve up occasional cutesy commercials for soap, hair tonic and laxatives.

Dev Kennedy gives a polished performance as Freddie Filmore, the station's boss, and he creates a creditable Mr. Potter, Bedford Falls' greed-driven banker. George Keating is animated as Bailey, a decent man who does the right thing even as his college and honeymoon plans are thwarted.

Meanwhile, pianist Tom Clear does double duty not only as the play's music director but also in multiple roles, including the hapless Uncle Billy and Clarence, Angel Second Class, who eventually earns his wings by saving Bailey from himself.

Anna Hammonds and Jessie Fisher, also in numerous roles, both stand out in the strong cast, while Jack Sweeney proves himself a sound-effects maestro. Joining Sweeney is Stirling Joyner in taking on the role of the young cousin who is learning the tricks of the trade.

Members of two youth choirs, ranging in age from 8 to 13, supplement the cast, singing Christmas carols and assuming the roles of the Bailey children. They include Amelia Kihlman of St. Charles, Meagan Graal of West Chicago, Rebecca Roy of Geneva, Kelsey Pettrone of La Grange, Madysen Simanonis of Winfield, Emily Marie Turner of Sleepy Hollow, Annamarie Schutt of South Elgin, Melissa Wickland of Schaumburg and Leikyn Bravo of South Elgin.

Period costumes by Brenda Winstead add another touch of authenticity to the production.

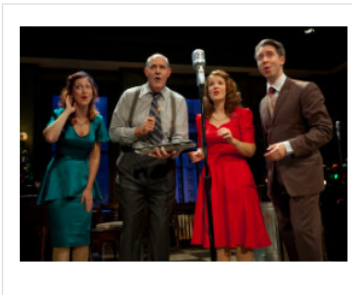
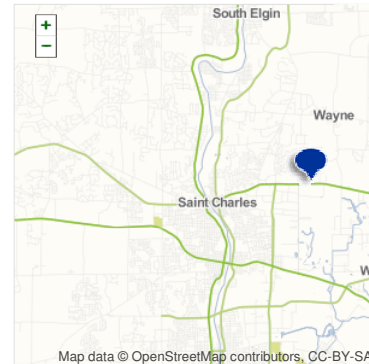
"It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play" tells a powerful, uplifting story. It's just the thing to light holiday spirits.

'It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play'—Through Dec. 26 by Noble Fool Theatricals at Pheasant Run Resort Mainstage, 4051 E. Main St., St. Charles. \$29.50-\$39.50. Box office: (630) 584-6342 or visit www.noblefool.org (<http://www.noblefool.org/>) for information.



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