

~~~Christmas on stage~~~

Plano siblings in 'A Christmas Story' at Pheasant Run



By Lisa Welz

Children love to pretend and Plano residents Stirling and Julia Joyner are no different. The brother and sister will be appearing in Noble Fools Theatricals' production of "A Christmas Story" for a six week run at Pheasant Run Resort. It opened Nov. 12 and continues through Dec. 27.

Director John Gawlik explained that this stage version of the 1983 film "is very true to the film." The story about a boy named Ralphie, who wants a Red Rider bb gun for Christmas, is narrated by an older version of himself as he recalls memories of that Christmas when he was nine.

The play begins a couple of weeks prior to Christmas and every time Ralphie brings up the bb gun, whether to Santa, his parents, or teachers, they all tell him, "You'll shoot your eye out." Gawlick chuckled, "It's a really wonderful, very funny, PG or G story."

In the production, Stirling, 12, plays Scut Farkus the town bully. "He spends his time chasing down Ralphie's friends, twisting arms, and making them yell 'I'm a dirty little chicken,'" Gawlick explained, adding that there is a scene where the older Ralphie says, "I ran into Scut a couple of years ago. He wasn't nearly as big as I remembered him and he tried to sell me life insurance."

Julia, 9, plays Helen, a friend of Esther Jane, two girls in Ralphie's class. "Helen is written to be older for her age. There are wonderful comedic moments meant exclusively for adults," Gawlick said. He laughed as he recalled one scene where Esther Jane tells Helen that Ralphie likes her. Julia as Helen, who is a sixth grader, answers, "I like older men."

A kid's perspective

Stirling talked of the play and said, "It's really fun because I get to chase them across stage all the time. Then at the end I get to be in a fight scene where Ralphie beats me up because he's sick of being chased by me."

His favorite part of the play, he said, "Is a really cool cowboy scene that I'm in and it's really, really awesome. There's strobe light effects and cool music and it's really chaotic. I have to go to the side of the stage and he shoots me and I fall down and then we shoot each other, I spin around, and fall on the ground."

Getting the parts, both kids said, came after auditions at which they had to read monologues. "When they think you do well and have a good resume," Stirling said, "They give you a part." To prepare for it, he said, "I had to memorize it and practice using different hand gestures and stuff like that."

Like Stirling, Julia also auditioned, but she added, "I really didn't have anything on my resume other than classes, so I'm just really lucky that I got the part." Helen, she says, is the

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Julia Joyner plays Helen in "A Christmas Story."

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Playing 'Scut Farcus,' and the teacher's pet

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teacher's pet. "I get to read this speech about a grown up book."

"It's a bit hard," Julia says of working on the play. "But it's also fun



Stirling Joyner in costume for "A Christmas Story" at Pheasant Run.

because I get to run around and try on costumes that would've been worn back then. It seems more fun than hard work."

Memorizing the lines, Stirling explained, "Isn't that hard, but you also have to think about what you're going to do, what line you're going to say next, and make it look natural while you're doing it."

Being in the play with his sister, Stirling said, is "not that bad." Julia grinned and said, "I get to stand up to him because I'm not afraid of him. I think that's the part he might not like."

Gawlik complemented both, saying, "They're very good. One of the hardest things is getting off book; when you know your lines. They came in off book, ready to go. It's great that they're brother and sister in the show together, but they play such different roles. They just do it so well."

When it comes to their family, both children, recognize the sacrifices their parents make to get them to rehearsals in St. Charles five days a week. Stirling said, "My dad (Wade Joyner) is sort of our agent." Mom, Tracey Joyner, said both are being paid for their work; enough, at least, to cover gas costs.

Show times are Wednesday through Friday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 5 and 8:30 p.m., and Sunday at 2 p.m. through Dec. 27. For additional information visit www.noblefool.org. For tickets, call the Pheasant Run Box Office at (630) 584-6342 or visit www.ticketmaster.com.

Gawlik commented, "It's one of our fastest selling shows ever."

Area Madrigal dinners-

• Dec. 5, 6 and 7 in Yorkville

Yorkville High School's Madrigals will present their annual Madrigals Dinner performances at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 5; Saturday, Dec. 6; and Sunday, Dec. 7, in the YHS Cafetorium. This year the Madrigals will perform "The Taming of the Heinous Shrew-Wench."

Tickets are \$20 per person and include a dinner featuring both a grilled chicken breast and grilled pork chop. Tickets may be ordered on-line at www.yorkvillemadrigals.org or by calling Katie at 630-553-0651.

• Dec. 6 at Plano High School

The annual Madrigal Dinner will be held at Plano High School on Saturday, Dec. 6 at 5 p.m.

Join PHS theater and music students for an evening of food and fun. Entertainment will include madrigal singers, instrumentalists, and a theatrical presentation.

Included with the ticket price is a meal

consisting of roast chicken, smoked ham, roasted potatoes, green beans, rolls, cake, wassail, and coffee.

Tickets are \$20 for ages six to 100. Tickets must be ordered by Nov. 25. Contact Susan Webb or Rebecca Evans at Plano High School, 630-552-3178, for more information.

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