

REVIEW

It is a Wonderful Life with the Tennessee Rep

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By Chad Young, Senior Editor
for *Nashville Parent*

Step aside, George Bailey (the lead character in *It's a Wonderful Life*), because I feel like the richest man in town after experiencing Tennessee Repertory Theatre's (TRT) outstanding production of *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*. TRT has undoubtedly outdone itself with this one! This truly innovative take on a timeless Hollywood holiday classic is one of the greatest theatrical treats I have experienced in a long, long time.

Gary C. Hoff's fabulous set design transforms TPAC's Johnson Theater into a 1940s-era radio station, complete with old-fashioned microphones, illuminated "On the Air" signs and applause prompts. Everything on stage sets the perfect tone for transporting the audience to an era gone by.

Based on Frank Capra's renowned film, *It's a Wonderful Life*, David Alford's directorial brilliance shines brighter than the North Star in this stage masterpiece. The well-seasoned cast -- comprised of Alford, Jenny Littleton, Marin Miller, Matthew Carlton and Todd Truley -- portrays actors at a radio station in New York City, delivering a live broadcast of one of Christmastime's most memorable stories.

The cast members act out every character in the film, reading from their scripts and providing a huge spectrum of sound effects on old-school devices. A dramatic musical backdrop comes courtesy of a grand piano in the "studio" with Alford, Miller and Littleton taking turns tickling the ivories. This show offers an authentic replication of how radio dramas took place decades ago, and I was absolutely captivated and charmed to say the least.

Everyone on stage delivers flawless performances morphing in and out of each different character. Littleton, Miller and Alford each prove their inherent talents in this arena, especially Littleton who plays everyone from Violet Bick to male characters like Ernie Bishop.

The hour-and-a-half production does not include an intermission. Instead, the "breaks" in the radio show find the cast acting and singing its way through the station's commercial sponsors -- truly classic!

I dare say it's impossible to see this show without walking away feeling invigorated, inspired and filled with enough holiday spirit to make Tiny Tim blush just a little. It would be nice to see TRT perform this every year and make it one of Nashville's holiday traditions. It is truly that fantastic!

This show is most appropriate for ages 10 and older. Kids are sure to be awestruck at how family entertainment used to transpire, and you will be grateful to experience this holiday treat with your family.