

Santa on Trial in Yankton

By Rob Nielsen
Press & Dakotan

YANKTON — The Lewis & Clark Theatre Company in Yankton has given the area its first taste of Christmas with a production of the classic "Miracle on 34th Street."

The play began last week and will continue to run Thursday through Sunday at the Dakota Theater with show times at 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and 2 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets can be reserved by calling 665-4711.

Director Rebecca Bailey said the play will pull from both the book and movie and to encompass a wide range of audiences.

"It's a classic — the play is based on both the novel and the movie," Bailey said. "It's the traditional story that everybody's excited to hear. This is one of those stories that's open to young and old. It's a tale for everybody."

Bailey said the play takes a deep look at a subject that many other Christmas stories don't necessarily examine.

"It really focuses on faith in the intangible things that we can't just grasp easily," she said. "It's a beautiful story in that sense, and (it's) at a time of the year when we start to look at those things (like) Santa Claus and all the things that we don't easily have a way to explain. I think it incorporates humor and excitement and all the great characteristics you want in a story."

The story follows a man who's been dispatched to play the role of Santa Claus in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade who slowly begins telling people he's the real thing.

Michael Stepp, who plays the role of Dr. Pierce, said he's a fan of the source material.

"I think it's a great play," Stepp said. "The movie

itself was fantastic. It's a great play for this time of year."

Stepp said he enjoys the human element of his own character.

"He really has befriended Kris and he's vastly becoming aware that he is Kris Kringle and he doesn't look at him as someone who is troubled, but more of a friend," Stepp said.

Stepp said this is a return to the stage for him and he's enjoying the experience so far.

"It's been a while since I've done a play," he said. "I did plays all throughout high school, but that was almost 30 years ago. It's great to be on stage again."

Zak McComas, who plays Fred Gayley, said while the play stays true to its source material, this production will add a few of its own twists.

"It's kind of a Christmas classic so we want to be faithful to it," McComas said. "At the same time, we're putting our own little twists and turns on it. It's one of those Christmas shows that you rarely get to see more than a couple of times. It's got so many moments you just want to bring home to the family or bring the family along to see."

McComas said he's enjoyed preparing for the show.

"For me, it's been a long time since I've been on stage, but it's great to come back to a crew like we have here," he said. "It never feels like too much work because you're surrounded by people who are having just as much fun as you are."

Bailey, who's directing the play as an intern from the University of South Dakota, said she isn't new to theater, but this is her biggest production yet.

"I have directed before but this is the largest thing I've ever directed," she said. Her credits include an



The Lewis & Clark Theatre in Yankton is presenting "Miracle on 34th Street" for another weekend.

COURTESY PHOTO

experimental theater production at South Dakota State University and a one-act play at USD.

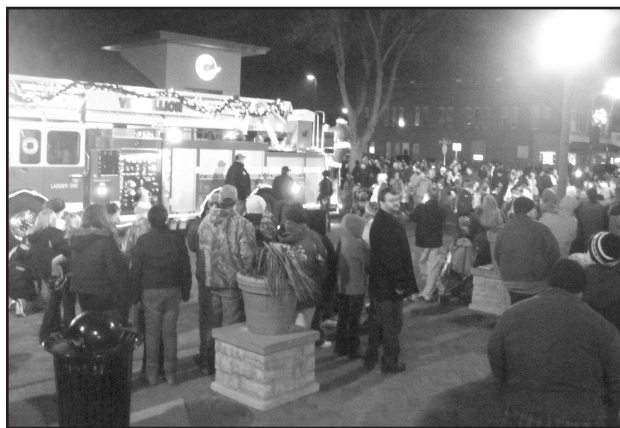
Despite the leap to a larger production, Bailey isn't getting flustered.

"I've had a great time," she said. "I've had a great cast and the community here is so excited to be involved. That makes it so much easier to have everybody excited to be here."

CAST AND CREW

- Kris Kringle — Rich Wright
- Doris Walker — Emily Morman
- Fred Gayley — Zak McComas
- Susan Walker — Renae Clark
- Judge Harper/ Rich Person — DeeDee Wood
- Sawyer — Steven Buchy
- Mara/ Bloomingdale — Paul Ridgway
- Shellhammer/ Louise-Rachel Wood
- Halloran/ Megan's Parent — Michael Haas
- Macy / Drunk Santa — Micky Clark
- Doctor Pierce — Michael Stepp
- Finley — Gabby Slowey
- Sharon's Parent — Amanda Horn
- Sharon — Joselyn Pearson
- Megan — Jasmine Gill
- Dutch Girl — Hope

- Leshor
- Foster Mother/ Ducan — Trish Yaggie
- Master James — Kalob Worm
- Johnny's Parent — Heidi Clark
- Johnny — Rylan Clark
- Carolers — Joshua Horn, Carley Lafrentz, Bella Simonsen, Natalie Nayokpuk
- Elf W — Alyson Johnson
- Elf R — Korbin Yaggie
- Elf Z — Zoie Lee
- Marcotte
- Elf Q — Rebecca Clark
- Alice/Elf — Rachel Schulte
- Child 1 — Jaden Pearson
- Child 2 — Macklin McNatt
- Stage Manager- Quinn Fargo
- Asst. Stage Manager — Donovan Quinn Pigney
- Light/Sound Design — Zak McComas
- Light/Sound Operators- Jason & Hollie Pearson/Sam Carda
- Musical Advisor — Dr. Kenneth Tice
- Costumes — Billy Wilburn
- Master Carpenter — Russ Leonard & Crew
- You can follow Rob Nielsen on Twitter at twitter.com/RobNielsenPan dD/. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net/



Santa dismounts the fire truck to light the community Christmas tree and greet the crowd gathered to see the Parade of Lights last Friday downtown.

SARAH WETZEL / FOR THE PLAIN TALK:

Parade of Lights draws crowd

by Sarah Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

Main St. was lined with excited families last Friday as the annual Parade of Lights made its way through historic downtown.

"It was awesome," said Jason Askew who was in attendance with his wife and children. "This year it was bigger again. There were new floats."

Askew's son, Brody (8) said his favorite parade entry was the hottest one around.

"The car with the back with the hot air balloon and then fire would come out," he said.

According to Askew, that particular float had hot air balloon burners on the back which lit up the street and provided warmth for

shivering parade watchers. Also appreciated was the music.

"The band played this year," said Askew's wife, Amy. "Our son plays in the band. He wasn't here tonight though. It was fun to have the high school band play."

The end of the parade highlighted everyone's favorite gift giver atop a fire truck with sirens wailing and lights flashing.

"There's no snow for my sleigh but the fire department did a good job getting me here" Santa said to the crowd before flipping the giant switch and lighting the community Christmas tree.

The Greek community took advantage of the celebration to create an opportunity to give.

FSA Holds Meetings, Informs Farmers

By Katie Clausen
For the Plain Talk

The 2014 Farm Bill is aimed towards all growers of agricultural commodities in the United States. The local FSA office in Vermillion hopes to help educate farmers in regards to how their operations will be affected by the most recent Farm Bill and changes that have been made to policy.

Meetings have already been hosted in Vermillion, Alcester, and Beresford. Two more meeting dates remain, Dec. 16 at South East Farmers Grain Elevator in Elk Point at 10:00am and 1:00pm, and Dec. 18th at 10:00am at the Spink Café in Spink.

These meetings have been organized by the Clay and Union County FSA offices, and will cover critical information for producers such as sign up for Farm Bill Safety Net Programs, yield updates, reallocation of acres, and annual enrollment for 2015-2018 growing season programs. Items within the Farm Bill have changed and growers are encouraged to come learn about how these changes will specifically affect their operations and how to select the protocols that are best for them.

Price Loss Coverage and Agricultural Risk Coverage programs have passed under the 2014 farm bill and are now available to producers. These programs are of particular emphasis in the FSA meetings. All meetings are open to the public.

Both producers and land owners are encouraged to attend the informational meetings or visit the FSA office on the web at www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

SCHOOL

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year's budget.

"To all the people here tonight we appreciate all the input you can give our legislators," he said.

"Being in that room and just talking about education for the day or for the afternoon you realize how many different ways our legislators are being pulled because everybody wants a piece of that limited amount of money."

Schwasinger also reported much talk on the Common Core.

"Not so much the existence of common core but the assessment and mechanism," he said.

"There's a lot of dialogue about that. We all left that day agreeing to disagree. Nothing has changed as far as the standpoint. I think what they wanted was a vote to say we all agree that testing is appropriate. We're not to the point yet of agreeing that the assessment that is proposed is the best way."

Also discussed at the assembly was the potential pipeline to run through the state.

"It's going to affect some

areas more than others because of where it physically exists but everyone's going to want a piece of it as well as education," Schwasinger said. "That was another topic discussed."

Doug Peterson and Chris Esping of the school board also recently met with Johnson Controls last Thursday regarding the high school project.

"This was really an update meeting where they asked for some clarification on the proposals, we're not making decisions on what the final product will look like," Peterson reported. "That will come in February."

"The short story is that while it would be really nice to look at changing the network to the best possible generation, that also means upgrading all of the schools so they're on the same network and that's probably not likely to fit in the budget," Peterson continued. "But we talked about that we talked about integrating the phone system with the internet so using voiceover IP and there's some advantages to that and some disadvantages. That's probably going to come back as a proposal in

February so we can look at it line by line."

According to Esping the project is still in the very preliminary stages but contractors are working on putting it together.

As well as reporting on the upcoming teacher workshop, Johnson explained the progress of the new math curriculum adoption.

"As we're moving forward looking at math curriculum adoption in the year ahead, next year, we wanted to be able to build an adequate framework of knowledge before starting really evaluating textbooks," she said. "We've had so many factors to consider with the common core and problem solving. Every curriculum says they're common core aligned but we need to be able to effectively analyze if they truly are."

Johnson said work groups have been assembled representing teachers of grades K-8.

"What we've found in listening to discussions on

the very first work day is that this professional collaboration, that discussion across grade level, the questions that they asked and the topics that they dug deeper into, it was inspiring to hear how passionate they are about doing this right," Johnson said. "They're doing a lot of work behind the scenes to help with that process and they're communicating with their grade level teams to bring that input into the group. And then when we have that knowledge we'll be able to move ahead and make a better-informed decision as we evaluate and make recommendations on math curriculum."

The delay in curriculum adoption comes, Johnson said, because they wish to make sure they are making the right decision.

According to Johnson, adoption of a new curriculum is a huge investment that cannot be taken lightly.

Schools who decide too hastily often regret their decision.

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– Frosted with clear wrap, bow and greeting tag/card

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- Sioux Falls - Berakhah House 400 N Western Avenue
- Rapid City -The Cornerstone Rescue Mission 30 Main Street
- Hot Springs, Veterans Town - RadioShack 204 S Chicago St.
- Pierre - Hughes County Courthouse Basement 104 E Capitol Ave. (Adopted/Supported by Pierre Elks Lodge #1953)
- Additional Locations - Call Local American Legion Auxiliary Unit

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