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### On Stage

# IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE A LIVE RADIO PLAY

Become part of the live audience at WBFR Radio, where anything can happen in this reimagined telling of a Christmas classic



By Sara Catherine (Lichon) Smith • Photos courtesy of STNJ

Holiday celebrants in search of inspiration return each year to "It's a Wonderful Life," whether they're watching the classic Frank Capra movie starring Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed, viewing a theatrical production on stage, or visiting the historic marker next to the Califon bridge (read more about Califon being the inspiration behind "It's a Wonderful Life" in the Holiday 2024 issue of BRJ). But this holiday season, STNJ's lively and uplifting production of, "It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play" will transcend your expectations.

Instead of watching the STNJ ensemble depict the beloved (and not so beloved) characters like suffering every man, George Bailey, and the villainous Mr. Potter, audiences will watch a play-within-a-play, where the actors portray actors staging a live radio play in

a retro 1940s recording studio. This twist on the familiar tale adds an extra layer of immersion, according to the production's director, Paul Mullins, as the theater's audience is transformed into a live studio audience.

"We're so visual these days, and I love the idea of hearing. I think the story gets told beautifully, and I think it's an interesting and unique way of telling it," said Paul Miller. "Instead of looking into someone's living room where you would never be, as we often do in theater, this is different. You could very likely have been in a world where you were in a studio where they recorded this radio show," Paul says. "You try to take people to another place a little more immersively than we normally do, unlike when we just go into the theater and sit and watch the people. We are inside of this story, not just observing."

Ad breaks with musical jingles, the vintage sound effects of a Foley artist, and theatre high jinks blend with the masterful storytelling at the heart of every Shakespeare Theatre production, as "It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play" brings the audience back to their oral storytelling roots through radio magic.

"It's about storytelling, when people sat in a room together and didn't look at anything in particular, they just listened," explained Paul Miller. "We hopefully make you think that you're hearing these things actually happen, even though what you're seeing in front of you is people standing at microphones and a guy that's pushing shoes into a box of sand to make it sound like someone walking through snow. That sort of trick is the beauty of the show."

Equity actors, Andy Paterson and Tina Stafford reprise their beloved roles as angel, Clarence Oddbody and mother, Rose Bailey, from the popular 2017 production, and along with an high-energy ensemble cast, they'll jump from role to role, portraying more than two dozen characters in what critics described in 2017 as "delightfully inspiring," "a joyful surprise" and "a vibrant, wholly satisfying rendering."

"I love to tell the story again, and I think right now is a perfect time to, as much as anytime," said Paul Miller. "It is always the time to be telling a story about what we mean to the world, and what the world means to us.

The story proves that without you, it doesn't all work. And I think that's a great thing for us all to remember, when things are great and when things are not so great... that we are valuable to each other and to the whole."

**It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play** runs from December 3 - 28 at STNJ. To purchase tickets or learn more about the production, visit [www.shakespearenj.org](http://www.shakespearenj.org) or call the box office at 973-408-5600.



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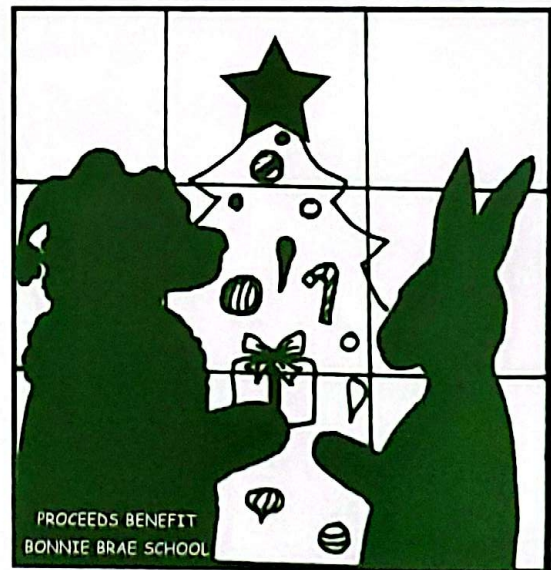


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