



Wednesday, November 27, 2002

MBT now showing 'A Christmas Carol'

Three spirits weave a magical tale wherein even the most miserly can reawaken the spirit of joy when Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" returns to the **Meadow Brook Theatre** stage on Friday, Nov. 29. The 21st production of the holiday classic runs through Sunday, Dec. 22, at Meadow Brook Theatre (MBT), Michigan's largest professional theatre company, on Oakland University's campus.

Over the past 20 seasons, Meadow Brook Theatre has presented 852 performances of "A Christmas Carol" to more than 420,000 people, making this one of Michigan's most popular and longest-running holiday traditions.

"Many patrons return each year and make this the centerpiece of their holiday season," said Debra Wicks, MBT artistic director. "We see second generations of families enjoying this show. I think audiences appreciate our continued investment in making our 'Carol' the largest and most spectacular production around."

MBT will again use the Charles Nolte's beloved adaptation and original staging of Dickens' classic.

David Ellenstein will make his Meadow Brook directing debut with this season's revival of "A Christmas Carol." Now artistic director of both the Los Angeles Repertory Company and the Arizona Jewish Theatre, Ellenstein has acted in several MBT productions, including "Beau Jest, Jest A Second" and "Scotland Road."

For the third straight year, the play features award-winning actor Dennis Robertson as the extraordinary Ebenezer Scrooge. Voted Best Actor by The Detroit Free Press, the veteran stage and screen thespian played the barrister Sir Wilfrid Robarts, Q.C. in MBT's season opener, Agatha Christie's "Witness for the Prosecution."

"Working with the entire team at Meadow Brook Theatre is an honor and a pleasure," Robertson said. "There is no more sublime role than Ebenezer Scrooge, and this marvelous production brings out the true complexity of human spirit represented by his character."

MBT's lavish production recreates 19th Century London, complete with cobblestone streets and lush Victorian attire.

Dickens' classic tells the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, a joyless miser and hardhearted businessman. Scrooge and the audience embark on a journey of reflection and redemption, guided by four holiday spirits and one most special little boy. As described by The Detroit News, "This production of 'A Christmas Carol' is as magical as it gets."

In a unique partnership, MBT's Scrooge, Dennis Robertson, will reprise his role from 2001 as spokesperson for the Food Bank of Oakland County's "Humbug to Hunger" campaign. "Scrooge" requests patrons bring non-perishable food donations to collection points at Meadow Brook Theatre and Meadow Brook Hall, from Nov. 29 to Dec. 22.

The huge cast numbers 38 actors, four more than in years past, and includes 18 children. There are additional carolers as well. The production features many familiar faces and a wonderful assortment of new ones. Returning to "Carol" and MBT include John Beidenbach, Joey Bybee, Scott Crownover, Judy Dery, Erik Gratton, Karey Hart, Mark Hammell, Paul Hopper, Tim Jacobs, Nicole Katovich, Cameron Knight, Kim Lucius, Thomas D. Mahard, Travis Walter, Sara Catheryn Wolf, and Kristopher Yoder. New actors to the MBT stage include Carrie Jay, Karissa Jones and Tara Tomcsik.

The role of Tiny Tim is played alternately by Andrew Fritsch and George McSweeney. Other children in the cast are Leif Halston, Stephanie Hamood, Tia Herrod, Julie Markiewicz, Hannah Mathers, AlissaBeth Morton, Jon Ohlinger, Katie Parsons, Lauren Peterson, Josh Romeo, Marissa Rossman, Jamison Schrock, Marleesha Simpson, Francisco Thurston, Zack Todero, and Shakarr Wiggins.

Tickets for A Christmas Carol and Meadow Brook Theatre's 2002-2003 season are on sale at the MBT Box Office by calling (248) 377-3300. Group tickets are available at (248) 370-3316.

For this long-time family favorite, **Meadow Brook Theatre** is offering special "Family Weekend" discounts from 50 percent to 62 percent off for children ages 5-12 at all performances on Thanksgiving weekend: 8 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 29; 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 30; and 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 1. Children ages 5 and older are welcome at all shows.

Special shows for the hearing impaired, offering American Sign Language interpretation, will be at the 8 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 18, performance. For the visually impaired, the 2 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 8, performance will be audio-described.

MBT also will present 19 matinee performances for school groups from Nov. 21 through Dec. 17. While many of these performances are already sold out, some tickets remain for select 2 p.m. matinee shows. Call (248) 370-3316 for information on the school-time matinees.

SUMMARY

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