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A "Miracle" for Lamorindans

By Cathy Tyson



Tom Flynn as Kris Kringle and Catherine Hayes as Susan in Town Hall Theatre Company's Miracle On 34th Street Photo by Stu Steland

It's been over sixty years since the film version of "Miracle on 34th Street" came out. Clearly the world is a different place. But themes of suspending disbelief and kindness still resonate in this classic holiday production. The adaptation by Patricia Di Benedetto Snyder, Will Severin and John Vreeke parallels the original novel by Valentine Davis. There is definitely a feeling of stepping back in time, from the hair styles to the music.

Single mom and Macy's employee Doris Walker, played seamlessly by Beth Deitchman, is required to find a new Santa at the last minute for the Thanksgiving Day Parade. Newly hired Santa, Tom Flynn, a dead ringer for the man in red, is a huge hit, but all business Doris has reservations that Mr. Kringle has reindeer on the brain upon his insistence that he really is Santa Claus. Who couldn't fall in love with Fred Galley, played by Timothy Redmond as nice-guy lawyer and Doris' neighbor/love interest?

Although some of the dialog feels circa 1947, there are some wonderful lines. With a hearty chuckle Santa answers the question of how old he is with, "as old as

my tongue and little bit older than my teeth."

In supporting roles, hilarious Lauren Rosi is a scene stealer as Miss Adams, Barbara Cecchetti takes on four roles, and does a convincing job with her primary part as a neurotic psychologist.

In her directorial debut at Town Hall Theatre, Jessica Richards manages to keep the ambitious assortment of actors together. In this adaptation, the play is similar to the film, so the real challenge is the distracting set switches that squeeze a total of thirty-three scenes into the two-hour production with the help of semi-stealthy elves.

"Miracle on 34th Street is a compelling story about Christmas spirit in the real world," says Jessica Richard, director. "What I love about Kris Kringle, Doris & Susan Walker, Fred Gailey, and all the characters in this play is that they are regular people wrestling with the questions of belief and compassion the same way we might be today. The discovery of Christmas spirit in themselves and others is timeless enough that it still inspires people year after year."

"When I first took over as Artistic Director of Town Hall Theatre I wanted to bring fresh directorial visions to our audience and the first person I thought of was Jessica Richards," says Clive Worsley, Artistic Director. "The spirit of humanity and compassion that is embodied in the character of Kris Kringle is something we can all aspire to, not just during the holidays."

Show runs through December 24, Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings at 8:00, Sunday matinees at 2:00. Additional shows Saturday and Sunday the 20th and 21st and Tuesday and Wednesday the 23rd and 24th. For tickets call (925) 283-1557 or go to www.townhalltheatre.com.

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