





# Simply AYBERRY FALL 2024

## STILLWATER JUNGTION

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#### MAYBERRY DAYS

Another festival in the books

# MORE THAN MAYBERRY

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# The Mount Airy News

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#### MAYBERRY DAYS

For the 34th year, the ever-popular and stillgrowing Mayberry Days Festival drew thousands to Andy Griffith's hometown, Mount Airy -- the real life Mayberry. Take a look back at the fun and good times from this year's festival while planning your trip to the 2025 Mayberry Days Festival.

### STILLWATER JUNGTION

One of the hottest up-and-coming Southern Rock bands originated in Mount Airy little more than three years ago, and it's beginnings were very Mayberry-like. Take a look at Stillwater Junction's beginnings, its meteoric rise and what the future holds for this homegrown band.

#### NOT ALL MAYBERRY

While many around the world know Mount Airy as Andy Griffith's birthplace, and as the keeper of all things Mayberry with the annual Mayberry Days Festival, there's plenty more going on. Make plans now for 2025 with a few of Mount Airy's largest events.

#### CHECK IT OUT

If you're in town, or even nearby, there's plenty to do in Mount Airy. Concerts, plays, radio shows, museums...the list could go on and on. And it does! Check out our calendar of events.

ON THE COVER

PHOTO BY RYAN KELLY

These ladies have fun while serving up the famous Ground Steak Sandwiches.



# STILLWATER JUNCTION MOVING UP

#### **BY JOHN PETERS**

ipeters@mtairynews.com

Fans of "The Andy Griffith Show" know the scene well: Andy and company (sometimes Barney, other times Aunt Bee and Opie, occasionally a visitor) sitting on the porch, just talking, relaxing. On a Sunday afternoon, maybe in the evening of a long day, the porch was where worries faded, easy conversations took place, and occasionally Andy would break out the guitar and strum a few tunes.

Six decades later, people around these parts still spend time on the porch, talking, dreaming.

And sometimes starting bands.

That was the case with Stillwater Junction, a local group which recently won the International Singer-Songwriter

Association's Band of the Year award and signed a recording contract with Curtain Call Records,

The award recognizes the work and accomplishments of the band to this point, while the record deal opens up a new world for the local musicians.

And it all started on lead singer Scotty Willard's front porch.

"We were just sitting around on the porch, talking," Willard said. His friend, Benny "The Rat Man" Rattermann was with him. "That's literally how the band started." Benny – who Scotty says "...looks like a hippie born in the wrong era," was strumming an acoustic guitar. "We were talking, and I said we should start a band...that's how we were formed."

That was in 2021. By the end of the year the two had recruited a couple of other local musicians and they were off and running, releasing the band's first single on Jan. 1, 2022.

That was followed by recording and releasing a music video of the song, then recording two more works and releasing a three-song extended play collection.

In 2023, the group released its first full album, featuring 11 original pieces.

Along the way, the group – consisting of Scotty, Benny, Ray Velvis, who plays bass guitar and back-up rhythm guitar, and Josh Reavis on the drums – has been performing at venues large and small. While many start-up bands with little experience under its belt play small bars and local festivals, Stillwater Junction has made a name for itself quickly.

"We've opened for Blackstone Cherry, the Georgia Thunderbolts...the Marshall Tucker Band...we've shared the stage with the Piedmont Boys."

Those bands, for the uninitiated, are major names in the Southern Rock world, particularly the Marshall Tucker Band, which has produced a string of charting singles and albums dating back five decades.

All totaled,
Stillwater Junction
has played close to 60
shows over the past year.
Professional bands whose
members make a living from the music
might find that a doable schedule, but
for the local musicians it's an even more
significant achievement given that
music is, at this point, still a part-time
vocation for the members.

Scotty, who lives in Mount Airy, works a full time job at Merritt Supply Inc. Ratermann, also a Granite City resident, Velbis, known as The Rev, from Wilkesboro, and Reavis, from Greensboro, all work in addition to playing in the band.

#### **WORLD CHANGING**

Adding to the group's recent accolades are nominations for two Josie Awards, for multi-genre Album of the Year and Country Rock/Southern Rock



PHOTOS COURTESY STILLWATER JUNCTION Stillwater Junction members, from left, Josh Reavis, Scotty Willard, Benny Ratermann, and Ray Velbis.



Bass guitarist Ray Velbis with lead singer Scotty Willard in concert.

Band of the Year, awards that were to be given during a presentation in late October at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville. Tennessee.

"The Josie Music Awards is the premier music event within the independent music industry recognizing and celebrating excellence globally," the organization said on its website.

"If you get nominated for a Josie, it's like getting nominated for a Grammy for unsigned artists," Willard said.



Stillwater Junction lead singer Scotty Willard performs with guitarist and back-up lead singer Benny Ratermann during a show.

Of course, having been freshly signed to a contract, Willard said the group's travel and performance plans will change significantly over the next couple of years. He said Curtian Call Records will have the group playing at larger events — Daytona Bike Week, the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota, as well as festivals and events in Maryland, New York and Tennessee.

Being part of a record deal also means wider distribution. Willard said their music soon will be available through Sony's The Orchard distribution service, and many of the social media postings and marketing efforts will now be taken off of his plate.

"I go home at night and spend two or three hours on social media, booking venues, doing promotion...this will alleviate a lot of that," he said.

Now, he can put some of that time toward working with the band on music and writing.

#### UNCONVENTIONAL BEGINNING, AND REMEMBERING THEIR ROOTS

While the genesis of the band – a front-porch conversation – already sets it apart from many other musical acts, Willard's pursuit of a musical career is also a bit different. He's 43 years old, and this is his first attempt at making it professionally.

"I grew up listening to music, my parents played music, I listened to all kinds of genres. Motown, Southern Rock, heavy metal, country, it didn't make a difference. My play list was astronomically crazy. I got a knack for liking different kinds of music. I started singing when I was 12 or 13, I did my first live singing around 14. When I was 17, 18, 19, I'd go around and sing at karaoke contests, I was winning thousands of dollars at karaoke contests, but I never pursued a band....I didn't do the band thing until I turned 40 years old, after my daughter grew up and was off to college, I said now it's my time."

Now that Stillwater Junction has a contract and will be playing bigger shows across the nation, Willard said he and his bandmates aren't forgetting the smaller venues that have supported them.

"I'm still handling our local bookings, our local venues aren't going to be able to pay label prices." Willard said he was able to work out an agreement with the record label that allows Willard to handle those local venues, not having to go through the record company, to play locally when they aren't on the road at national events, keeping those booking costs down.

That the band would stay close to its roots should come as no surprise, given its origins and even the name – Stillwater Junction.

Stillwater, he explained, was an old name for moonshine, or illegally distilled whiskey, and junction was often used to describe where folks would meet – especially moonshine producers hooking up with customers.

Regardless of the name's origins, or how far it might go, Willard is insistent on one thing – this is a band with equal members, not a lead singer with instruments playing along with him.

"This isn't just me," he said of the group's success. "It was the full band, Without the band I'm nothing but a guy standing up there singing karaoke, it was a full team effort....if we're going to be a band we're going to be a band. I don't want someone singled out, It would make that person more important than the rest of them...we all have our importance as a unit, Without each other we won't make it."

That sense of teamwork, of sticking together, he hopes helps the band keep progressing, keep growing and, maybe not too far down the road, make their music a second career for each of them.





BY RYAN KELLY | ryan.kelly@mtairynews.com

It does not matter to lovers of "The Andy Griffith Show" (TAGS) that the show has been off the air for decades, because the feeling and emotions elicited by a trip to Mayberry still ring true.

It may shock those who are not from Mount Airy, or fans themselves of TAGS, but the nostalgic draw of the classic American television show still beckons to fans of the show across the country and abroad.

Each year Mount Airy hosts Mayberry Days, which invites fans of the show and lovers of the idea of idyllic Mayberry to spend time here. It's a place where complex issues were resolved with folksy wisdom and often a little lesson for Sheriff Andy Taylor's son Opie, and the television viewer as well.

Presented by the Surry Arts Council, Mayberry Days is a chance for fans of the show to come together in the home of fictitious 'Mayberry' to share memories of the show and even some of Andy's lessons

Visitors can choose to enjoy taking one of the Squad Car Tours around the sights of Mayberry, visit the jail or sample the pork chop sandwich at Snappy Lunch. Annually, fans tee it up with other TAGS lovers during a golf tournament affectionately known as "The Emmett" before enjoying a meal at Cross Creek Country Club with other devotees.

"Mayberry Days has evolved over the years to help

keep the Mayberry spirit alive. As some events have come and gone, new traditions are born," the Surry Arts Council wrote.

With each year, some faces fall away but the staying power and reach of TAGS seems to keep the tap flowing, replacing some of those missing faces with younger ones. It seems, that Andy, Barney, and company are still reaching into living rooms even in the twenty-first century with limitless entertainment options to choose from.

Every good story has a beginning and for Mayberry Days that goes back to 1990 when the festival was started to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of TAGS. According to the Arts Council the idea was born at the estate sale of Frances Bavier who played Aunt Bee on the show.

When she passed away, also in 1990, many of her belongings were auctioned off and fans of the show gobbled up items that reminded them of the character. One of those auction attendees was the late Alma Venable of Mount Airy who told a reporter that she planned to make an Aunt Bee themed room at The Mayberry Motor Inn.

If you build it they will come worked for a baseball field in a movie once upon a time, and it worked in Mount Airy as well. The Aunt Bee room still exists today at the motor lodge off U.S. 52 in Mount Airy where attendees of Mayberry Days have been known to frequent during the festival week.



FILE PHOTO

The Mayberry Days parade is always a big hit in Mount Airy, with thousands lining Main Street to interact with Mayberry Days guests, artists, and character tribute artists.

At this year's dinner as some worked their way through the buffet line, others were mingling with celebrity guests who had roles on TAGS. While these may have been young actors, they have vivid memories of working on the show with Griffith and Don Knotts, who played loveable Deputy Barney Fife.

In attendance for the first time this year was Margaret Teele who played Barney's love interest in a later episode of TAGS after Fife had moved from Mayberry. She said it was a treat to be around people who share a love of the show and values it presented which are nearly absent in Hollywood today.

She lost her taste and walked away from showbusiness, but recalled with a broad smile what a gentleman Griffith was and recounted some long conversations she had with her scene partner Knotts some 55 years ago.

Other notable attendees included Dennis Rush who played Howie Pruitt, Keith Thibodeaux who was seen as Johnny Paul Jason, Rodney Dillard as one of 'The Darling Boys,' and Ronnie Schell who played several characters.

Also in attendance was Knott's daughter Karen who has been attending and presented her own show "Make

America Funny Again" in which she presented the top reasons to elect Barney Fife for President.

The love that fans have for Griffith bubbles over from TAGS as is evidenced by the attention that Daniel Roebuck receives during Mayberry Days.

While he was not on TAGS, he was a crucial member of the team for Griffith on his later program, 'Matlock,' where he played private investigator Cliff Lewis for the shows final three seasons. He has been attending the festival now with some regularity and has found himself new fame locally with a starring turn as Scrooge in the Surry Arts Council's 'A Christmas Carol' which he will be undertaking again





PHOTO BY RYAN KELLY 'The Andy Griffith Show' fans line up for a buffet style meal at Cross Creek Country Club following The Emmett Golf Tournament during Mayberry Days 2024.

Parade 2023 with fishing pole in hand. All throughout the week, characters from The Andy Griffith Show are on hand adding some authentic flavor for lovers of the show.

PHOTO BY RYAN KELLY

Parade participants smile from inside a replica police cruiser in the Mayberry Days parade. This year, Mayberry Squad Car Tours won the Excellence in Tourism Award from the Greater Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce.

this holiday season.

Shelly Stock from Rock Hill, South Carolina, waited in line for a chance to have a photo taken with Roebuck and get an autograph for her collection. A self-professed fan of Ben Matlock, she brought her daughter and grandson along for the 2024 incarnation of Mayberry Days but said this was the first time her husband could not attend with her.

"This would have been our tenth straight Mayberry Days but old folks like us have to sometimes pick and choose what we want to do - this ride was too much for him this year," she said. It was for the best she felt because that morning pounding rains from the remnants of Hurricane Helene drenched the area and made for a very wet day before the storm moved

into the mountains causing catastrophic damage to mountain communities.

"The Andy Griffith Show was something we enjoyed together growing up in a small town and my grandkids get a kick out of it too. I am glad to be here again this year, "Stock said. Her husband loved most being around other fans, she said, and they had made friends during Mayberry Days that carried over to the rest of the year even exchanging birthday cards with a couple from Arkansas they met a few years back.

Mayberry Days is a feel-good week in Mount Airy that brings lots of people to town, but unlike those who come for events like Autumn Leaves Festival in October, fans of Mayberry Days do not come for the hustle and bustle of a gigantic crafts fair.

In fact, some come to town with little to no agenda at all and go with the flow wherever their whims lead. The pace may not be quite as slow as Mayberry in early black-and-white episodes of TAGS, but that suits visitors to Mayberry Days just fine. After all, live moves pretty fast, and slowing down to enjoy some moments of simplicity are always going to be a welcome homecoming.



# MOUNT AIRY

more than Mayberry

BY JOHN PETERS | JPETERS@MTAIRYNEWS.COM

ount Airy is world-renowned as the home of Andy Griffith and the source for the fictional town of Mayberry, and it's just as well known for its place in old time and bluegrass musical history.

But there's far more to the town than most know, and plenty to do for visitors looking for a fun get-away, particularly during the host of events and festivals held throughout the year. There are regular concerts (nearly weekly spring through autumn), car shows, food truck festivals, parades, and the list could go on.

Mayberry fans, of course, are well-acquainted with the annual Mayberry Days Festival every September, but just two weeks later, as the fall colors are approaching their peak, Mount Airy hosts the Autumn Leaves Festival.

Born more than 60 years ago, the festival was founded as a three-day event centered around celebrating the fall harvest experienced by local farmers and orchardists. Over the years the annual gathering has gradually morphed into a giant craft fair, a food festival, a three-day live music concert, and a children's playground -- all while holding onto its roots as a celebration of the harvest and the changing seasons.

"North Carolina's longest running, most successful events," is how the Greater Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce describes the annual event. The Chamber, which sponsors the event, says the gathering is consistently recognized as one of the Top 20 Events in the Southeast by the Southern Tourism Society.

That means thousands of visitors -- some say as many as 200,000 some



ILE PHOTO

## **DURING THE AUTUMN LEAVES FESTIVALS**

not only do crafters sell their hand-made wares, but some set up and demonstrate how they are created.

years -- make their way up and down Main Street, checking out the various displays, crafters and food vendors.

For more information on the festival, or to keep up with the latest on upcoming festivals, visit http://www.autumnleavesfestival.com/

#### **SPRING IS BUD TIME**

While the Autumn Leaves Festival might be the biggest of the events in Mount Airy each year, there are plenty of other gatherings and celebrations. As ground zero for the North Carolina wine industry, the greater Yadkin Valley is leaning increasingly into the call of agritourism, especially among those who are fans of wineries and microbreweries.

To recognize this, and celebrate the still-growing industry, Mount Airy is home to the annual Wine and Craft

SIMPLY MAYBERRY • FALL 2024



Beer Budbreak Festival, generally held in early May every year.

Initially begun as a festival to celebrate the time of year when grape vines in area vineyards begin producing buds, the festival includes live music, some dancing, and a chance for those in attendance to sample goods by many area wineries and breweries set up for the day in downtown Mount Airy.

Operated by the Rotary Club of Mount Airy, 2025 will be the 15th version of the festival.

Thirteen wineries and four breweries had booths in 2024. They offered more than just wine and beer. Wine slushies are often a popular selection among those attending. To keep up with the annual festival, and to view more details of the 2025 gathering visit https://budbreakfestival.com/



FILE PHOTO

## THE ANNUAL WINE AND CRAFT BEER BUDBREAK FESTIVAL

in Mount Airy is a chance for visitors to sample and purchase wines and craft beers made locally.

#### **MOONSHINE AND RACING**

For fans of NASCAR, the history of the racing sport is well-documented. It was the moonshiners -- those trying to outrun revenue agents and law enforcement -- who built regular cars into swift racing machines. And many of those moonshine running cars found their way onto dirt tracks throughout the South.

Over the decades, NASCAR, the governing body for the largest racing organization in the United States, formed and grew the sport into what it is today.

Every September, Mount Airy pays homage to the old-time moonshiners and the racers from that bygone era with the



annual Moonshine and Race Car Drivers Reunion.

For one day, Main Street in downtown Mount Airy is lined with race cars. Everything from early 20th century racing vehicles -- as early as the second decade of the century -- all the way through modern stock cars are on display. Dirt tracks, outlaw racing, all the way up to NASCAR's top series are represented by the cars, and even some drivers present.

Bobby Allison, 1983 NASCAR champion, has made several appearances at the event, along with scores of other drivers from various series, sharing stories, signing autographs, and even posing for a few pictures with fans.

The Moonshine and Race Car Driver Reunion is another one of the events that draw visitors from across North Carolina and other states, and keeps downtown Mount Airy vibrant for local residents and visitors alike.

For more information, visit https://www.facebook.com/mtairymoonshineandracersreunion/

To keep up with many of the other events in Mount Airy throughout the year, visit

https://www.visitmayberry.com/



FILE PHOTO

#### THE ICONIC 43

from the heyday of NASCAR legend Richard Petty, is one of many racing cars often on display in Mount Airy during the annual Moonshine and Race Car Drivers Reunion.



FILE PHOTO

### CARS FROM ALL ERAS OF RACING

are on display in downtown Mount Airy during the annual Moonshine and Race Car Driver's Reunion.

# What's Happening In

# MAYBERRY

Concerts, shows and more!

Thile the Autumn Leaves Festival is certainly the big show in town in October, there's still plenty of other activities and entertainment to enjoy. When you're done with the festival, or later when you want to visit Mount Airy again, check out some of these.

#### **CONCERTS & EVENTS**

Note: For tickets to all concerts that are part of the Surry Arts Council Summer Concert Series or the Blue Ridge And Beyond series, or to purchase season tickets, visit https://www.surryarts. org/shows/menu.html, or call 336-786-7998. Season ticket prices, good for admission to any or all of the summer concert series shows at the Blackmon Amphitheatre, are \$160. Tickets for individual



# **MOUNTAIN BLESSINGS**

Summer Concert Series tickets are \$17, with children 12 and younger admitted free. Prices vary for the Blue Ridge And Beyond series. Concessions are on sale at each of the Summer Concert Series shows. Those attending the concert are encouraged to take lounge chairs. Concessions will be available for purchase.

#### **NOVEMBER**

Mountain Blessings will be in concert at 6:30 p.m. at the Historic Earle Theatre. Reserved seats are \$12. Mountain Blessings is a bluegrass and bluegrass gospel band formed in the



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# **EMBERS**

# **CRAIG SOUTHERN & PHOENIXX**

Foothills of North Carolina. These award-winning band members love to play music and engage the audience. Visit https://www.surryarts.org/shows/blueridgebeyond.html for more information or to purchase tickets.

#### **DECEMBER**

Dailey & Vincent Christmas 2024, 7:30 p.m. at the Historic Earle Theatre. For the past four years, Dailey & Vincent have brought their multi-award-winning American Music (bluegrass, traditional country, and gospel music) to a national television audience on their top-rated, national, weekly television show, The Dailey & Vincent Show on RFD TV. Grand Ole Opry members, five-time Grammy award winners individually, three-time Grammy award nominees collectively, four-time DOVE Award winners and winners of 35 IBMA Awards altogether Dailey & Vincent's reedy harmonies and musicianship has gained praise for their style and worldwide recognition. Preferred seating tickets are \$90; Orchestra Preferred \$85; Orchestra \$80; Balcony Preferred \$70; Balcony \$65. Visit https://www.surryarts.org/shows/blueridgebeyond.html for more information or to purchase tickets.

18 Elkin Big Band Christmas Show, 7 p.m. at the Andy Griffith Playhouse. Tickets are \$25 for preferred seating and \$20 for orchestra. The Elkin Big Band featuring Teresa Jasper on vocals will perform a program of traditional Christmas music entitled, "Big Band Christmas Classics." The show will include seasonal tunes. Everything from traditional carols to holiday jazz classics as well as many movie and TV soundtracks. Visit https://www.surryarts.org/shows/blueridgebeyond.html for more information or to purchase tickets.

#### **DECEMBER**

16 Christmas with the Embers, featuring Craig Woolard, 7:30 p.m. at the Andy Griffith Playhouse. Reserved seat tickets are \$30. The world-famous Embers Band with Craig Woolard presents their Christmas show featuring holiday favorites and a few visitors, like Frosty, Rudolph, and friends.

#### **JANUARY**

An old-time tradition,
Breaking Up Christmas,
was a time when families got
together in the days after
Christmas to celebrate, play
music, dance, and rest up before
the cold of winter set it. These
days that tradition is marked
with the annual Breaking Up
Christmas concert and dance at
the The Historic Earle Theatre
with Trish Fore and the Wildcats
in concert. Concert begins at



TRISH FORE

7~p.m., tickets~are~\$12.~For~more~information~visit~https://www.~surryarts.org/shows/blueridgebeyond.html

#### **WEEKLY EVENTS**

Experience the Merry-Go-Round, the second-longest continuously running live radio broadcast in the nation, with a live show every Saturday at The Historic Earle Theatre from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. each week. Doors open at 10:30 a.m. Admission is \$8 or a Merry-Go-Round Annual Pass is \$20, or a current Surry Arts Council season pass.

#### **ONGOING**

16 The Old-Time Music Heritage Hall, housed in the Historic Earle Theatre at 142 N. Main Street in Mount Airy, is open daily throughout the year. Exhibit hours are 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Sundays, noon to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday, and on Saturday WPAQ's Merry-Go-Round and exhibits from are on display from 11 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. Self-guided tours of the Old-Time Music Heritage Hall are \$8 per person plus tax per person and includes admission to the Andy Griffith Museum, Betty Lynn Exhibit and Siamese Twins Exhibit.





# **DAILEY & VINCENT CHRISTMAS 2024**

# **ELKIN BIG BAND**

# LIVE PLAYS AND SHOWS OCTOBER 31-NOV. 1

Young Frankenstein. From the creators of the record-breaking Broadway sensation, The Producers, comes this monster new musical comedy. Grandson of the infamous Victor Frankenstein, Frederick Frankenstein (pronounced "Fronk-en-steen") inherits his family's estate in Transylvania. With the help of a hunchbacked sidekick, Igor (pronounced "Eye-gore"), and a leggy lab assistant, Inga (pronounced normally), Frederick finds himself in the mad scientist shoes of his ancestors. "It's alive!" he exclaims as he brings to life a creature to rival his grandfather's. Eventually, of course, the monster escapes and hilarity continuously abounds. Young Frankenstein has all the panache of the screen sensation with a little extra theatrical flair added. With such memorable tunes as "The Transylvania Mania," "He Vas My Boyfriend" and "Puttin' on the Ritz," Young Frankenstein is scientifically proven, monstrously good entertainment. Directed by Tyler Matanick, show at the Andy Griffith Playhouse. Tickets are Preferred Seats \$25; Orchestra Seats \$20. Shows are Oct. 31 and Nov. 1 at 7 p.m. and Nov. 2 at 3 p.m. Some content may be inappropriate for children under 13. To purchase tickets, visit https://www.surryarts.org/shows/livetheatre.html

#### **DECEMBER**

The Nutcracker performed by New York Ballet for Young Audiences, along with Surry Arts Council dance students, at 3 p.m. at the Andy Griffith Playhouse. Preferred Seats \$25, Orchestra Seats \$20. To purchase tickets, visit https://www.surryarts.org/shows/livetheatre.html

#### **DECEMBER 13-16, 20**

Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, starring Matlock's Daniel Roebuck, at the Andy Griffith Playhouse. Enjoy special guest star, Dan Roebuck, as Scrooge and the Surry Arts Players as they share this traditional Christmas story. Dickens' A Christmas Carol recounts the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, an elderly miser who is visited by the ghost of his former business parter, Jacob Marley, and the spirits of Christmas Past, Present, and Christmas Yet to Come. After the visits, Scrooge is transformed into a kinder, gentler man. Preferred Seat tickets are \$30; Orchestra Seats are \$25. Shows are Dec. 13, 7 p.m., Dec. 14 and 15 at 3 p.m., Dec. 16 at 7 p.m., and Dec. 20 at 7 p.m.





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