

Merely Players
Presents
IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE: A LIVE RADIO PLAY

A Christmas Classic
Adapted by Joe Landry
Based on the story “The Greatest Gift” by Philip Van Doren Stern

Directed by
Matt Bodo+

Tech Director/Scenic, Light Designer **Charles Ford+**

Center these within themselves

Costume Designer
Katherine Brown **Stage Manager**
Diane Panelli+

December 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13,14, 2025
at
Merely Underground in Durango, Colorado

Presented by special arrangement with Broadway Licensing
(www.broadwaylicensing.com)

It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play

CAST

George Bailey	Brian Devine+
Mary	Emilie Kershaw
Clarence	Paul Laakso+
Potter and others	Michael Chapman+
Violet and others	Kaitlyn Bosveil
Joseph and others	Heather Rasmussen Thomas+
Announcer, Billy, and others	Ian Thomas+
Rose, Bert, and others	Lori Fisher+
Sadie, Zuzu, and others	Abby Kubicek+
Stage Manager/Foley Artist	Beth Miller+
Foley Artists	Riki Tsethlikai+
	Mick Souder+

PRODUCTION TEAM

Wardrobe Lead	Mary Lynn Clark+
Light Technician	Jay Hecker+
Sound Technician	Randy Hertzman+
Props/Box Office Manager	Diane Panelli+
Production Coordinator	Mona Wood-Patterson+
Costume Assistant	Grace Dendy+
Props Assistant	Jamie Pickering+
Ticket Manager	Greta Richter+
Photographer	Kara Cavalca+
Master Carpenters	Charles Ford+ Mark Russell+
Technical Lead	Matt Bodo+
Technical Assistant	Jenny Mason+
Poster Design	Kate Ishay+

Set/Props Construction/Scenic Painting

Ted Carr

Nancy Carr

Mohriah James+

Margy Dudley+

Marilyn Monger+

Jay Hecker+

Jamie Pickering+

Abby Kubicek+

Avery Brown

Paul Laakso+

Maureen May+

+ Merely Players Artistic Company

The show is played with no intermission. Concessions from Gabe's Goodies will be on sale before the show.

Please silence your cell phones; they don't work that well down here anyway.

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited. We know that, for many of you, taking performance photos or video of your loved ones is a huge temptation. Please respect this rule of theatre etiquette and resist! Phone use during a show is distracting to actors and audience members and is disrespectful of our creative property. Live theatre is meant to be temporal – let it be just that. Thank you!

That said, we welcome you to take photos/video in the theatre before and after, but not during, the performance. If you post photos of the stage, please be sure to credit and tag Merely Players. @merely_players_durango

WHO'S WHO

Matt Bodo (*Director*) fears that Merely audiences may have hit their saturation point with seeing Matt as Claudius (*Hamlet*), Nathan Detroit (*Guys and Dolls*), Lucius & Bull (*Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*), Henry (*Book of Will*), Frank (*Hands on a Hardbody*), Caliban (*The Tempest*), Duke Frederick & Silvius (*As You Like It*). Durango theatregoers have also been over-watered by Pastor Greg (*Hand to God*) and Ebenezer Scrooge in the radio play of *A Christmas Carol* both by Doctuh Mistuh Productions. Matt also wets his beak as a featured writer for Durango Magazine. Winner – 2024 BroadwayWorld Denver Award – Best Performer in A Play for Henry in *Book of Will*. Matt is honored to be able to share the story of second chances and borrowed time as his directorial debut. HAPPY HOLLA-DAZE!

Kaitlyn Bosveil (*Violet & Others*) is tickled to be back in the arms of Merely Players for their production of *It's a Wonderful Life*. After a decade-long hiatus, Kaitlyn dove back into the theatrical waters as a Mission Doll in Merely's production of *Guys and Dolls* last spring. In the time-lapse of performing in shows such as: *Grease* (Rizzo), *The Wedding Singer* (Julia), *Hairspray* (Lil' Inez) and *Godspell*, Kaitlyn has been pursuing a career in education (all beginning with work in children's theater!) Kaitlyn is currently a teacher at

Durango Montessori School, and holds the magic of theater, storytelling, performance, and the playfulness of this human experience (we often forget about), dear to her heart. May we feel the softness of Zuzu's petals together this winter!

Katherine Brown (*Costume Designer*) After graduating from the Fort Lewis theater program last year, Katherine has decided to stay in Durango to continue doing what she loves. She is currently working as the costume shop supervisor at Rail Events Inc, Polar Express, and is therefore always overflowing with holiday cheer and an obscene amount of hot chocolate! She worked costumes for just about every FLC theater production that happened during her 4 years at the Fort, as well as working on *Hand to God* with the DAC. Some of her favorite FLC productions were: *The Great Comet*, *Cabaret*, *Never More*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Katherine wishes everyone thanks and a merry little Christmas.

Michael Chapman (*Potter & Others*) is excited to be Merely Playing once again. His more recent credits include Calvin in *Guys and Dolls*, and Sargeant Fogerty/Chorus in *Chicago*.

Mary Lynn Clark (*Wardrobe Foreman*) is delighted to dress these actors for a play that is set on the radio stage where they are not seen but heard by the audience they perform for. But seriously, this is one of Mary Lynn's favorite Christmas movies, and it still makes her tear up when she watches it. She wishes you a magical holiday season and hopes you enjoy the show.

Grace Dendy (*Costume Manager*) is a Durango local, raised in the creative world. She has appeared backstage during many of Merley Players showings, such as *Matilda the Musical*, *Guys and Dolls* and *Chicago*. She is excited to be a part of finding some "wonderful" costumes for the actors!

Brian Devine (*George Bailey*) is delighted to return to the Merely stage in a more festive setting than his recent appearance (and untimely demise) as Polonius/Gravedigger in *Hamlet*. Other memorable roles on this fine stage include Gonzalo in *The Tempest* and Ratchett/Arbuthnot in *Murder on the Orient Express*. This holiday season, Brian is grateful for his parents, who can probably recite the film version of *It's a Wonderful Life* from memory, his lovely wife Melissa, who always agrees to play just 12 days of Christmas music, and the entire theatre community in Durango - what a town!

Lori Fisher (*Rose, Bert, & Others*) has been practicing her expertise in voicing multiple characters for the last decade, as she reads books to her children, who are the harshest critics. When she's not flipping back and forth between sneaky ninja voices and depressed dragon voices, she can be seen onstage in Merely productions. Recent credits include *Guys and Dolls* (Crapshooter and General Matilda Cartwright), *Tiny Beautiful Things*, *Chicago* (Ensemble), and *Hands on a Hardbody* (Virginia Drew). In her offstage life, Lori reads voraciously, cooks delicious food, and spends time in water.

Charles Ford (*Tech Director/Scenic Designer*) is a master backstage technician and the Technical Director of Merely Players. An avid puppeteer, mask-maker, make-up artist, robotics engineer, and special effects designer, he has designed dozens of sets for a variety of theatrical genres. Charles is thrilled to bring this beloved Christmas classic to

life. He hopes that the post WWII rekindling of hope and optimism that good can triumph over evil will translate to our times through this production.

Jay Hecker (*Light Technician*) has recently joined Merely Players by working the light board for *Hamlet*. His talents are best utilized on the dark side of the curtain, and he's excited to be on the light board again for one of his favorite Christmas stories.

Randy Hertzman (*Sound Technician*) is happy to participate in his second season with Merely Players. A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, he worked in professional theatre in the Boston area with numerous lighting design credits to his name for theatre companies including the Gloucester Stage Company, the New Rep, the Boston Conservatory of Music, and others. He spends his time teaching wilderness medicine for NOLS and trying to figure out what to do when he grows up.

Emilie Kershaw (*Mary*) is delighted to appear in this production. Having grown up watching this beloved holiday classic every year- reciting its lines as a child - Emilie is thrilled to bring its magic to the stage. This marks her second appearance with Merely Players, following her debut as a Mission Doll in *Guys and Dolls*. She is excited to continue growing as a performer with Merely Players and to share many more memorable shows together in the future. Offstage, Emilie works as the Assistant Director at Durango Montessori School. She loves weaving creativity into her daily life, whether in the Montessori classroom or finding inspiration in nature.

Abby Kubicek (*Sadie, Zuzu, & Others*) is thrilled to be back at Merely Players bringing her family Christmas movie to the stage! Recent stage credits include *5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche* (Vern – DAC), *Collective Rage: A Play in Five Betties* (Betty #1 – Unsought Theatre), *I Hate Hamlet* (Deirdre – DAC), and *Murder on the Orient Express* (Mary – Merely Players). Outside of the theatre, Abby is a licensed sex and relationship therapist. She enjoys singing, reading, and spending time in nature. Abby dedicates this performance to her mother, whose love and care always made Christmas truly magical.

Paul Laasko (*Clarence*) After dishing up Shakespeare thrice at Merely Players, Paul is enjoying a new kick: radio drama. He fondly remembers listening to the Lone Ranger as a lad. Just as it transported him into the mythical Western landscape, he hopes that we can carry you back to the golden age of radio with our collective effort.

Beth Miller (*Foley Artist*) is delighted to be back on stage with Merely Players! You may remember her singing and dancing her way through *Guys and Dolls*, *Chicago*, *Man of La Mancha*, and *The Secret Garden*; and trying not to drown in the whitewater of the Colorado River as Frank Goodman in *Men On Boats*. A writer and educator in the area, she believes in the power of story and is honored to share this holiday tale of second chances and the meaning of true riches with the community. This one goes out to Jacob—this is what I wished for.

Diane Panelli (*Stage Manager/Props Lead/Box Office Manager*) absolutely loves doing props for each Merely Players show. That being said it is rare indeed when the props needed are ones that make only particular sounds. The props are heard and then seen. She loves the message of *It's a Wonderful Life*, as it never goes out of style and is

enjoyed no matter the age you are. May the spirit of Christmas live in your heart all year long.

Jamie Pickering (*Props Assistant*) Of all the Angels in cinematic history, Clarence has been Jamie's favorite. Thus, finding the perfect bell for Clarence getting his wings will be the number one priority. When not lost in the Props closet, Jamie spends her time buried in a book or Dungeon and Dragons session.

Heather Rasmussen Thomas (*Joseph & Others*) is excited to be a part of *It's a Wonderful Life: A Radio Play* for the second time! This time, she shares the stage with her husband, Ian. Although at her day job she plays with adult sized trains at the Durango and Silverton, she enjoys playing games (D&D, board, and video versions) in her free time. She hopes you enjoy the show!

Mick Souder (*Foley Artist*) After 10 years of doing tech for Merely Players, Mick will be on stage for the first time in the 21st Century. He was last seen performing in 1999 when one of the actors of the play he was directing for the Titanic Players, based in an Irish bar in Minneapolis, became unavailable. Afterwards one of the cast members said to him "I didn't know you could actually act."

Ian Thomas (*Announcer, Billy, & Others*) is overjoyed to join the cast for this winter adventure. He will be reprising a role he had many years ago in Durango as Freddy Filmore and is excited to host this holly jolly radio play. Having recently joined a goodly number of these fine folks as recently as *Guys and Dolls* and *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, he is happy to have time enough to join them again. When he isn't on stage, which is most of the time, Ian works as a tile setter in Durango, and enjoys running a Dungeons and Dragons campaign for his friends whenever he can.

Riki Tsethlikai (*Foley Artist*) is excited to be returning to the stage in Merely Players. Durango has been graced with his involvement in many productions including Hector McQueen in *Murder on the Orient Express*, Red Eyes in *A Wrinkle in Time* and, most recently, Harry the Horse in *Guys and Dolls*. Riki graduated from Bayfield High School and spent a couple of years at Fort Lewis College studying vocal music performance. He is no stranger to the love of radio shows, always a spectator, from Sherlock Holmes, Boston Blackie, and *A Christmas Carol*. The opportunity to be a part of one is an exciting prospect, and he hopes Durango will find it as enjoyable as he does.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We offer our sincere gratitude to those who donated items or helped us with this show. Many hands and kind hearts help us to do our work:

Community Foundation Serving SW Colorado
The Durango Herald
Fort Lewis College Theatre
Margy Dudley/4 Corners Arts Forum/ KDUR
Mariah Kaminsky
Rufe's Paint

Heartfelt gratitude to **Trisha & Hank Hayes** and **Lois Bartig & Ed Small** for the generous gift of our brand new, wonderfully comfortable chairs. Your kindness supports every artist and audience member. Our entire community thanks you!

MERELY PLAYERS began work in 1994, was officially founded in 1997, and has been bringing theatre to our community ever since. Our vision is to consistently provide quality theatre in this region, while broadening the range of types of experiences available to local theatergoers through relevant, exciting productions. Merely Players is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, and we assure you that any money donated will go toward making quality theatre in Durango both now and in the future.

Our 2025-2026 MERELY PLAYERS THEATRE SEASON continues:

A Heavenly Drama
Silent Sky February 2026

A Musical Journey
Into the Woods April/May 2026

AND IN OUR STUDIO SERIES:

Pay What You Wish/No Reservations Necessary

Improv Fun
Borrowed Houses December 8, 2025

Tickets for all shows are on sale on our website now.

ANNOUNCING AUDITIONS:

Into the Woods December 15 and 16, 2025
Watch our website or join our mailing list for more details.

CONNECT WITH US:

For more information on Merely Players, to buy tickets, to get involved, or to be added to our mailing list:

Website: <http://www.merelyplayers.org/>

Telephone: 970.749.8585

Email: merelydirectors@gmail.com

OR codes for FB and Insta and Website

MERELY PLAYERS ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

Artistic Director Mona Wood-Patterson+
Technical Director Charles Ford+
Company Manager Mary Lynn Clark+

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Janet Curry, President
Marc Arbeeny, Vice-President
Kate Ishay, Secretary

Jessica Jane Harris, Treasurer
Diane Panelli
Heather Howe
Deborah Heath

Thank you for spending your time with us. We would love to know what you thought about the play. Drop us an email at merelydirectors@gmail.com or share with us on Facebook at Merely Players – Durango.

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR:

I have the honor of this production being my directorial debut with Merely Players. In creating this world, working with a talented ensemble of character actors, and assembling the radio studio set, lights, and sound with Merely's tech wizard Charles Ford—something magical happened. Art imitates life, history repeats itself, and the parallels between our small Colorado town and 1947 Bedford Falls became striking.

Times were troubling, uncertain, and stressful in 1947. World War II had just ended. America had survived the Great Depression only to face a global conflict. The characters in this story have endured fear, loss, poverty, and confusion. George Bailey is torn between his ambition to travel the world and his devotion to his town, family, and one true love, Mary—a struggle as old as time and as familiar as the American Dream. In creating a holiday getaway for all, we've crafted a mirror. *It's a Wonderful Life* reflects hope, community, gratitude, and love. My most sincere hope is that it reminds us we can persevere through trying times, not by focusing on what we cannot control, but by cherishing what's right in front of us: our family, friends, community, and love. I began this project as a holiday illusion, blending theatre, cinema, and radio. Instead, I discovered the story bridges past and present. It's a time machine and a gift that we look forward to sharing.

Matt Bodo