

Blackhorse stars shine for Christmas with Bob's Your Elf

By Anne Ritchie

Meet the elf with attitude and a stage manager with magnitude, the librarian in search of a library and the director in search of the best Christmas play, Santa and a spirited ghost of Christmas.

'Tis the season for Norm Foster's Bob's Your Elf, arriving at Blackhorse Village Players stage bearing gifts of laughter, talent, and joy.

Santa (Ivor Cathcart) is gloriously jolly, though his elf (Roderick Cook) is not. In a family Christmas production enjoyed by all ages, the chip on Bob's shoulder is as noticeable as Rudolph's red nose, and it will take some doing to bring him into the Christmas spirit.

When Santa's crew unexpectedly gathers to review his performance, Cook makes the magic of Christmas believable.

If Blackhorse were a Christmas tree, Cathcart would be one of the brightest lights. His laughter is contagious, his joy unbounding, his performance enjoyed by the cast as much as the audience. Bob will learn from the master, and Cathcart, as Santa, has the talent to master the role.

When Bob is sent to Thithleville to learn his lesson, he meets Amber (Susan Jalbert), a bookless librarian cast as the Christmas pageant's Virgin Mary. The twinkle in Jalbert's portrayal reflects the sweetness and sincerity of a small town sweetheart. She supplies each scene with the energy that fuels the Christmas spirit in each and every one.

Aiding in Bob's redemption is the gracious but addled Fiona Putzle (Denise Kennedy). The dear lady, a term which applies to both Putzle and Kennedy, confuses a great many characters, and as a result, offers a brilliant performance that includes Scrooge's ghosts, Scarlett O'Hara and the Wicked Witch of the East. Kennedy shines, whether befuddled by door chimes enroute to the manger or sorting out her role(s).

Stage manager Les Banter, (Vincent Ursini) capably calls one and all (including the audience) to order with a voice so expressive it could announce the coming of a King. He throws himself into the role with such fervor he and Wright convincingly draw the audience into play in the role of the Thithelville choir. (We were wonderful!)

Braden Wright gifts Director Gordon Ford with a suave, smooth, charm that shimmers like tinsel. However, Gord's carefully constructed leadership scatters when faced with mutiny of his cast and crew and his finest hour arrives in the midst of Bob's most unexpected and delightful moment. Wright's generous talents are well used to capture the meaning of Christmas.

It's not just the obvious Thithelville lisp or the hilarity and lessons found in the entertaining story that's entertaining; it's the audience and actors interacting in the Christmas season that make this a wonderful show.

Director Morris Durante and producers Elizabeth Coulter and Cheryl Phillips have given us a production filled with Christmas spirit, lighting the season with laughter and love.

Celebrate the joys of season by reserving your ticket at 905-880-5002. Bob's your Elf is at Blackhorse until Nov. 21

