

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

Dean Paul Gibson is an accomplished actor and one of Canada's best and most sought after directors. He's been behind many Arts Club shows including this season's *Black Comedy*, *The History Boys*, *The School for Scandal*, and *A Flea in Her Ear*. Here, he talks about the task of bringing this heartwarming work to the stage.

What are some of the challenges of staging a story that is so well known as a film?

When it's a film, when it's something that didn't start as a play, people want to come and see that thing that is the film. That's a particular challenge, because people want to come and see Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed and Lionel Barrymore and everyone else in between. We can't give them that, but we can capture the spirit and quality that the film represented.

It's really important to find the universal appeal of an enduring iconic film like this, to capture the essence of it. What is it about the film that speaks to so many people's hearts year after year? I've got to try to capture the essence of the film and put it on stage. That begins with a good adaptation and then actors that can inhabit those qualities: actors who have a particularly transparent and good heart.

How would you characterize the essence of *It's a Wonderful Life*?

It's hopeful. It's simply hopeful. So when we get so weighed down with the complexities of our lives today, to see a light in whatever tunnel that we might be travelling through is the thing that speaks to so many of us. We need to be hopeful. We need to be able to come through, rededicate, recommit to our families and, beyond that, to our life. Part of that journey for many people is to feel safe, whatever that means to you personally and individually. [The film] is hopeful, and that's what's so great about it. The humanity that comes out of it is of course something that appeals to all of us perennially. We're challenged to find it amongst all the things that happen in the world, but when we do, that simple humanity is pure gold.

There's also a dark side to the film, isn't there?

[Frank] Capra [the film's director] was known for that; he was subversive. It is very dark.

George Bailey's journey is one of those instances of "I didn't choose it, it chose me."

He wants to see the world and be a great architect, and he dashes all his personal dreams for the greater good of the community. Whatever the divine powers are—and it's not overt, but it's a seemingly Christian God—they decide that George needs to stay in Bedford Falls because his life is an integral part of its survival. Ultimately, George learns that where you live is more important than anything else; he learns the importance of maintaining his roots, and the payoff of those relationships is enormous.

I work really hard at maintaining relationships that go back 35 years, and I see those people still because they're such an important part of the fibre of my existence. Just knowing that can help me all the other places I go in the world. I've got a great sense of my history and that really informs who I am.

Does *It's a Wonderful Life* play a part in your personal holiday traditions?

It was not a tradition in the Gibson family; we were more spontaneous. Mom loved *A Christmas Carol* with Alistair Sim; she loved watching the expressions on his face. I don't have an annual visit with *It's a Wonderful Life*. I know people who watch it every Christmas Eve, but I reacquaint myself with it serendipitously: it's on late and I'll catch half of it, or I'll sit down with a group of people who are watching it.

I remember the first time I saw it when I was a kid, and then the obsession with angels was born. I went around ringing bells because I was sure I could be a broker for people I knew who deserved their wings, so I'd run around ringing as many bells as I could.

ABOUT PHILIP GRECIAN

Philip Grecian is more than familiar with bringing holiday classics to the stage. His adaptation of Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* has been on the boards for thirty years; his authorized stage adaptation of *A Christmas Story* (seen on the Arts Club's Granville Island Stage last Christmas) enjoys approximately 100 productions a year; his staged radio version of *It's a Wonderful Life* is popular throughout the English-speaking world; and now he has created the fully staged version of the classic Frank Capra film.

He began his show business career at four years of age, as a ventriloquist and magician. By the age of 15 he had written a three-act comedy, which was produced at a local theatre. At 16 he was founding director for a city-funded community theatre. Three years later he spent a season with the Creede Colorado Repertory Theatre, and continues to maintain a connection with that company as a playwright and guest performer. Shortly after his season with Creede Rep, he returned to the city-funded theatre he had founded for six more seasons as Artistic/Managing Director and Resident Playwright, and then resigned to create a professional dinner theatre, where he served as Producer and Artistic Director. After establishing a strong financial base for the new theatre, Grecian left to work as a writer/director for film, video and audio production.

In 1994 he became Founding Director/Playwright for IHS Productions, Inc., which annually produces his stage adaptation of *In His Steps*, based on the Charles Sheldon novel.

Other works include *The Dragon of Nitt* and *The Lion and the Lyre* (both translated and performed in Russian); *Little Pills*, a farce suggested by Moliere's *Imaginary Invalid*; *Toby Saves the Farm*, a musical salute to tent shows and the old "Let's do a play in the barn" movies; an adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and a translation of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Mr. Grecian has also written numerous staged radio dramatizations, including *Twisted Tales of Poe*, *The Blood Countess*, *Dracula*, and *Frankenstein*.

FILM SYNOPSIS

Philip Grecian's stage adaptation of *It's a Wonderful Life* is very faithful to the 1946 film directed by Frank Capra. Although the film was not a commercial success at the time of its release, it has become a holiday favourite, thanks to repeated television airings since the 1970s, and is now recognized as a classic. The film is ranked #11 on the American Film Institute's Top 100 American Films list, released in 1998.

The play begins with various characters praying for George Bailey. The action moves to Heaven, where the prayers are being heard by The Boss, who sends Clarence the Clockmaker to try to save George's soul. Clarence, a somewhat inept angel who has not yet earned his wings, gets a full briefing on George's life from another angel, Joseph. Clarence is eager to help George and thereby earn his wings. Along with Clarence, we watch the pivotal events of George's past. As a young boy, he saves his brother Harry from drowning in a frozen pond, but the icy plunge costs George his hearing in one ear. Later, while working at Gower's Drugstore and dreaming of a life of travel and adventure, George averts tragedy when his boss, who is reeling from the news of his son's death, inadvertently prepares a toxic prescription for a sick child.

As a young man, George is all set to travel on a cattle ship en route to college to study architecture. The night before his departure, he attends his younger brother Harry's high school graduation dance and meets Mary, whom he has known since childhood but never before taken an interest in. The two hit it off romantically after plunging into the pool under the school gymnasium floor—the ingeniously designed (by George) floor has been opened beneath their feet by Mary's beau, jealous of her dancing all night with George. As George walks Mary home, they sing together and stop by the old, abandoned Granville House. George says it's haunted; Mary thinks it's beautiful. Both throw stones at the windows and make a wish. They are about to kiss when George receives the news that his father has had a stroke. The stroke proves fatal—both to Mr. Bailey and to George's dreams. After his father's death, George is appointed to run Bailey Building and Loan, the only financial business in town not operated by the ruthless Potter. George's travels and his college career are postponed as the only means of keeping Bailey Building and Loan, which has helped countless residents of Bedford Falls to own their homes rather than live in one of Potter's slums, out of Potter's hands. Meanwhile, Harry goes to college and becomes a football star.

Mary also goes to college, and when she returns, George reluctantly agrees to visit her. The chemistry between them is still palpable, and they eventually marry. They are on their way to catch a train for their honeymoon when the stock market crash causes panic at Bailey Building and Loan. George must use his entire savings to keep his shareholders from wiping out his business, or going bankrupt themselves if they choose to sell their shares—at half their value—to the opportunistic Potter. At the end of an exhausting day, George is escorted to the old Granville House and there he finds Mary, who has begun the old house's magical transformation into their family home. She reveals that this was what she wished for on the night they threw rocks at the

windows; her wish has now come true.

Act Two of the play begins with Potter offering George a job at ten times his current salary, but George declines, refusing to surrender Bailey Building and Loan to such a heartless economic predator. He returns home to find Mary pregnant with the first of what will be their four children. The narrative skips ahead through the war, where George's brother Harry has distinguished himself brilliantly.

It is now Christmas Eve, and the eve of Harry's return to Bedford Falls, where a hero's welcome awaits him. George's absent-minded Uncle Billy has lost an \$8000 deposit at the bank, having unwittingly handed it to Potter along with some newspapers trumpeting Harry's accomplishments. The lost deposit will spell the end of Bailey Building and Loan unless George can come up with \$8000 in a hurry. At home, he is uncharacteristically short-tempered with his children, and on the phone, he chastises the teacher of his youngest girl, Zuzu, for sending her home without a coat on. We see George share a moment of tenderness with Zuzu—a brief respite in his incredibly stressful day. After yelling at his other children, George feels remorse and abruptly leaves the house. Mary starts phoning friends and relatives to help her find George. Meanwhile, George goes to Potter to ask him for a loan of the \$8000. Potter asks what sort of collateral he has, and George says he has a life insurance policy worth \$15,000. Potter accuses George of financial mismanagement and threatens to have him arrested, taunting him that he is worth more dead than alive.

As this truth sinks in, a desperate George heads to the bridge, contemplating suicide. He prays for a sign. A man comes along and, on learning George's name, he punches George in the mouth—it turns out he's the husband of Zuzu's teacher, whom George had insulted on the phone earlier that evening. With no hope left, George is about to jump off the bridge and end his life. At this moment, Clarence is at last able to intervene—he appears as a drowning man under the bridge, and George dives in to save him. As the two men dry off in a nearby tollbooth, Clarence tells George he's his guardian angel. George scoffs and says he wishes he'd never been born. Clarence decides to show him what life would be like if he had never been born.

He takes George back to Bedford Falls, now called Pottersville. George and Clarence make quite an impression at a neighbourhood bar, where George's friend Ernie is the bartender. Ernie doesn't recognize George and has no patience for Clarence's eccentricity: as the cash register rings, Clarence says that every time a bell rings, an angel gets his wings. They are unceremoniously kicked out of the bar. George goes to see his mother, who also doesn't recognize him, and who is furious when he mentions Harry, who died as a boy because George wasn't there to save him from drowning. Mr. Gower is an alcoholic who served 20 years in prison for killing a child with a botched prescription. Mary is a spinster librarian. Many of the town's residents live in miserable conditions due to Potter's complete control of all the public institutions. On the whole, Pottersville is a bleak and corrupt shadow of Bedford Falls.

After so many hostile encounters with loved ones who don't seem to know him, George tells Clarence that he wants to live again, and implores him to return him to his family. George is now back on the bridge, where his police officer friend, Bert, finds him. When George realizes that he has been returned to his life, he runs home joyfully. Meanwhile, Clarence retrieves the missing \$8000 from Potter.

When George gets home, the whole town is there—everyone has chipped in money to make up the lost deposit, and offers have even come from friends overseas. Harry has flown in early from New York. George realizes that his ordinary life has meant a great deal and that he has made a difference in the world; he also recognizes that real richness lies in love and friendship, not in money or adventure. He hears a bell ring and knows that Clarence has gotten his wings.

The Adaptation of It's A Wonderful Life: From Screen to Stage

By Philip Grecian

If you've adapted a story from one medium to the other, and it looks easy to your audience, you've done your job.

Because it's not easy.

For one thing, people who loved the original piece expect certain things in the adaptation...and each person tends to expect a different "certain thing."

When I wrote the authorized stage adaptation of "A Christmas Story," I had any number of people weigh in on what absolutely, positively had to be in it—including specific lines. The woman who helped me proof the galley just before publication stopped reading one evening to ask, "Where's the line about lobsters?" "I didn't use it." "Put it in. It HAS to be in."

I put in the line about Randy lying there like a slug under the same circumstances.

People expect to see on the stage what they've seen in a film.

But you simply can't do that. For one thing, it's pretty tough to do cuts and dissolves. You need time for set and costume changes; so you have to juggle the time lines around. You have to figure out different ways to point things up—close ups and cut-in shots don't work onstage. You have to consider the differences between media...but you also must consider the advantages of the stage over film, most especially the immediacy of it all. How about that three-minute scene that would require a whole new set? Are the lines important? Can it be staged in another—already planned on--set? Can it be cut?

And how about all those people in a film? There are over sixty speaking roles in the film "It's a Wonderful Life." Do we need them all? Is there room onstage for them all? Can we afford them all? In real time, does a cast that large slow the story down? Oh, yes. What's the effect of that many people in a film? How can that same effect be achieved onstage?

And how can the story be told for the stage to achieve, if possible, an even better effect than the film? Well, for one thing, the film, "It's a Wonderful Life," was assembled in its present form, according to the story that goes around, after it didn't work in a more linear form.

Here's the way the story is told: The film as originally assembled did not open with the heavenly conversation. It was not narrated by angels. It told a straightforward story about George Bailey and, three-quarters of the way through the picture, as George is going to kill himself, Clarence appears.

It didn't work in its first cut.

It seemed to jump genres. Sudden Heavenly intervention? Capra had a problem. He had to foreshadow Clarence's appearance—so he went back and filmed the beginning piece with the dialogue and the star field. He didn't have enough money to shoot any extra scenes on location, so he animated stars and had the actors do their lines in voiceover. Then he pulled in scraps of scenes from Bedford Falls while the angels narrated all the background. Next time you see the film, pay close attention on the wide shot of the main street of Bedford Falls. If you look fast, you'll see, in the far background, a figure running toward the camera just before they cut to another shot.

That's George.

It's a piece from his run through town late in the picture ("Merry Christmas Bedford Falls!")

And that scene where they stop the film and George stands with his hands in the air, describing a suitcase? They needed to get in a lot of lines for the angels, and they were out of footage to cover...so they held the image while they finished up.

That's the story, anyway.

And speaking of story...

I had some concerns about the holes in the original story. If you sit down and closely examine the timeline in the film, you'll discover that it makes no sense, most particularly from the bank closings to World War Two. Nobody seems to have noticed this about the film, but I couldn't let it go for the stage. Had to fix it. Then, too, Clarence takes a long time to show up, doesn't he? Then he's around for about twenty minutes and disappears a little too soon. If you've got an angel as a main character, shouldn't he turn up sooner? Shouldn't he stay longer? That plastics factory just outside of town—we mention it once. Can we use it somehow again? Seems a shame to mention it, the drop it. How about Violet? She said her future in Bedford Falls is hopeless, didn't she? Then she said she was leaving. But then she decides to stay. How come? And what's going to happen to her? She should have a chance at happiness, shouldn't she? And Potter? In the film, he gets away with all that money. That's not fair. But more than that—the townspeople take up a collection to replace the money, but that doesn't mean the authorities will forgive perceived embezzlement; and if they do forgive George for it, Potter will surely pursue it.

When you adapt an existing story, there are certain things that get past you—things that wouldn't get past you if you were creating a story from the ground up. It becomes necessary to question absolutely everything about the story as it originally existed and ask why a lot. It becomes necessary to pay some attention to the timelines as stated and to question the motives of the characters as if you had created them from whole cloth.

Do you remember that, in the film, Clarence abbreviates "Angel Second Class" as "A.S-2"? How does that make any sense? Shouldn't it be "A.S.C."? It is in the stage version. Who can say where the original abbreviation came from?

Since I had already written a staged radio drama version of the story, I had to try to forget everything I could about it...establish a fresh perspective by watching the film and reading the screenplay, write my first very rough draft...then go back to the radio drama to see if there were any wonderful ideas I'd established there that I could use in this new adaptation. There were a few—including some things about Violet's fate in a "Georgeless" world—that I thought were valid and strong and perfect enough to use for the full stage version.

FRANK CAPRA

Born in Sicily in 1897, Frank Capra moved with his family to Los Angeles just before his sixth birthday. Capra studied chemical engineering at what is now the California Institute of Technology, and received the highest grades in his class. In 1917, Capra enlisted in the army and was inducted shortly after his graduation in 1918, less than a month before the end of World War I. In December of that year, he came down with Spanish Influenza. While recuperating the following year, Capra began to work as a film extra, making his first contact with many artists who would become part of his films later in his career.

Within a couple of years, Capra began writing and directing silent films. By the late 1920s, he had steady directing work at Columbia Pictures. In the 1930s, Capra emerged as the leading director in Hollywood, with films including *It Happened One Night*, *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, *You Can't Take It with You* (all of which won Best Director Oscars for Capra), *Platinum Blonde*, *Lost Horizon*, and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. He became president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences from 1935 to 1939—a difficult position given the climate of labour unrest among the various professional guilds in the movie industry—and hosted the Academy Awards in 1936 and 1939.

During World War II, Capra rejoined the army and made a series of propaganda films, which were lauded for their craftsmanship. Capra took as much pride in these award-winning films as in his features.

Though many of his most critically and commercially successful films were screwball comedies—a genre in which he excelled—Capra was most passionate about his films that tackled more serious issues. These films, which include *The Bitter Tea of General Yen*, *American Madness*, and *Meet John Doe*, are less well known today, but some of their weightier intentions are shared by *It's a Wonderful Life*. Ironically, the film, ranked #1 on the American Film Institute's list of the 100 Most Inspiring Movies of All Time, carries a potent critique of some good old American values—like ruthless capitalism, and self-determination without an accompanying sense of community responsibility.

Because so many of his films have a message—often the affirmation of the difference an individual can make against a unified mass—some critics have labelled them “Capra corn,” alleging overly simple storylines and pat emotions. But in all his films, idealism triumphs over cynicism, making them as resonant today as they were 60 or 70 years ago.

Although it proved a critical and commercial failure upon its release, *It's a Wonderful Life* was Capra's last great film. He took an eight-year break from filmmaking in the 1950s, and made his last film, *Pocketful of Miracles*, in 1961. Widely considered one of the foremost American film directors of the 20th century, Capra died in his sleep in 1991.

THE COMPANY

Eileen Barrett ~ Mother Bailey

Eileen's favourite projects include *My Fair Lady* (Gateway), *Killing Caesar* (Rubicon), *The Dissociates* (Sea Theatre), *How I Learned to Drive* (Overdrive Productions) for which she received a Jessie Award, *The Attic, the Pearls and Three Fine Girls* (Western Canada Theatre), *Blythe Spirit, Seven Stories*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Graffiti). Film/TV credits include *Hiccups, Ramona and Beezus, Alice, Supernatural, Kyle XY, Anna's Storm* and *Eureka*. Eileen would like to say a big thank you to Dean for inviting her to this marvellous party. *Robert, Matthew and Garnet—you make this a wonderful life. Happy Holidays!*

Ashley Braun ~ Zuzu

Ashley is in grade five at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Vancouver. In addition to participating in the Language Arts Enrichment program at school, Ashley takes lessons in ballet, piano, karate, and ice-skating. Ashley was a gold medalist for her entry of "The Indian Girl's Song" by Percy Shelly in the Art Carney Speech Arts Competition. Last summer Ashley took part in the Young Shakespearean Workshop of *Hamlet* at Bard on the Beach, and the summer prior she was in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Audrey Braun ~ Zuzu

Audrey is four years old, and takes classes in ballet, cooking, gymnastics, ice-skating, and swimming. Audrey's favourite activities include swimming and playing. Audrey likes Christmas the best of all the holidays because, "you get presents and you can share your love." Audrey is excited to be involved in this production, and she wonders how the angel Clarence came down to Earth if he did not have any wings.

Sasa Brown ~ Violet Black/Mrs. Thompson

Sasa is thrilled to be back for her third appearance in *It's a Wonderful Life*. She was recently seen at the Arts Club on the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage in *Black Comedy* and *Doubt*. A graduate of the UBC BFA Acting Program, some of her other credits include *Summer of My Amazing Luck* (Gateway), *Bone in Her Teeth, Giant Consortium, Salome* (Leaky Heaven), *The Dissemblers* (Touchstone), *The Blue Horse, Bluebeard and His Wives* (Caravan Farm Theatre), *Arabian Night* (Pi/Axis), *The Skinny Lie* (Green Thumb), *Spank!* (Virtual Stage), *Macbeth* (Pound of Flesh), and *Madama Butterfly* (Vancouver Opera). Sasa has also worked as a Movement Director for Memorial University of Newfoundland and is the recipient of two Jessie Awards.

Bernard Cuffling ~ Clarence

Bernard has recently appeared in and directed the production of *Woman in Black* for the Chemainus Theatre Festival. This past summer he played the role of Hector in *The History Boys* in Pittsburgh, having previously played it here at the Arts Club. Bernard is a member of the BC Walk of Fame.

Nikita Flynn ~ Young Harry Bailey

Nikita has studied acting with Arts Umbrella and Theatre-Studio Palme. His first role was Dragon in *The Princess and the Dragon* for Arts Umbrella. Other favourite productions include *Little Red Riding Hood II, Oscar*, and *Aladdin*. Nikita has played principal roles in commercials for major companies like Nestle and Kroger. He was the little boy dressed as a pirate who enjoyed life and Nesquik chocolate milk! Nikita enjoys choir, dance, storytelling, and playing

the recorder. Nikita receives full support from his family who are as well in entertainment industry. Nikita is now working on the Future Student Film *Kids Court* by Kevin Redvers.

Bob Frazer ~ George Bailey

To be sung to "Silent Night"

Skydive

Cabaret

Richard the III

This is a Play

Equus, Hamlet

The Glass Menagerie

It's Snowing on Saltspring

The Fruit Machine

And Then There Were None

Prodigal Son

Unity (1918)

Rhys Jenkins ~ Young George Bailey

Rhys was born in Vancouver. He is currently in Grade seven and is co-president of his school with his twin brother Sam. Along with a love of acting, Rhys is a sports enthusiast and spends much of his time playing soccer, baseball, and snowboarding. Rhys has been acting since 2007 and has appeared in numerous commercials, but was thrilled when he was offered the chance to have his first experience in live theater. Rhys has a large family and many friends who will be cheering him on at the performances.

Kyle Jespersen ~ Harry/Peter Bailey/Teller/Tom

Say, Kyle sure is keen on spending his holidays with the Arts Club again. Gee, he's also performed with Green Thumb, UpInTheAir, Wild Excursions, Pacific Theatre, and Caravan Farm Theatre. Aw shucks, he was the 2006 recipient of the Sydney J. Risk Award for outstanding potential (at his alma mater Studio 58), and the winner of a 2008 Jessie Award for Significant Achievement in Ensemble Acting (Green Thumb's *Steel Kiss*). Why, Kyle's currently training for the title role in *Rick: The Rick Hansen Story*, which will be opening right here on the Granville Island Stage in March as part of the 2010 Cultural Olympiad. Swell.
www.kylejespersen.com

Eric Keenleyside ~ Bert/Ed

Eric is delighted to be re-appearing in his first production with the Arts Club. Born in New Brunswick and growing up in Ontario, he studied at the University of Windsor and apprenticed at the Stratford Festival. He and his beautiful, talented wife Peg lived in Toronto and Los Angeles before moving to Lynden, WA and then to Tsawassen, where they now live with their astonishingly brilliant children, Madeleine and Nicholas. Eric has appeared in more than a hundred film and TV projects, some of them based on plays, but never before vice versa.

Brian Linds ~ Uncle Billy

Brian was last seen at the Arts Club in *It's a Wonderful Life*, and *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, and will return this season for *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. Selected acting credits include *As You Like It*, *Death of a Salesman* (Blue Bridge Theatre) *Urinetown*, *Art*, (Belfry Theatre), *The Man Who Shot Chance Delaney* (Western Canada Theatre), *Einstein's Gift* (Winnipeg Jewish Theatre), and *Sexy Laundry* (Theatre Northwest). As a sound designer,

Brian's work has been seen in *The History Boys* (Arts Club), *Palace of the End*, *Demon Voice* (Touchstone), *True West* (Playhouse), *No Exit* (Electric Company Theatre/Virtual Stage), and *The Miracle Worker*, *A Doll's House* (Chemainus Theatre Festival). Brian is a graduate of Studio 58 and the National Theatre School.

Hrothgar Mathews ~ Rieneman/Gowar/Man at Bank

Previous appearances for the Arts Club include *The Foursome*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Travels with My Aunt*, and *The Wild Guys*. Film and television credits include *Death's Dream*, for which he won a Leo Award; *Hard Time: The David Milgaard Story*, for which he received a Gemini Award; and *Human Cargo*, which garnered him a second Gemini nomination and a Peabody Award, and *DaVinci's Inquest* in the role of Officer Klotchko. Hrothgar is married to actress Gabrielle Rose and they have two sons, Liam and Finn.

Kennedy Montano ~ Young Mary

Kennedy's love for acting started at the age of five. Since then she's gone on to star in over 20 commercials and has graced the big screen with Jet Li and Jason Statham as Ana in *War*. After a summer of intense studies at Lyric, Kennedy is excited to put her skills to good use in her first stage production. Kennedy would like to thank her mom Judy, her brother Michael, and her father Matthew for all their patience and love. She also thanks her fantastic agents, Lyne Moroni and Dylan Collingwood, for all their support and guidance. Kennedy sends a big "hi" to all her friends, family, and teachers at school.

Madelin Prekaski ~ Young Violet/Mrs. Thompson's Daughter

Madelin is currently attending grade six in Delta. She started work in the movie industry in grade one by being involved in extra work and graduated to principal work two years ago. She has taken two years of acting classes at Tarlington Training and is thrilled to have the opportunity to be making her professional theatre debut. Madelin also plays piano, sings, and plays soccer. Madelin would like to thank all her teachers and coaches for their support.

Alec Willows ~ Henry Potter

Alec started his career at the Arts Club on Seymour in the early 70s in *Hot L Baltimore*. He toured Canada in the National Arts Centre production of John Gray's *Rock & Roll*. With the Flying Karamazov Bros. he performed at the Goodman in Chicago and the Lincoln Centre in New York in their acclaimed production of *Comedy of Errors*. Arts Club appearances include *Lend Me A Tenor*, *High Life*, *Dancing At Lughnasa*, and *Easy Money*. Recent appearances include *True West* and *Frost/Nixon* for the Playhouse, *Mesa* for PTE, and *Still Desire You* for ATP. Alec has starred in two TV series, *Airwaves* and *Max Glick*, and the film comedies *Harmony Cats* and *Tokyo Cowboy*. He will be seen this year in Brent Butt's new show *Hiccups*.

Kirsten Robek ~ Mary Bailey

Kirsten is a graduate of York University and has worked professionally on stage, film, television, and radio for the past decade. Before becoming "Mom" to her beautiful son Nicholas, Kirsten could be seen locally on stage as Harper in *Angels in America* and as Catherine in Electric Company Theatre's touring production of *Brilliant!* She has also worked on several television series and films. She is the recipient of a Jessie, a Leo, and a New York Independent Short Film Award. When not working, Kirsten enjoys experiencing all the wonders of life through the eyes of her two-year-old. With love and devotion, and for all their hard work, Kirsten dedicates this performance to her family and to Lisa.

Beatrice Zeilinger ~ Tilly

Beatrice is thrilled to be working at the Arts Club again, especially in this Christmas classic with such a great group of people. Previous Arts Club productions include *The Odd Couple*; *Under the Influence*; *It's Snowing on Saltspring*; *It's Blowin', Growin', and Glowin' on Bowen*; *Make Up Your Mind*; and *Steppin' Out*. Other favourite productions include *Lend Me a Tenor* (Gateway), *The Waiting Room* (Ruby Slippers/Studio 58), and *The Number 14* (Axis Theatre), of which she was an original creator/actor. She has worked for most theatre companies in Vancouver and is a graduate of Studio 58, as well as the recipient of three Jessie Awards. Upcoming, Beatrice can be seen the TV series *Hiccups*, as Deb in *Mom's the Word: Remixed*, and in the Arts Club co-production of *Don Quixote*. Her favourite role by far is that of Mommy to her two darlings, Millie and Tony.

Dean Paul Gibson ~ Director

DPG's selected directing credits include *7 Stories* (Theatre Calgary/CanStage), *Black Comedy*, *The History Boys*, *It's A Wonderful Life*, *The School for Scandal* and *A Flea in Her Ear* (Arts Club), *Toronto, Mississippi*, *True West*, *No Great Mischief*, and *Noises Off* (The Playhouse), *The Boyfriend* (Studio 58), *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Nights Dream*, *Hamlet*, and many more (Bard on the Beach), *Lend Me a Tenor*, *Good Night Desdemona—Good Morning Juliet*, and *Powerlines* (Gateway Theatre). As an actor, Dean has also been seen on stage and in various film and TV roles. Dean has been honoured with Jessie Richardson Awards for his acting and directing and is a graduate of Studio 58. Upcoming, Dean will appear in *The Drowsy Chaperone* (MTC).

Marsha Sibthorpe ~ Lighting Designer

Marsha has designed the lighting for over 515 theatrical productions. Her work is currently on the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage in *White Christmas* and will soon be seen around the province *Mom's the Word Remixed*. Her work was recently seen at the Chemainus Festival's production of *Woman in Black*. *May all you Hanukahs and Christmases be bright*.

Ted Roberts ~ Set Designer

As Resident Designer for the Arts Club, Ted's past projects with Dean Paul Gibson include *Black Comedy*, *The History Boys*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *The School for Scandal*, and *A Flea in Her Ear*. Other recent designs for the Arts Club include *Les Misérables* and *Homechild* at the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage, *Altar Boyz* at the Granville Island Stage; and the touring production of *The Thing about Men*. Ted is a member of Associated Designers of Canada.

Rebekka Sorensen ~ Costume Designer

Rebekka is a costume and set design BFA graduate of UBC. She is a member of the Associated Designers of Canada and has been nominated for a number of Jessie Awards. In 2007 she won for Best Costume Design, Large Theatre, for her work on *The School for Scandal* (Arts Club), in 2006 for her work on *Enchanted April* (Arts Club), and for Best Costumes, Small Theatre in 2003 for *The Cat Who Ate Her Husband* (Ruby Slippers). Some previous credits include *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Miss Saigon*, and *Othello* for the Arts Club; *The Secret Garden*, *The King and I*, and *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* (Gateway Theatre); and *Oh What a Lovely War* for UBC. She wants to thank Bill and Michael for all the great opportunities at the Arts Club, and the Arts Club wardrobe department, her family, and friends for all their help and support.

Neil Weisensel ~ Sound Designer

Neil is a Vancouver-based composer, conductor, and multi-instrumentalist. He has composed works for orchestra, songs, a musical, operas, chamber and choral music, as well as film and television scores. His music for big band garnered a Genie nomination for a collaboration with Michael Bublé. Neil holds degrees in composition and piano performance from the University of Manitoba and the University of British Columbia. In December the Victoria Symphony will premiere several of his works in a show called *What a Wonderful World* featuring the soprano Rachel Landrecht (to whom Neil is married). The evening will include an aria from his opera *Merry Christmas Stephen Leacock*, the song *I Feel a Change Today* (co-composed with Rachel for former US President Bill Clinton and the Clinton Foundation) and eight other new arrangements of songs. Neil and Rachel live in Vancouver with their 3-year-old daughter Miracle.

Jamie Nesbitt ~ Projection Designer

Based in Vancouver, Jamie works across the country from Toronto to Whitehorse. Jamie's resume includes Canadian Stage, the Playhouse, Bard on the Beach, the Arts Club, Gateway Theatre, The Electric Company, Pi Theatre, The Belfry, The Actors Repertory Company, The Yukon Arts Centre, Rumble Productions, and many more. Jamie's work has also toured North America with Green Thumb Theatre. His work has received national attention in *The Globe and Mail* and *National Post*. He is the recipient of six Jessie Award nominations, a 2009 Jessie Award for outstanding artistic achievement, the 2008 Mayor's Arts Award, the 2007 Sam Payne Award, and the 2006 Earl Klein Memorial Scholarship.

Pamela Jakobs ~ Stage Manager

Pamela's past shows for the Arts Club include *Les Misérables*, *Glorious!*, *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, *The School for Scandal*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Miss Saigon*, and *Enchanted April* at the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage, and *Mom's the Word: Remixed*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *The History Boys*, *The Back Kitchen Release Party*, *Tuesdays with Morrie*, *Poster Boys*, and *Mom's the Word 2: Unhinged* at the Granville Island Stage. Pamela is a graduate of the BFA Theatre program at UBC. She would like to thank her husband Craig and her daughter Rose for everything.

Sarah Pearson ~ Assistant Stage Manager

Sarah is happy to be back at the Granville Island Stage with this show, having worked on it last season. A few other credits include *The Comedy of Errors* and *Othello* (ASM, Bard on the Beach), *Where The River Meets The Sea* (Stage Manager, Presentation House), *Three Viewings* (Stage Manager, Presentation House), *King Lear* and *Twelfth Night* (ASM, Bard on the Beach), *The View from Above* (Stage Manager, Ruby Slippers), and *The Goat or Who is Sylvia* (Stage Manager, Presentation House). Sarah completed the production program at Studio 58.