

**BY JOE LANDRY**  
**Directed by Adrian Elfenbaum**

# It's A Wonderful Life



**A LIVE RADIO PLAY**

**November 17-  
December 17, 2023**



**TICKETS** [RossValleyPlayers.com](https://RossValleyPlayers.com) | 415-456-9555

Design: Mark Shepard

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Design: Mark Shepard

## From The Executive Producer

When I consider Ross Valley Players' award-winning productions of *The Government Inspector* and *Picnic* last season and more recently our much-lauded productions of *Pride & Prejudice – The Musical*, *Native Gardens* and *The Glass Menagerie*, I can see they were all successful critically and at the box office because of terrific teamwork.

RVP's directors are selected first and foremost for their unique expertise and passion for a play; talented design teams and crews are assembled for their vision and dedication; each show is cast with actors who are best able to bring the play to life. These production teams spend five intense weeks working together to bring each show to you.

We hope you'll take great delight in the teamwork that brings you a beloved American holiday classic as a live 1940s radio broadcast; three acts of growing up, adulthood, and death in *Our Town*; an inspiring new musical that brings to life the legendary icon of the stage, Sarah Bernhardt; and finally, the twists and turns of a devoted book club sprinkled with wit, joy and novels galore!

The RVP team is dedicated to bringing you the most comfortable, affordable, and delightful live theater in the San Francisco Bay Area – a destination for artists and audiences. We hope you'll become part of our team by bringing family and friends, becoming a subscriber and making Ross Valley Players your theater home!

Welcome to The Barn!  
Steve Price

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# It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play

Christmas Eve, 1946 • Studio A at WBFR in Manhattan, New York.

## CAST

Freddie Filmore	Loren Nordlund*
Jake Laurents	Evan Held
Sally Applewhite	Elenor Irene Paul
Lana Sherwood	Molly Rebekka Benson*
Harry "Jazzbo" Heywood	Malcolm Bowman Rodgers

## Roles in *It's a Wonderful Life*:

**Freddie:** Announcer, Mr. Gower, Mr. Potter, Uncle Billy, Joseph the Angel, Peter Bailey, Ernie the Cab Driver, Old Man Collins, Ed, Pete Bailey, Man at Martini's, Nick the Bartender, Bridge Keeper, Binky the Bouncer, Cop

**Jake:** George Bailey (and Young George)

**Sally:** Mary Hatch (and Young Mary)

**Lana:** Violet (and Young Violet), Rose Bailey, Matilda the Building & Loan Secretary, Ruth Dakin Bailey, Mrs. Hatch, Mrs. Thompson, Schultz, Zuzu Bailey, Janie Bailey, Sadie the Bank Examiner

**Harry:** Harry (and Young Harry), Bert the Cop, Clarence Oddbody the Angel 2nd Class, Sam Wainwright, Martini, Dr. Campbell, Charlie, Man at Bank Run, Horace the Bank Teller, Mr. Welch, Tommy Bailey, Sheriff

## PRODUCTION TEAM

Producer	Steve Price
Director	Adrian Elfenbaum
Music Director	Loren Nordlund
Stage Manager	Ben Vasquez
Assistant Stage Managers	Dianne Harrison, Raysheina de Leon Ruhs
Set Design	Mikiko Uesugi**
Lighting Design	Jim Cave
Costume Design	Michael A. Berg
Sound Design	Billie Cox
Property Design	Dianne Harrison
Intimacy and Movement Coach	Elena Wright
Master Set Builder	Michael Walraven
Scenic Painter	Dhyanis Carniglia
Photographer	Robin Jackson
Original Music and Arrangements	Loren Nordlund
Photographer	Robin Jackson
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\*Appears through the courtesy of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

\*\*United Scenic Artists Local USA 829, IATSE

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## Director's Notes

Republic Pictures' copyright on Frank Capra's 1946 film, *It's a Wonderful Life*, expired in 1974. Soon thereafter, budget conscious local television stations across the country undertook repeated airings of the film each holiday season, royalty free. Although *It's a Wonderful Life* was not very successful in its 1946 theatrical release, the popularity of this life-affirming story steadily grew through the 1970s and 1980s, thanks to the film's ubiquitous television presence. In the mid-1990s, Republic reasserted its copyright and limited the release of *It's a Wonderful Life* to annual airings on NBC. By then, the film had become a renowned and beloved holiday classic.

I am among those who love the film, and when RVP asked me if I would be interested in directing a holiday show this season, I immediately replied, "Is there a stage version of *It's a Wonderful Life*?" I had forgotten that there is one - Joe Landry's radio play version has been entertaining holiday audiences since it first was produced almost 20 years ago. We began planning right away! Not only was I thrilled about the chance to work with the RVP team to tell this beautiful story, I was equally excited by the opportunity that this particular version provides for us to share with the audience what we do backstage. As you will see, the activity behind the scenes is as complex and fascinating as that which appears in front of the proverbial curtain.

### WOOD LOCKHART LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Wood Lockhart's involvement with RVP spans 20 years, including Board membership, head of House Management, production manager for *Sabrina Fair* and *The Ladies of the Camellias*, and acting in over 20 productions, including *Premiere!*, *A Month in the Country*, *Heroes*, *The Ladies of the Camellias*, *On Golden Pond* and *Proof*. Most recently, Wood played Osip in *The Government Inspector*.

RVP honors and acknowledges these contributions.



The casts of most productions of *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play* enjoy the assistance of an onstage Foley artist who performs most, if not all, of the sound effects and music cues, leaving the actors free to focus on performing the characters and telling the story. Having myself performed with school tour programs, as well as in many plays with San Francisco's Word for Word, where actors often get to perform backstage effects in addition to playing multiple characters in show, I asked RVP if we could cast this production without the Foley artist, but instead with flexible, talented actors capable of performing all the sound effects and music themselves. "Go for it!" was Steve Price's trusting response.

I am beholden to our immensely gifted cast, our imaginative and creative designers and consultants, our stalwart crew, and our unfailingly gracious producer for their steadfast dedication and patience.

Thus, we present you with the well-known and beloved story of a person who rejects his value to his community, only to have his heart and soul buoyed by the love of that very community. *It's a Wonderful Life* inspires us, during this holiday season, to always cherish the reality that we depend on each other, and we need each other.

Happy holidays to you, to those you love and to those who love you.

## Director's Bio

### Adrian Elfenbaum (Director)

happily returns to Ross Valley Players, where he directed award-nominated productions of *The 39 Steps* (2017), *The Mousetrap* (2019), and last season's *Picnic*, the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Best Production (North Bay Small Theatres). Other North Bay credits include *Medea* and the BATCC-nominated *Dead Accounts* at College of Marin, and several plays at Sonoma State University, including *Much Ado About Nothing*, the operas *Bastien and Bastienne*, *The Old Maid and the Thief*, and Leonard Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*, and the musicals *A Little Night Music*, *Company*, *Oklahoma!* and *Fiddler on the Roof*. Adrian



has worked with many Bay Area theatre companies as an actor or director, including Marin Shakespeare, VITA Shakespeare, TheatreWorks, the Magic Theatre, and San Francisco's Word for Word, with which he has participated on stage or behind the scenes since their first season. (Happy 30th Anniversary, Word for Word!) Adrian holds an MFA in

Acting from UC Davis. Adrian thanks the generous and creative cast of *It's a Wonderful Life*, and once again thanks the collegial production team at RVP, with whom it's always a joy to work. Adrian is forever grateful to JoAnne, Ben and Jack for their continuous patience and loving support.



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# THE CAST



**Molly Rebekka Benson** (*Lana Sherwood*), a theater actor and voiceover artist, graduated from Oberlin College with a BA in theater and has since delighted in shifting into varied characters on stage and over microphones. Molly recently found a theatrical home as a Company Member with Word for Word Theater Company and has been in *Anniversary!* and *Food Stories*, both of which toured in France, as well as numerous Off the Page readings. Other companies she's worked with in the Bay Area include Theaterworks, Cutting Ball, Shotgun Players, Custom Made, Cal Shakes, Town Hall Theater and Killing My Lobster, and Grove Theater Center and El Portal Theater in Los Angeles. Molly currently focuses on her voiceover career and her role as Mom to two amazing kids. Thanks and love to Dan, her partner of 19 years, for being so supportive as she takes to the stage once again. [www.mollyrbenson.com](http://www.mollyrbenson.com).



**Evan Held** (*Jake Laurents*) graduated from the Pacific Conservatory of Performing Arts (PCPA) and has been a Bay Area actor his whole life, acting at companies including Ross Valley Players, Marin Summer Theater, SRJC, 6th Street Playhouse, Word for Word, Livermore Shakes, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Redwood Theater Company, Spreckels, Main Stage West, and more! He's currently leading the education department at San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, primarily focused on their Shakespeare's Heartbeat program utilizing Shakespeare's themes and stories to bring education to the special education community in schools.



**Loren Nordlund** (*Freddie Filmore*). A member of Actors' Equity since 1989, Loren is delighted to be on the RVP team for this holiday classic. Loren's theatrical credits are highlighted by two long-running comedies: *Noises Off* (Marin Theatre Company and Marines Memorial Theatre) and *Greater Tuna* (SF and Kansas City). He has performed with the Berkeley, San Francisco and Oregon Shakespeare festivals, Word for Word Theatre (SF) and the San Francisco Opera. He also composes and arranges music. Loren gives special thanks to Ken for definitively proving that it is, indeed, a wonderful life.



**Elenor Irene Paul** (*Sally Applewhite*) is so excited to be returning once again to the RVP stage! A Sonoma County native, Elenor recently graduated from PCPA in Santa Maria. She is enjoying reconnecting to the Bay Area theater community and making new art. Some of her favorite roles include Bianca/Lodovico in *Othello* (San Jose Stage), Caroline Bingley in *Pride & Prejudice — The Musical* (RVP), Sarah Brown in *Guys and Dolls* (6th Street Playhouse), and Ariel in *The Tempest* (Redwood Theater Company). Outside of theater, Elenor makes time for birding, cooking, and for her friends and family.



**Malcolm Rodgers** (*Harry "Jazzbo" Heywood*) is an actor and scenic designer based in Marin County. Most recently, he has performed in *The 39 Steps* (Clown), *Othello* (Iago) and *The Winter's Tale* (Polixines) at SPARC/SIV in Livermore, and *How to Transcend a Happy Marriage* (Michael) at Custom Made Theatre. Recent roles elsewhere include Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, Grossman in *These Shining Lives* at RVP; Antiochus and Leonine in *Pericles* at SF Shakespeare; and George in *The Speakeasy* at Box Car Theater. As a scenic designer, Malcolm has worked with Shotgun Players, Ross Valley Players, CCCT, Masquers Playhouse, Arabian Shakespeare, Napa Valley Shakespeare, and College of Marin. Malcolm studied performance and design at SFSU and received his acting conservatory training at PCPA.

## PRODUCTION SPONSOR

Tessera Trademark Screening is proud to support *It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play* and artistic excellence at Ross Valley Players.



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## Backstage Bios

**Billie Cox** (*Sound Design*) has worked with Marin Shakespeare, 6th Street Playhouse, SF Playhouse, Custom Made Theatre, NCTC, Stapleton, Masquers, Alcove, Novato Players, College of Marin and many others. Her work has brought her ten BATCC nominations, a TBA nomination, two Falstaff Awards and a Dean Goodman Award. Her original play, *A Bearded Lady*, was awarded Best Play of the 2009 SF Fringe Festival.

**Benjamin Vasquez** (*Stage Manager*) is excited to be working on this production and with this wonderful team at Ross Valley Players. Some past stage management credits at the Barn include *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *The 39 Steps*, *Mousetrap*, *Sylvia* and *Picnic*. Most recently you may have seen him moving furniture in the transitions of *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Musical*. Some past onstage credits include Caliban in *The Tempest*, the Aviator in *The Little Prince* at the College of Marin, and Dobchinsky in *The Government Inspector* here at the Barn. He would like to thank his family for all their support and also the Drama Department and Program staff at College of Marin for their guidance and training.

**Dianne Harrison** (*Property Design/ Assistant Stage Manager*) has worked for the past fifteen years in stage management, sound/light board operations, and props design for many Bay Area theatre companies, including the African-American Shakespeare Company (*Richard II*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Death of a Salesman*), the Altarena Playhouse (*A Nice Family Gathering*, *The Birds*), Eye Zen Presents (*Sylvester: The Mighty Real*), Playground SF (Monday Night Series, Best of Festival), Ross Valley Players (*Silent Sky*, *Pride & Prejudice — The Musical*), Santa Rosa Junior College

(*Beauty and the Beast*, *Legally Blonde: The Musical*, *SpongeBob: The Musical*), Sonoma Arts Live (*Nunsense*, *Calendar Girls*), the Mountain Play (*Camelot*), and Valley Players (*Men on Boats*). In 2015, she earned a Certificate of Merit from the Kennedy Center's American College Theater Festival for stage managing the SRJC's production of *Almost, Maine*. Dianne is honored to design for RVP, and she thanks her husband for his unwavering encouragement and support.

**Raysheina de Leon-Ruhs** (*Assistant Stage Manager*) is a College of Marin alumna. As a student, she performed in several theatre productions, including *The River Bride*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Tempest*. She transferred to SF State, where she received her BA in Theatre Arts. She has enjoyed being Assistant Stage Manager for Ross Valley Players productions of *Ripcord*, *Sherlock*, and *Picnic*. She also had fun performing as Bobchinsky in *The Government Inspector*, Christine Schoenwalder in *Picnic*, and Mary Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice, The Musical*. In her free time, she can be found out in the woods looking for wild mushrooms.

**Michael A. Berg** (*Costume Design*) has created costumes for many Bay Area theatrical organizations, including Center Rep in Walnut Creek, the Mountain Play, Marin Shakespeare and the College of Marin. Michael is Resident Costume Manager for RVP. His knowledge of the current extensive costume stock and the ever-expanding costume shop he has created at the Barn are invaluable assets to RVP productions. In addition to Michael's RVP responsibilities, he is on the costume staff of Center Repertory Company in Walnut Creek, and he costumed *Spamalot* for the Marin Shakespeare Company.



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Theater lobby



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**Mikiko Uesugi** (*Scenic Design*) is pleased to be designing for Ross Valley Players for the first time. Recent theater credits include *Citizen* and *Home* for Word for Word, *Nightingale* and *Erwartung* for West Edge Opera. She has also designed for Aurora Theater Company, Magic Theater, Shotgun Players, Golden Thread Productions, Crowded Fire, Theater of Yugen, Theater Works, ACT MFA Program, Berkeley Repertory Theater, and Chanticleer, among others. She is a resident artist at Golden Thread Productions, a recipient of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Designers and of The Isadora Duncan Dance Award.

**Jim Cave** (*Lighting Design*) has, for the past forty-some years, focused on the development of new theater, multi-disciplinary and site-specific performances, demonstrations, and general disruption. He has directed and designed plays, dance, dance-theater, opera, new music theater, site-specific spectacles, and a flea circus for San Francisco's Exploratorium. His lighting

designs have been seen at the Eureka, the Magic, the Aurora, BAMPFA, SOMArts and Intersection for the Arts. He designs regularly for Word for Word Performing Arts Company at Z Space in San Francisco, where he is a Core Company Member and Production Manager.

**Elena Wright** (*Intimacy and Movement Coach*) is a Bay Area actor, educator, and fight/intimacy director. Elena has designed violence and/or intimacy for SF Playhouse, Santa Clara University, Chabot College, Left Edge Theatre, The Pear Theatre, Aurora Theatre, College of Marin, Shotgun Players, AlterTheatre, TheatreFirst, Custom Made, Sonoma State University, Landmark Musical Theatre, City Lights Theatre, Role Players Ensemble, Ross Valley Players, Marin Shakespeare Company, and Laney College, among others. Elena received their MFA in acting from the University of Washington, and a BS in theatre from Northeastern University and is a teacher with Dueling Arts International.

**Dhyanis Carniglia** (*Scenic Artist*) was introduced to the Barn Theatre in 1986 and has served many roles here and at other Bay Area theatres, including Head Costumer and Designer, Scenic Artist, Choreographer and Prop Designer. She is currently assistant to the set designer at College of Marin. She designs and produces her own line of dance costumes and clothing, teaches belly dance and is a Grief Coach. Past credits at the Mountain Play include Costume Designer for *The King and I* (1987), *South Pacific* (1988), *Brigadoon* (1989), and *Anything Goes* (1990). She also served as Scenic Artist on the Mountain up to and including *Beauty and the Beast* (2017). Awards for costuming include Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle (*Follies*, 1994), four Shellies (Contra Costa Civic Light Opera musicals) and a Solano College Award for *Elephant Man* (1995).

**RVP** is part of the Marin Art and Garden Center, which sits within the unceded ancestral homeland of the Coast Miwok people. RVP respects and honors past, present, and future generations of Miwok and their continued connection to this land. RVP is grateful for the opportunity to gather in this place and gives respect to its first inhabitants.



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Should auld acquaintance be forgot  
And never brought to mind?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot  
And auld lang syne?

For auld lang syne, my dear  
For auld lang syne  
We'll take a cup of kindness yet  
For auld lang syne



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