



# A Christmas Story

Dec. 4 thru Dec. 19, 2009

By Philip Grecian, based upon the motion picture *A Christmas Story*, written by Jean Shepherd, Leigh Brown and Bob Clark, and the book *In God we Trust, All Others Pay Cash* by Jean Shepherd

**Directed by Paul Barnes**

## Ralphie, you'll shoot your eye out!

By Greg Hatch

Dramaturg for *A Christmas Story*

Set in pre-World War II in the fictional town of Hohman, Indiana, *A Christmas Story* follows the trials and tribulations of Ralphie Parker, a grade-school boy with a wild imagination and a singular purpose in life. His greatest desire is to be the proud, enviable owner of an official Red Ryder carbine action 200-shot range model air rifle.



Red Ryder(R) is a registered trademark of Red Ryder Ent., Inc., used under license by Daisy. Image used with permission of Daisy(R) Outdoor Products.

Playwright Philip Grecian adapted most of the text of the play *A Christmas Story* directly from the 1983 movie of the same title, which itself is a compilation of text (often taken word-for-word) from four short stories written by radio personality, actor, and author Jean Shepherd. These, in turn, were transcripts of Shepherd's radio and stand-up monologues published in two short story anthologies, *In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash* and *Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories*.

Jean Shepherd (1921-1999) was a raconteur of legendary status and ability. As a storyteller, he rivaled Mark Twain, in facial hair and hair-brained characters. As a radio personality, he was a

low-budget, one-man band version of Garrison Keillor's *A Prairie Home Companion*. His stories have the small town drama and confident optimism of *The Music Man*, but with more jazz; the joy, pain, and bittersweet melancholy of *Our Town*, without the cemetery. His style was a blend of Bill Cosby's childhood capers and familial high jinks, combined with David Letterman's outlandish audience stunts, and Jerry Seinfeld's observations of everyday absurdities, with a Protestant, Midwestern twist.

The Parker family's fictional Hohman is based on Hammond, Indiana, Jean Shepherd's home town. Located 25 miles southeast of Chicago, Illinois, on the southern shore of Lake Michigan, Hammond was a successful railroad

## CONTENT

**SYNOPSIS:** Nine-year-old Ralphie only wants one thing for Christmas: the legendary official Red Ryder 200-Shot Carbine Action Range Model Air Rifle with a compass and this thing that tells time built right in the stock. The problem is that every adult in his life, beginning with his mother, is afraid he'll shoot his eye out with it. Ralphie's attempts to persuade Santa and his parents that he should get the Red Ryder gun form the basis for this charming and nostalgic look at growing up in a small town in Midwestern America in 1938.

**LANGUAGE:** None.

**SMOKING & DRINKING:** None.

**SEX:** None.

**VIOLENCE:** None.

**FOR WHICH AUDIENCES?:** *A Christmas Story* is suitable for all audiences, including children aged 5 and older.

**RATING:** The movie version of *A Christmas Story* was rated "G."

**RUNNING TIME:** Two hours and 30 minutes, which includes one intermission.

### Beginning January 2010

*Backstage* will only be delivered online via [www.pioneertheatre.org](http://www.pioneertheatre.org)

Please read Managing Director Chris Lino's article on page 3 for more information.

# Director and Cast for *A Christmas Story*

**PAUL BARNES** (Director) returns to PTC after directing last season's *Romeo & Juliet* and enjoys working with the cast he's assembled for this Christmas classic.

**DON BURROUGHS\*** (The Old Man) previously appeared at PTC as Oberon/Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Most recently he played Elyot opposite his wife in *Private Lives* and wrote and performed music for *As You Like It* this summer at USF in Cedar City. He spent three years in the Las Vegas production of *Mamma Mia!* at Mandalay Bay. NY credits include *Dessa Rose* at Lincoln Center, *Reunion* at Theatre Row (cast album), and the First National Tour of *The Full Monty*.

**BROCK HOLMAN** (Farkas) recently played Motel in *Fiddler on the Roof* and Minstrel in *Once Upon A Mattress* at Bryant Intermediate where he attends school. Brock has also enjoyed roles in the film *A Pioneer Miracle*, and numerous radio and tv commercials.

**ALEXIA "ALLY" IOANNIDES** (Esther Jane) makes her debut at PTC. Ally has performed at the Egyptian Theatre in *Charlie Brown* (Lucy), *Willy Wonka* (Veruca Salt) and *Once On This Island* (Gossip). Ally's film highlights include *The Alice Winter*, *The Wood* and Park City Chamber and as well as ongoing work with an educational software company.

**MASON JOHNSON** (Ralphie) has had many adventures on the stage and in film, but his first professional theatrical experience was playing Winthrop in *The Music Man* at the Egyptian Theatre.

**JACK KOENIG\*** (Ralph) was David Hyde Pierce's standby in the Broadway revival of *Accent on Youth*, and played the Nazi major in the Off-Broadway revival of Arthur Miller's *Incident at Vichy*. He spent three years in *The Lion King* on Broadway, and received a Drama Desk Award as part of the Outstanding Ensemble of the Off-Broadway play *Tabletop*. Many regional credits, most recently *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (Virginia Stage). TV credits include *Sex and the City* and multiple appearances on all three *Law & Order* series. He is a member of The Actors Company Theatre (TACT) and of The Actors Center Company.

**CADEN MAYNES** (Randy) has appeared in many productions at the Hale Centre Theatre, including *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Phantom*, and *A Christmas Carol*.

**BYRON MELVILLE** (Schwartz) is pleased to be involved in *A Christmas Story*. Productions Byron has been in include *To See the Stars* and *The No Girls Allowed Club*.

**REGAN THOMPSON\*** (Miss Shields) makes her Pioneer Theatre debut. Off-Broadway credits include *Theophilus North* (Keen Company). She has been seen on television in *As the World Turns* and *Law & Order: SVU*. Her regional and other NY credits include *Bad Dates* (Hangar Theatre), *The Elephant Man* and *The Crucible* (Northern Stage), *Crimes of the Heart* (Playmakers Repertory Company), *Theophilus North* (Dorset Theatre Festival), *As You Like It* and *Julius Caesar* (North Carolina Shakespeare Festival), *Vanities* (Penguin Repertory Company), *Déjà Vu* (Caldwell Theatre Company), *Dracula* (Tennessee Repertory Theatre), *Proof* (Depot Theatre), *I, Vermin* (NYC Fringe Festival), *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *King John*, and *Julius Caesar* (Alabama Shakespeare Festival).

**GAVIN YEHLE** (Flick) has been in Youth Theatre at the U for four years and is currently part of Youth Theatre Conservatory's production of *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!* He has also been in *Inherit the Wind* at the Grand Theatre, *Zink the Zebra* and *Zebra Swallowtail*.

**ROBIN YOUNG** (Helen) has participated in Youth Theatre at the U since she was four, and has performed in several of their shows. Some of her favorite roles include Lucy in *The No Girls Allowed Club* and Banderlog in *The Jungle Book*.

**GABRA ZACKMAN\*** (Mother) Ms. Zackman's New York credits include *On the Verge* (John Houseman, NY and Edinburgh Fringe); *Train Story* by Adam Rapp; and new plays at Juilliard, Soho Rep, Lincoln Center Studio, The Harold Clurman, Premiere Stages and The Lake George Theatre Lab. Regional credits include: *Love Song* (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park); *My Name is Asher Lev* (Arden Theatre); Mary Zimmerman's production of *Metamorphoses* (Hartford Stage and Kansas City Rep, and a new production at Florida Studio Theatre); *Measure for Pleasure* (also at FST); four seasons with The Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival including *Pericles*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Cymbeline*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Stratford Theatre, CT); and *Taming of the Shrew* (Georgia Shakespeare Festival, Nebraska Shakespeare Festival).

More cast information at:

[www.pioneertheatre.org/2009-2010-season/a-christmas-story](http://www.pioneertheatre.org/2009-2010-season/a-christmas-story)

**DON BURROUGHS**  
The Old Man



**BROCK HOLMAN**  
Farkas



**ALLY IOANNIDES**  
Esther Jane



**MASON JOHNSON**  
Ralphie



**JACK KOENIG**  
Ralph



**CADEN MAYNES**  
Randy



**BYRON MELVILLE**  
Schwartz



**REGAN THOMPSON**  
Miss Shields



**GAVIN YEHLE**  
Flick



**ROBIN YOUNG**  
Helen



**GABRA ZACKMAN**  
Mother



# “State of the Union” Report



By Chris Lino, Managing Director

Generally we reserve the pages of our *Backstage* newsletter for stories about the upcoming production—background information on the play, and director’s notes.

For this issue, however, I’d like to take a moment to report on the theatre’s operations and finances. The economy and its effect on business has been front page news for over a year. Virtually every employment sector— private business, local and state government and the not-for-profit performing arts—have been hard hit by the economy. It seems like a week doesn’t go by

when we don’t open the paper and read about lay-offs, bankruptcies, and other dispiriting news.

Pioneer Theatre Company is not immune to those forces, but the good news is that, as the financial report next to this column indicates, PTC completed the 2008-09 fiscal year with a balanced operating budget. The theatre has had balanced budgets in eight of the last nine years, has no accumulated debt and some assets, in the form of endowments and a small cash reserve, to help us through difficult times.

The theatre generates roughly 65% of its operating revenues from ticket sales and other earned revenue, an extremely strong percentage compared with our national peer group, and this helps us in difficult economic times as well.

PTC also operates with a smaller staff than other theatres of our size, and this helps us maintain a healthy operating model. According to the most recent not-for-profit theatre national report, on average theatres across the country spend 21.1% of their budget on administrative salaries; PTC spends less than 14%. This keeps our total operating expenses down, and ensures that more of our budget can be spent on the quality of our productions.

On the other hand, and despite all of the above, it is clear that the current year, and probably next year as well, are going to be extremely challenging ones.

PTC’s share of Zoo, Arts and Parks revenues, which are derived from sales tax collected in Salt Lake County and account historically for roughly 16% of our operating revenues, are down roughly \$130,000 from last year to this year. Likewise corporate and foundation gifts, which depend on a strong stock market and a healthy corporate bottom line, respectively, are suffering similar declines.

PTC’s endowments, which are managed and invested by the University of Utah, have outperformed the S&P 500 index, but still lost 14% of their value during the past year. In practical terms, this means that the endowments generate less revenue available for operating purposes—about \$50,000 less over the past twelve months—than in previous years.

And ticket sales, while they have stayed relatively strong (for the 2009-2010 season, we have the third highest number of season tickets we’ve had in the past twenty years), are also affected by the economy.

How will we deal with these challenges? Like all business, we will engage in belt-tightening, but one thing we won’t do is cut the scope and quality of our productions. We will still do large scale musicals like this season’s ending *42nd Street*, and we will still cast our productions with the best Equity actors from New York and Salt Lake City. We will still create sets and costumes for each production that rival those you would see on Broadway.

Most of the belt-tightening we do should be invisible to you. However, at least one will be apparent to you, because it has to do with this newsletter.

Starting with our January World Premiere production of *Touch(ed)*, we will be converting to an online-only newsletter. *Backstage* will not be printed and mailed to you. We will still produce a newsletter with the same content you’re used to, but it will be delivered to you electronically, via e-mail. It will also be available online via our website.

If you wish to have *Backstage* e-mailed to you, please be sure we have your e-mail address. You can do that by calling our Box Office at 801-581-6961. (If your email address is already in our system, you may update your online profile, including your address or mailing preferences, from our home page. Simply click “My Account” from the top right menu at [www.PioneerTheatre.org](http://www.PioneerTheatre.org).)

Thank you for your understanding—and more importantly, thank you for your continued patronage. That we’ve done as well as we have is because so many of you in our community care passionately enough about theatre to make it a regular part of your lives.

And to our donors—that special group that makes up the last 35% of our budget year in and year out—a special thank you. We’re here, and have been here for forty-seven years, because of you.

## Schedule of Operating Revenues and Expenses For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2009

### EARNED REVENUES

Season tickets	\$1,750,007
Single tickets	842,980
Concession & Loge Gallery	58,736
Miscellaneous Box Office	107,874
Set & Costume Rentals	33,811
Events (earned)*	30,618
Spendable Earnings from Endowments	131,312

**SUBTOTAL EARNED: \$2,955,338**

### CONTRIBUTED REVENUES

Individuals	199,125
Corporations	232,722
Foundations	181,455
Matching Gifts	9,108
Salt Lake City Arts Council	5,000
Salt Lake County Zoo, Arts & Parks	727,620
Utah Arts Council	53,000
Pioneer Theatre Guild	8,200
Events (contributed)*	101,419
Other	42,000

**SUBTOTAL CONTRIBUTED: \$1,559,649**

**TOTAL REVENUES: \$4,514,987**

### EXPENDITURES

Administrative Salaries & benefits	603,375
Artistic Salaries & benefits	1,622,833
Technical Salaries & benefits	860,027
Set & Costume materials	223,982
Royalties	198,679
Staff & Artist Travel	101,729
Artist Housing	128,218
Marketing	389,332
Development (fundraising)	52,758
Box Office & House	163,137
Concessions & Loge Gallery	36,123
New Plays Project	36,000
Miscellaneous	67,943

**TOTAL EXPENSES: \$4,484,137**

Department of Theatre Production Expenses**	186,600
University Support for Department of Theatre**	186,600

**OPERATING SURPLUS \$30,850**

### NOTES

\*Audit standards require that the theatre report revenue derived from events (the Gala) as “earned,” representing the fair market value of goods and services provided, and “contributed,” representing the amount of Gala revenue received above the fair market value of goods and services provided.

\*\* Pioneer Theatre company has budgetary responsibility for, and incurs \$186,600 in production expenses of, the University’s academic Department of Theatre in the Babcock Theatre, located in the lower level of Simmons PMT. The University of Utah provides \$186,600 in off-setting support for these activities.

Pioneer Theatre Company commissions an annual independent certified audit of its operations. The 2008-09 audit has been conducted by the firm of Hansen, Barnett & Maxwell, a professional corporation. A copy of the audit is available on request.

Continued from page 1

hub and industrial city. By the early 1930s, the population was 66,000 and the city boasted over 100 industries—mostly refineries, mills, and processing plants—as well as the world’s largest power generation plant. It was a fine place to raise a family with 20 schools, nine parks, six hospitals, dozens of churches, a YMCA, and its own Carnegie library. It was cosmopolitan, too, with a newspaper—*The Hammond Times*—two skyscrapers, a movie palace, and two playhouses. Nevertheless, Hammond was not immune to the effects of the Great Depression. All nine of Hammond’s banks failed



by 1932, making it the largest city in the United States without a bank. This backdrop to *A Christmas Story* draws parallels to many of our own experiences today, with banks and businesses collapsing, a newly elected president orchestrating major government and policy overhauls, and American families making the best of tough economic times.

Jean Shepherd’s own family was lower-middle class; his father worked as a manager at Borden Dairies, his mother, a housewife. Shepherd’s love affair with radio started

in high school when he worked as a sportscaster for the local radio station. After serving in World War II as a radar engineer, he took classes at Indiana University before dropping out to take a job at WSAI in Cincinnati, Ohio. While hosting a popular late-night comedy show on WLW-TV, he was invited to New York City to audition as the replacement for Steve Allen on NBC’s *The Tonight Show*. He didn’t get the gig, but he stayed in New York and spent the next 21 years telling tall tales at WOR-AM radio.

Jean Shepherd insisted on classifying his stories as fiction. While based on his experiences growing up in Hammond, Shepherd’s nostalgic tales of family, school, and work life in “Industrial Town America” are more fable than fact. They’re as much make-believe as memory, embodying his strong sense of satire with just a hint of sentiment. Beginning many of his on-air stories with “I’m this kid, see...,” Shepherd connected with his audience through a common sensibility—humor—about a common experience: childhood.

Want more of this discussion? Visit us online at:

[www.pioneertheatre.org/2009-2010-season/a-christmas-story/directors-notes/](http://www.pioneertheatre.org/2009-2010-season/a-christmas-story/directors-notes/)

This link is also available by navigating to the Show Information Page for *A Christmas Story*.

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## Loge Gallery

Visit our gallery during *A Christmas Story* to see the variety of work offered by artists Susan Jarvis, Jamie Love and Lucia Heffernan.



by Jamie Love



Top: by Lucia Heffernan, bottom by Susan Jarvis

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Dec. 4 thru Dec. 19, 2009

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