

South HUNTSVILLE NEIGHBORS

DECEMBER 2021

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Fantasy Playhouse "A Christmas Carol"

By Karen Mockensturm, Executive Director and Megan Carter

Having found ways to pivot to virtual programming during 2020, Fantasy Playhouse Children's Theater & Academy was thrilled to open its doors to in person programming beginning this fall. The pandemic was especially destructive to the arts and culture industry, but Fantasy Playhouse used the opportunity to create artistic lemonade out of Covid lemons and even saw a 7% increase in audiences by providing virtual and other alternative programs.

But the theatre is made for live audiences and Fantasy Playhouse is excited to return to the Von Braun Center Playhouse stage to present its 32nd production of Charles Dickens' classic, "A Christmas Carol." This Huntsville holiday tradition involves over 100 volunteer theatre artists working on stage and backstage and has become a holiday tradition for families involved and as well as those enjoying the spectacle from seats in the audience. South Huntsville resident Akshay Ahuja is part of the cast for a second time and echoes the thoughts of many involved: "(This story) takes me back in time and makes me appreciate the season. It reminds me of how truly blessed we are."

The hallmark of Fantasy Playhouse's "Christmas Carol" is the fact that it allows intergenerational family participation. This year's company represents 30 households, some of them working with multiple generations of family members. Devoting time to the process of creating the stage production has become synonymous with the holiday season itself. Fantasy Playhouse veteran Alma Huston states, "I am so excited for this to be our first production with three generations represented. I can't wait to make new memories with my daughter and granddaughter that will last forever."

Lena Austin also reflects on the tradition: "It's hard for me to put into words how much directing a Christmas Carol means to me. It's something I've looked forward to for almost a decade. This was the first production (my eldest daughter) Maddie and I participated in at Fantasy Playhouse and it ignited a passion for theater in us that changed everything."



South Huntsville resident, Akshay Ahuja (right) first performed onstage with Kevin O'Brien (left) in an earlier staging of Fantasy Playhouse Children's Theater's production of "A Christmas Carol."

Barbara Field's classic retelling is peppered with traditional carol caroles. On Christmas Eve, solitary businessman Ebenezer Scrooge receives a haunting visit from the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future to show him what truly matters. As director Austin states, "It's the second most important story of redemption and forgiveness and it is an honor to bring this to the community after such a long time of uncertainty."

Suitable for the entire family, "A Christmas Carol" runs December 3-5 and 10-12 at the Von Braun Center Playhouse at 700 Monroe Street, Huntsville, AL. Showtimes are 7:00pm on Fridays and 1:00pm and 6:00pm on Saturdays and Sundays. Tickets are \$21 for adults and \$16 for students. Discounts for groups of 10 or more are available as well. More information (including information regarding health and safety measures around Covid) may be found at www.fantasyplayhouse.org/ticket-information. Information regarding student matinee performances and supporting classroom curriculum, please email FieldTrips@fantasyplayhouse.com.



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