



**WELLS  
FARGO**

presents

## THE GUIDE

A theatergoer's resource prepared for  
**Portland Center Stage**

by Darius Pierce with support from Cynthia Kirk

# THIS WONDERFUL LIFE

PORTLAND  
**CENTER  
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THEATER  
LIVE

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PORTLAND OR 97205

[www.PCS.org](http://www.PCS.org)

written by **Steve Murray** and  
conceived by Mark Setlock  
based on the screenplay *It's A Wonderful Life*  
directed by Martha Banta

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Mary (Donna Reed), George (Jimmy Stewart), and Zuzu (Karolyn Grimes)



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*With the exceptions of Martha and Mark's headshots, all of the images are screenshots from the movie It's a Wonderful Life. All of these scenes will be presented in This Wonderful Life - the difference being that Mark will be portraying all of the characters shown. And Mark will appear live in person, rather than on a screen. And he'll be in color, thanks in no part to Ted Turner.*

# THIS ONE-DERFUL LIFE

by Darius Pierce



Little George (Robert Anderson)

Ten years ago, Mark Setlock was performing in a Christmas show. However, the show wasn't the only place he was performing; backstage Mark was doing something entirely different. Over the course of the holidays, Mark entertained the Christmas show's cast by imitating scenes from the movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, and by the end of the run, one of his fellow actors was more than entertained. He encouraged Mark to bring his *Wonderful* act to an audience.

The seed was planted. That's all it took. And look at us now.

Two years ago, while delighting Portland audiences in *Fully Committed*, Mark made a passing comment about his idea for a one-man version of *It's a Wonderful Life*. Then, just last year, Portland Center Stage sought a holiday show to replace the long-running *SantaLand Diaries*, and stage manager Marcella Crowson remembered Mark's idea. The prospect of creating a world premiere and working again with Mark was too good to pass up. So we didn't.

In addition to his extraordinary skill at imitations, Mark's accessibility and warmth onstage created a

personal relationship between him and *It's a Wonderful Life*. But who would create the perfect artistic relationship to fill out the project? Playwright Steve Murray came immediately to mind. Steve had worked with Chris Coleman in Atlanta; his acerbic farce *Manna*, which PCS presented at its JAW/West Festival in 2002, evinced a knack for working playfully with pop culture. Thinking Steve and Mark might connect, PCS flew Steve to London, where Mark was performing *Fully Committed* in the West End. They talked, and – to make a long story short – Steve agreed to author the show.

The last piece of the puzzle was Martha Banta, a director who has mounted many one-person shows and worked frequently with Mark. She believes that the *Wonderful Life* story is ideal to be told by one person, because the story is about an individual's impact on the grander scope of life. What better than to focus the performance utterly on one individual.

To add to that focus, Mark himself will be controlling the evening, despite portraying many characters. Even the set will fall under Mark's purview as he manipulates the pieces to provide the setting he needs to tell the story. The production, then, will not merely be a retelling of *It's a Wonderful Life*, but will be about one man's zeal for retelling *It's a Wonderful Life*. Mark will be attempting 100% accurate imitations of the beloved (and less-than-beloved) characters from the film, while putting a respectful spin on this holiday classic at Christmas time.

After sorting out the complicated copyright issues surrounding the play, Mark, Steve, and Martha held a



Clarence (Henry Travers) and George (Jimmy Stewart)

years of exemplary stage management for Portland Center Stage, she is moving on to the next stage of her life. Whatever that turns out to be, we all wish her the best. With any luck, audiences will not notice her absence from the house, which will only be a testament to the extraordinary quality of her invisible yet inestimable work.

one-week workshop of the work in progress – now retitled *This Wonderful Life* – last August. Out of that came the first draft of the script. As of this writing, we are working on the fourth draft of the script, and many more drafts should appear before the final script is set for performance. Steve will be working with Mark, Martha and Marcella the entire time, rewriting, discovering and creating for weeks into the rehearsal process as they develop this world premiere adaptation.

For many, the movie version of *It's a Wonderful Life* may be so seemingly familiar that it is rarely revisited. Here, we are offering the opportunity to return to this beloved story in a fresh light, in a new format, and through different eyes. Surrounded by your community in the theater, the story, the movie, and – now – the play grab your attention. As Mark says, you may not know exactly what a “run on a bank” is, but everyone has had moments of wondering, “What’s my place in the world?” Here, live, they’ll get to see it.

After two one-man shows at Portland Center Stage, what’s next for Mark Setlock? He jokes that it will be his own, original, one-man stage adaptation of *Sophie’s Choice*. We’ll be waiting for it with baited breath. But not held breath.

Finally, *This Wonderful Life* marks our final show with the aforementioned Marcella Crowson. After ten

## THE STORY...

the place to find out what will happen before it does



George (Jimmy Stewart), Mary (Donna Reed), and a neighbor.  
(please email [webmaster@pcs.org](mailto:webmaster@pcs.org) if you know who!)

From all over Portland and the surrounding areas, people of all ages approach the Portland Center for the Performing Arts in anticipation of the show. They park their cars and get off their busses. They lock their bikes and pay for their cabs. Entering the building, they stop at the box office, the restroom and the restaurant, though possibly not all three and probably not in that order. Eventually, everyone – the parents and children the singles and couples, the young and the old – find themselves in the theater, in their seats, in the dark awaiting the same thing. To experience *This Wonderful Life* together. And in the dark, they hear voices.

The voices are praising one George Bailey. And the stage lights rise to reveal not the aforementioned George Bailey, but one Mark Setlock. Mark is this evening's host. He will be telling the gathered masses the story of George Bailey. But not just telling them, because the odds are pretty good most of them know it already. Mark will be performing it, commenting on it, commenting with it, mocking it, loving it, and generally re-imagining it for the modern-day live-theater setting. And, he tells us, he'll be playing every one of the characters. Dozens of them. He also tells

us the tale will be told in one hour... or else there will be dire consequences. That's right. Dire.

Three angels tell us that later tonight, George is going to consider killing himself. Fledgling angel Clarence is assigned to make sure that George comes through that dilemma alive. If Clarence succeeds in saving George, he will receive his long-awaited angel wings.

To prepare Clarence for his mission, the other angels give him a crash course in George's history, including how he lost the use of one ear saving his brother Harry's life, how he saved Mrs. Blaine's life when he noticed her doctor's mistake, and how Mary Hatch is in love with him. We're now less than ten minutes into the show, Mark has performed ten characters, and George is growing up.

George is heading off to college with no intention of coming back to his home town. Before leaving, he attends one last dance at his old high school. After falling in a swimming pool and failing to kiss Mary, George's night is tarnished by the news that his father has had a fatal stroke. Mr. Potter owns most of the town and now would like the Bailey family's Building & Loan business, too. To resist Potter's takeover, George stays in town to run his father's business. Harry goes off to school with George's college money, becoming exceedingly successful.

Meanwhile, George and Mary marry. However, once again George's plan to leave town is thwarted. The Great Depression causes a run on the Loan office. George turns down Mr. Potter's opportunistic offer to help



Officer Bert (Ward Bond) and George (Jimmy Stewart)

and manages to stem the rush by paying people back out of his honeymoon money. So Mary and George cannot go on their honeymoon. But the good news is they have bought a house. But the bad news is that it is incredibly run down. And the worse news is that Potter is trying every trick in the proverbial book to take over the Bailey business. George just barely turns down an offer to work for Potter and returns home to the news that Mary is pregnant.

Years pass. Mary and George have two kids, a spruced up home, and a business that's barely afloat. Harry earns a Congressional Medal of Honor in World War II while George couldn't fight because of his ear.

Now it's Christmas Eve and George's Uncle Billy is on his way to deposit \$8,000 in the bank when he runs into Potter. Billy grabs Potter's newspaper because he sees the article about Harry winning the Medal of Honor, but when he returns the paper to Potter, he also hands him the \$8,000. This is a terrible accident because the bank examiner is on his way to check the Building and Loan's books and that money needed to be deposited!

This financial loss is George's last straw. He feels his life has been a series of disappointments and is taking out his anger and frustration on his family. Finally, he decides he must go to Potter to ask for the \$8,000. Potter's response is to threaten George with arrest – but not before they discover that George's life

insurance policy makes him worth more dead than alive. This revelation leads a drunk and depressed George to the brink of a bridge. That's when Clarence drops his life—literally.

It takes some convincing, but eventually George accepts that Clarence is an angel. George is also convinced that the world would have been better if he had never been born. To show him how wrong he is, Clarence uses his angel magic to allow George to witness a world in which he had never been born. And it isn't pretty. Among the many changes: the town is now called Potterville; Harry and Mrs. Blaine are dead because George wasn't there to save them; Uncle Billy's in an asylum; George's children don't exist; and Mary is an old maid.

George, finally understanding how important his life has been, runs back to the bridge begging Clarence to make him live again – and he does. And it's Christmas. He returns home changed and giddily happy to find the police waiting to arrest him. But Mary spread the word about George's financial straits and when the town heard, they rallied behind George to raise the money he needed and more. His lifelong karma is finally being cashed in. Everyone is happy, Potter is defeated, and all have a Merry Christmas. Including Clarence, who gets his wings. That's the end of the story that Mark has hopefully relayed in about 60 minutes...

...then he retells it in 60 seconds.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS – the people you will, in a way, see

**MARK SETLOCK** the host, the narrator, the commentator, the everyman. Mark will also portray all of the rest of the parts listed.

**GEORGE BAILEY** the center of the story, a generous, seemingly unlucky man

**FRANKLIN** an angel

**JOSEPH** an angel

**CLARENCE** an angel assigned to take care of GEORGE

**SAM WAINWRIGHT** childhood friend of GEORGE

**HARRY BAILEY** brother of GEORGE

**GOWER** owner of the neighborhood drug store

**VIOLET BICK** classmate of GEORGE

**MARY HATCH** wife of GEORGE

**PETER BAILEY** father of GEORGE

**“ALFALFA”** high school classmate of GEORGE

**CROWD** a whole lot of people

**MAN ON PORCH** a guy on his porch

**UNCLE BILLY** uncle of GEORGE and an alcoholic

**POTTER** evil, greedy, land-owning mogul

**MRS. BAILEY** mother of GEORGE

**MRS. HATCH** mother of MARY, mother-in-law of GEORGE



Uncle Billy (Thomas Mitchell), Mary (Donna Reed), George (Jimmy Stewart), and the family

**ANNIE** the maid of the Bailey family

**ERNIE** the cabbie

**RANDALL** some wisenheimer

**MRS. DAVIS** woman in town

**MARTINI** the local bar owner

**PETE** son of GEORGE

**JANIE** daughter of GEORGE

**TOMMY** son of GEORGE

**ZUZU** daughter of GEORGE

**NICK** the bartender

**MR. WELCH** ZUZU's teacher's husband

**TREE OWNER** man who owns the tree

**BERT** the police officer

**SHERIFF** the sheriff

## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT



Clarence (Henry Travers) and George (Jimmy Stewart)

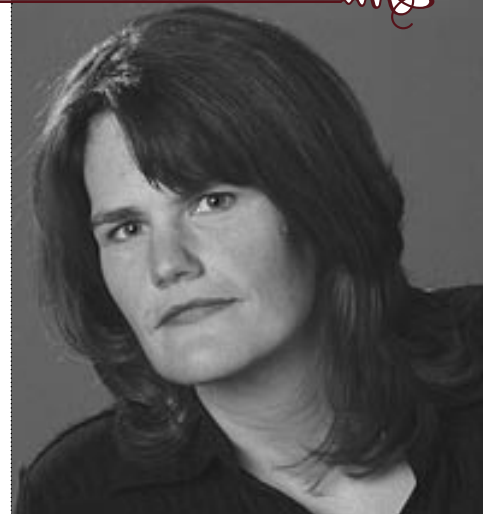
### STEVE MURRAY

An award-winning, nationally produced playwright, Steve Murray divides his time between writing for the stage and as a film and television critic for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. His plays *Hungry to Bed* and the box-office record-breaking *Rescue & Recovery* were directed by PCS artistic director Chris Coleman at Atlanta's Actor's Express. His comedy *Manna* was seen in PCS's JAW/West 2002 and was produced the following year at Actor's Express. He thanks Chris, Rose Riordan, Mark Setlock and Martha Banta for inviting him to be part of this project.

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

### MARTHA BANTA

Martha Banta is thrilled to be working with Mark Setlock again and with Portland Center Stage for the first time. New York directing credits include new plays at The Clark Theater at Lincoln Center, New York Theatre Workshop, New Georges, Soho Rep, Ensemble Studio Theater, One Dream Theater, The Westbank, Tiny Mythic, Orange Thoughts and the 52nd Street Project. Some regional theater directing includes productions at Portland Stage ME, Cincinnati Playhouse, Merrimack Repertory Theater, Berkshire Theater Festival and Capital Repertory. She has directed productions at the Julliard School, Columbia University, Suny Stony Brook, Ramapo College and Dartmouth College. Martha is an original founder and the Artistic Director of the Adirondack Theatre Festival where she has overseen more than 50 productions artistically. Her commercial theater directing includes productions of the musical *Rent* in Japan and Germany, the current "show" *Playhouse Disney Live* running at Disney's MGM Studios in Orlando. She is currently serving as Resident Director for *Mamma Mia* on Broadway and tour. Martha has worked on the production staff of New York City Opera and she served many years as Artistic Associate at New York Theater Workshop.



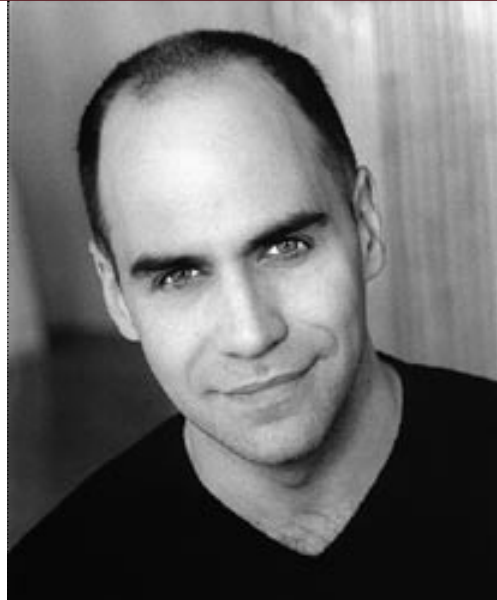
## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### **MARK SETLOCK {Performer, right}**

Mark won the 2000 Outer Critics Circle Award for and Drama Desk nomination best solo performance for *Fully Committed*, which he helped create with playwright Becky Mode. *Fully Committed* has been performed by Mark in Los Angeles, Boston, Portland, London, and had its world premiere at the Adirondack Theatre Festival, of which Martha Banta is Artistic Director. In NYC he's worked with the Original Broadway Company of *Rent*, the Vineyard Theatre, Rising Phoenix Rep, Target Margin, New York Theatre Workshop, Rattlestick, New Georges, Primary Stages, and Tiny Mythic. Recent credits: *The Safety Net* for the Broken Watch Theatre Company, *Roulette* with Ensemble Studio Theatre at the John Houseman, and *The Last Sunday in June* at the Century Center for the Performing Arts. Mark is a member of the Vineyard Theatre's Community of Artists. Regionally in the US: Adirondack Theatre Festival, the Huntington Theatre Company, Porthouse Theatre Company, and the Old Globe. Television: *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*. Film: *New Suit*.

### **DEX EDWARDS {Set Designer}**

Dex's last set design for Portland Center Stage was *Bat Boy: The Musical*. His design work has been seen in theaters in the U.S., Canada and Europe, including the Long Wharf Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory, North Shore Music Theatre, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Indiana Repertory, Alliance Theatre Company, Virginia Stage Company, Georgia Shakespeare Festival, Merrimack Repertory Theatre, The Drury Lane Oak Brook Theatre, The Jim Stafford Theatre, The Grand Palace Theatre, The 1996 Centennial Cultural Olympiad and Actor's Express in Atlanta, Queens Mill Theatre in Ontario, Canada and the Berlin Opera House. Dex designed the world premiere of the Jimmy Buffet/Herman Wouk musical *Don't Stop the Carnival* (Coconut Grove Playhouse), and was the recipient of Chicago's Joseph Jefferson Award in Scenic Design for his work on *Comedy of Errors* (Chicago's Shakespeare Repertory Theatre). Dex also received the Boston Critics Circle Award for his production of *Miss Saigon* at North Shore Music Theatre.



### **JEFF CONE {Costume Designer}**

Jeff Cone, costume shop manager for Portland Center Stage, most recently designed *Underneath the Lintel*. Other PCS credits include *Things of Dry Hours*, *Anna in the Tropics*, *King Lear*, the world premiere of *Another Fine Mess*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *True West*, *Flesh and Blood*, *A New Brain*, *Closer*, *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, *Bus Stop* and *Dirty Blonde* for which he received a Drammy for Best Costume Design. Highlights of his 16-year career include the world premiere of Pearl Cleage's *Flyin' West* at the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, with subsequent productions at Indiana Repertory Theatre, Brooklyn Academy of Music and the Long Wharf Theatre; an expressionistic *Charlotte's Web* and ten annual productions of *A Christmas Carol* at the Alliance; and the coordination of costumes for the Seattle Opera's productions of *Andrea Chenier* and *La Traviata*.

### **MATT FREY {Lighting Designer}**

Matt Frey recently designed *Finn in the Underworld* directed by Les Waters at Berkeley Rep and *Shelter Project* at the BAM/Next Wave Festival and Harry Partch's opera *Oedipus* with Ridge Theater. Also with Ridge,



Harry Bailey (Todd Karns) in photo

*Decasia* (St. Ann's Warehouse, Brooklyn) and *The Death of Klinghoffer* (BAM/Next Wave Festival). Last season he designed Melissa James Gibson's *Brooklyn Bridge* (Children's Theatre Company, Minneapolis). He also designed Melissa James Gibson's plays [*sic*] and *Suitcase* (Soho Rep, New York and the latter at La Jolla Playhouse). Also last season Matt designed Neil Labute's play *Fat Pig* (directed by Jo Bonney for Manhattan Class Company). Other collaborations include *The Orphan of Zhao* (English version, conceived and directed by Chen Shi Zheng at Lincoln Center Festival) and Steve Reich and Beryl Korot's *Three Tales* performed worldwide. Matt has also worked at Playwright's Horizons, New York Theatre Workshop, Signature Theater, Theatre for a New Audience, Corn Exchange (Dublin) and regional theaters around the US.

**JEN RAYNAK {Sound Designer}**

This is Jen's eleventh season at Portland Center Stage. She has designed sound for many productions, including *Pride and Prejudice*, *Underneath the Lintel*, *O Lovely Glowworm*, *Things of Dry Hours*, *Anna in the Tropics*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The SantaLand Diaries/A Christmas Memory*, *Another Fine Mess*, *Outrage*, *True West*, *Flesh and Blood* and *for colored girls....* Jen is a member of the Drammy Committee and serves on the Board of Directors of the Portland Area Theatre Alliance.



**MARCELLA Y. CROWSON {Stage Manager}**

Ten years, fifty-some productions, hundreds of actors, thousands of rehearsals, tens of thousands of light, sound and scenery cues, hundreds of thousands of audience members, millions of words. Some darn good stories. Her colleagues: Gods and ghosts, cows and goats, a crippled boy in the Aran Islands, a mermaid on a rock, Mae West, Truman Capote, a singing frog, a talking dog, a Macy's elf, a boy named Bucket, a man named Scrooge, a hag named Mrs. Seabag; Didi, Pearl, Petey and a whole town full of folks in Tuna, Texas trying desperately to have a nice Christmas. Let's not forget the Pirates. And all of that is just the last decade at PCS. Marcella is proud to have made such glamorous and varied acquaintances over the years and prouder still to've collaborated with the very best technicians and artists in an effort to help these people tell their tales.

**MARK TYNAN {Assistant Stage Manager}**

Mark Tynan is happy to be entering his fourth season with Portland Center Stage. Previous PCS Shows include *O Lovely Glowworm*, *Things of Dry Hours*, *King Lear*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Bat Boy: The Musical*, *Outrage*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *for colored girls....* Previous to PCS, Mark toured nationally and internationally with musicals including *Dreamgirls*, *The King and I* with Rudolf Nureyev, *How to Succeed...*, *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Rent*. Mark is grateful for the hard work and support of Jamie Hill and Jacob Fenston, the PCS production assistants. The past several summers, Mark has enjoyed being part of the Broadway Rose Theatre Company productions in Tigard with shows including *Jekyll and Hyde* and *Chicago*.

## PAGE, SCREEN AND STAGE: A HISTORY OF IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

by Cynthia Kirk

*“You see we’re all George Baileys in one form or another.”*

—Frank Capra, responding to a 1956 fan letter



George (Jimmy Stewart)

Frank Capra’s *It’s a Wonderful Life*, now one of the most beloved of American movies, began in an inauspicious way.

Frustrated at not finding a publisher for his short story “The Greatest Gift,” scholar and historian Philip Van Doren Stern had it printed privately and included it in about 200 Christmas cards in 1943. On that list was someone in Hollywood – perhaps Cary Grant – who suggested it be optioned by RKO.

Try as it might, the studio was unable to turn the odd story of a young man saved from suicide by a bedraggled angel who takes him a revisionist journey of his life into a satisfactory star vehicle, even after three complete screenplays by accomplished writers. When Frank Capra returned to Hollywood in the fall of 1945, after having served in the Office of War Information during World War II, he wanted to leave the war far behind him. A story about small town life in the era between the wars offered the promise of the rich character roles at which he excelled and, best of all, a starring role for Jimmy Stewart and another shot at the Oscars that had just eluded them with their last film together, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939).

Capra bought the rights – including all three complete screenplays – for a mere \$10,000. He then set to work transforming the story for the screen, inventing an entirely new – and more realistic – effect for snow along the way. The film was ready in less than a year and unexpectedly released in 50 markets just before Christmas 1946, allowing the film to be considered for the 1947 Academy Awards. It went into wide release in January 1947.

Opinion-leading reviews from *The New York Times*, the *New Yorker* and the *New Republic* were mixed or negative. But reviews from other publications across the country, including the UPI, *Time*, *Life*, the *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune* and the *Houston Post* were boffo. In February, it was still in the top ten of highest grosses box offices, although sales dropped sharply after the holidays.

When the Oscar nominations came in, the film received five, including Best Picture and nods to both Capra and Stewart for directing and acting. In the end, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, directed by Capra’s Liberty Films partner William Wyler, swept the 1947 Oscars, winning in every one of the seven categories, including Best Picture, Director and Actor, in which it was nominated. Clearly, most Americans weren’t quite ready to leave World War II behind—not for a fantasy that couldn’t be neatly pegged as romance, comedy or drama.

Capra did win the Golden Globe award as best director; *It’s a Wonderful Life* was included in lists of the year’s top ten best films; and it was among the year’s top-grossing films. But it began



Mary (Donna Reed)

to fade into obscurity, much like the short story on which it was based. Appropriate to a film about the power and importance of the individual, interest in the film was kept alive by fans who, one by one, wrote Capra by the droves, year in and year out. They were still writing in 1957, 1967 and 1977 and Capra was still answering – and filing – every trace of that correspondence.

Sometime in the early 70s, RKO (which had distributed the film) inadvertently let the copyright lapse. Once the film was in public domain, TV stations all across the nation jumped on the chance to screen it for free. Blanket TV broadcasts turned *It's a Wonderful Life* into an iconic Christmas film on a par with *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street*.

In 1979, Frank Capra must have enjoyed the sweet irony of having the *New Yorker* write a full page Talk of the Town piece about the film, entitled “Wonderful.” It recounted how a group of young New Yorkers were in the custom of gathering every Christmas over drinks and sandwiches to watch it on TV. Like other cult movies, the *It's a Wonderful Life* groupies had rituals, including the handshake greeting, “Wonderful Life, [your name here].” When New York’s WNET-TV failed to air it one year, the station received more letters and phone calls of complaint than ever before in its history.

*It's a Wonderful Life* was itself experiencing a revisionist history. It became the subject of academic study and was praised in *Film Comment*, the *Village Voice*, *Partisan Review*, and others.

It has also inspired many adaptations, including a gender-switching, made-for-television adaptation with Marlo Thomas; a musical by Rodgers and Higgins; and a four-actor version by a Canadian comedy troupe. But none can compare to PCS's new adaptation, *This Wonderful Life*, starring the award-winning vocal gymnast Mark Setlock, who won our hearts with his one-man bravura performance in *Fully Committed*, the hit of the 2003/2004 season.

*This Wonderful Life*, while far from autobiographical, is such an integral part of Mark's internal life that he used to drive cast-mates crazy with his dead-on imitations of George, Mary, Ernie, Bert and, yes, ZuZu, between cues for the various shows he's played. Ten years ago, one of his fellow actors urged him to make a play of it. And now, with the help of playwright Steve Murray, he has. So, when you see him walking down Broadway, be sure to wish him, “Wonderful life, Mark.”

Source: *It's a Wonderful Life Book*, Jeanine Basinger (Alfred A. Knopf, 1986).

## SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS AND classroom activities



Potter (Lionel Barrymore) and George (Jimmy Stewart)

### Before the show:

1. Have the students seen the film *It's a Wonderful Life*? What were their impressions? What are they expecting going into see a stage version of it? A one-man version? Are they more or less interested for being so familiar with the story beforehand?
2. What do you feel are the most important aspects of your life? The strongest held principals? The most prized possessions? Why did you choose as you did? How much would you be willing to sacrifice to save them?
3. Brainstorm a list of ways life might be different without you.
4. Why see a play when you can see the movie? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this format of storytelling?
5. Brainstorm a list of some of your favorite holiday stories. What made these stories so compelling? What do they have in common, and does *It's a Wonderful Life* share those traits? Why are holiday stories, in general, so appealing?
6. Read the plot synopsis provided in this guide. Choose a word and an emotion that captures the arc of the play for you and discuss how you would use costume, lighting and set design to illustrate your ideas. Use drawings, visual aids or writing to present your thoughts.

### After the show:

1. How did Mark's telling of the story affect your involvement with the story or understanding of the story? Did you find yourself relating more with Mark or with the characters he was portraying? Why do you think that was?
2. Clarence grants George the "gift" of seeing what the world would be like if he had never been born. In George's case, it turns out to be a wonderful gift. Do you think that that opportunity, in general, is a gift? Is it a curse? Would you want to see what the world would be like if you had never been born?
3. How well does the town of Bedford Falls represent life in America today? Where can we see parallels in our lives to the battle between George and Potter? Which is more similar to a typical city today – Bedford Falls or Pottersville? Why?
4. Choose one of your favorite characters from literature. Write a scene or a story describing what life might have been like in their world if that character had never been born.
5. If you went through an experience like the one George has, how would you describe it to others? Would you even try, or would you keep it a secret? Write out or improvise a scene between George and another character from the story where George tries to tell them what happened to him.



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