

## Encore

# 'Wonderful Life' is one-man tour de force

David A. Sargent / Special to the Sun Journal

[Encore](#) | Wednesday, December 3, 2014

### **Michael Anthony gives 'remarkable' performance**

MONMOUTH -- It's all there ... the Bedford Falls Building and Loan, Zuzu's petals, solid George Bailey, miserly Mr. Potter, and unwavering Angel Second Class Clarence Obody.

In a remarkable one-man performance of "This Wonderful Life," Michael Anthony brings the magic of the Christmas season to the Victorian opera house at Cumston Hall.

This singular recreation of "It's a Wonderful Life," the classic Frank Capra film from 1946, is an extraordinary multi-dimensional experience for the audience. Familiar lines of dialogue bring chuckles. Simple memories take full bloom on the turn of a phrase, or a facial expression, or a well-remembered prop, like the loose piece of banister on the Bailey house stairway.

Michael Anthony presents a tour de force performance in this one-man show. Furthermore, "This Wonderful Life" is the perfect theatrical piece to highlight the power of imagination. Anthony, a few props and some sound effects evoke all the iconic silver screen images of Bedford Falls.

This show is a kaleidoscope of scenes running through a complete range of humor, action and touching drama. Anthony's performance is rich in detail. It catches every nuance of the classic Frank Capra film from 1946, including voice characterization of the film's iconic stars.

Anthony brings much more to his performance than impersonations of James Stewart and Lionel Barrymore, as well as the story's women. The play calls for lots of action, and for Anthony that often calls for extra effort when he switches smoothly from character to character. George dances with Mary, George confronts Potter's greed, George saves Clarence from the river. All this merges with memories of the movie, and even though one person is on stage, it seems like a fully-staged production is taking place.

Anthony, who has played numerous roles in TAM's summer season over the past seven years, is skilled in either comedy or drama, and both of those abilities are employed throughout "This Wonderful Life." He portrays the lead players as well as about 20 of the townspeople who rally around George Bailey to reveal how ripples from one person's life may have a profound impact.

The current production of "This Wonderful Life" marks the third year that Anthony has undertaken the multi-role performance. Dawn McAndrews, TAM's producing artistic director, asked Friday's opening night audience how many of them have seen the earlier shows. A strong majority had seen last year's production, for two in the audience this was their third time, and a few were seeing the show for the third time. It doesn't matter whether a person, young or old, knows the original motion picture. Anthony gives a faithful rendition of the beloved story, but the one-man show can stand on its own as a delightfully entertaining and moving theatrical event.

"This Wonderful Life" was written about seven years ago by Steve Murray and was introduced in Oregon.

Murray also wrote another production for one-man performance called "Fully Committed." It's about a seemingly endless list of characters calling to claim a table at the most popular restaurant in the city.

Anthony's first performance in a one-man production was three years ago when he brought "This Wonderful Life" to Cumston Hall. He said, "I was shaking in my boots," but, with its success, he said he would like to tackle another one. "Fully Committed" would be his choice if the opportunity comes along.

Remaining performances of "This Wonderful Life" are at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday, Dec. 4-6 and at 1 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 6 and 7. Cumston Hall is at 796 Main St., Monmouth.

For tickets call 207-933-9999. For more information go online to

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

# # #