

FILM REVIEW: 'Believe' a Heartwarming Holiday Morality Play

Film is intended for a Christian audience, but has broader appeal



Film still from 'Believe'

It's late November in Grundy, Virginia, a tiny town whose economy revolves around Peyton Automotive, a family business inherited by Matthew Peyton (Ryan O'Quinn) from his late grandfather. Because the company has fallen on hard times in recent days, the overwhelmed CEO is considering cancelling the annual Christmas pageant the corporation has sponsored since the 1970s.

In fact, Matthew finds himself being pressured by his financial advisor, Albert Bagley (Kevin Sizemore) either to lay off or lower the salaries of some of

Soon enough, Matthew finds himself the victim of escalating violence. First his BMW is egged and has a tire slashed, before being torched entirely. Then, he's beaten to within an inch of his life and left for dead by a gang of union goons.

Coming to his rescue is a most unlikely hero, a precocious homeless kid named CJ Joseph (Isaac Ryan Brown). CJ and his mom Sharon (Danielle Nicolet) nurse Matthew back to health while giving him a priceless lesson about what really matters most in life.

For, despite their dire circumstances, the Josephs both fervently believe that better days are coming. "I wish I had that kind of faith," Matthew admits. Upon recovering, the grateful heir informs Sharon and son, "You took care of me, now I'll take care of you."

That is the point of departure of "Believe," a modern morality play marking the feature film directorial debut of Billy Dickson. Although the picture is ostensibly aimed at the Christian demographic, it has a complicated enough storyline, including a love triangle and intriguing plot twists, to appeal to more than merely Bible-thumping Evangelicals.

A thought-provoking parable as entertaining as it is a message movie.

Very Good ★★★

Rated PG for violence, mature themes and mild epithets.

Running time: 118 min.

Distributor: Power of 3

“CJ and his mom nurse Matthew back to health while giving him a priceless lesson about what really matters most in life

his 115 employees. Needless to say, the prospect of cutbacks doesn't sit well with union rep Bob Alexander (James C. Burns) who proceeds to call for a strike.

Matthew, in turn, testifies before Grundy's City Council that he can no longer afford to stage the holiday festival because the funds in the trust have been totally exhausted. Trouble is, his grandfather's specifically stipulated in his will that Peyton Automotive must continue the tradition.

Nevertheless, Matthew asserts that the business has been losing money for a couple of years and that, given the situation, he has no choice but to shut it down. Meanwhile, he's warned by the Mayor (Lance E. Nichols), "You keep going in this direction, you will get crucified."

The Armory Hosts Concerts, Bazaars, Singalongs in December

By *Portland Center Stage*

The Armory will be buzzing in December with a host of live music performances, including a special one-night only concert on New Year's Eve: Hershey Felder – the star and creator of Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin – will perform his Great American Songbook Singalong and audiences will be treated to a complimentary champagne toast (or sparkling cider) to help kick off their New Year's celebrations. Other December events include The Armory Holiday Bazaar, a screening of Broadway Musicals, a Jewish Legacy, Happy Hours with Portland Jazz Composers' Ensemble, numerous choral performances and more.

All events are held at The Armory (128 NW Eleventh Ave.). Details at <https://www.pcs.org/community>, 503.445.3700, or in person. Information on accessibility options available at <https://www.pcs.org/access>. Events, dates and times are subject to change.

On Stage in December

The Santaland Diaries: Nov. 26 – Dec. 24, 2016. By David Sedaris; Adapted for the stage by Joe Mantello; Directed by Wendy Knox. In the Ellyn Bye Studio. Tickets start at \$25. www.pcs.org/santaland-2016

Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin: Nov. 30 – Dec. 30, 2016. Created and performed by Hershey Felder; Directed by Trevor Hay On the U.S. Bank Main Stage. Tickets

start at \$25. www.pcs.org/irvingberlin

Special Events in December

New Year's Eve at The Armory: The Great American Songbook Singalong
Kick off the New Year's Eve celebrations with Hershey Felder (star and creator of Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin) in an evening of popular songs from the American songbook. This singalong celebration features an entire century of American music – including works by Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, George and Ira Gershwin, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Lerner and Loewe, Bock and Harnick, Bernstein, Sondheim, and tunes from beloved musicals such as The Sound of Music, South Pacific, Fiddler on the Roof, Showboat and more.

Dec. 31, 7:30 p.m., U.S. Bank Main Stage, \$50 or \$30 for ages 30 and younger. Ticket includes complimentary champagne toast (or sparkling cider) and a sweet treat.

The Armory Holiday Bazaar

Shop locally this holiday season by supporting The Armory-affiliated artisans who will be on hand to sell their crafts and goods on the Mezzanine throughout the day. Visitors will also enjoy free hot chocolate, cider and KIND Bars, holiday liqueur tastings from Eastside Distilling (with I.D.), live holiday music, a festive photo booth, backstage tours and a scavenger hunt.

See THE ARMORY on page 11

Portland Center Stage at
THE ARMORY
128 NW Eleventh Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97209
503.445.3700 | pcs.org

NOV. 30 - DEC. 30
HERSHEY FELDER
as
IRVING BERLIN
DIRECTED BY TREVOR HAY

Tickets start at \$25!

NOV. 26 - DEC. 24
DAVID SEDARIS
THE SANTALAND DIARIES
DIRECTED BY WENDY KNOX
ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY JOE MANTELLO

TOP: HERSHEY FELDER IN HERSHEY FELDER AS IRVING BERLIN. PHOTO BY EIGHTY-EIGHT ENTERTAINMENT.
BOTTOM: DARIUS PIERCE IN THE SANTALAND DIARIES. PHOTO BY KATE SZROM.

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SHOWTIMES **The Week of Friday, Dec. 2 through Thursday, Dec. 8, 2016**

MISS PEREGRINE'S HOME FOR PECULIAR CHILDREN (PG-13)
Fri-Thur: 2:30, 6:40

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN (PG-13)
Fri-Sun: 9:20; Mon-Thur: 4:10, 9:20

STORKS (PG)
Fri-Thur: 2:15

SULLY (PG-13)
Fri-Sun: 12:05; Mon-Thur: 12:05, 7:00

KUBO AND THE TWO STRINGS (PG)
Fri-Thur: 12:15

CAPTAIN FANTASTIC (R)
Fri: 1:40, 7:15; Sat-Sun: 7:15
Mon: 1:40, 7:15, 9:10

THE SECRET LIFE OF PETS (PG)
Fri: 11:40, 5:10; Sat-Sun: 5:10
Mon: 11:40, 5:10

TIME BANDITS (NR)
Fri-Thur: 4:20, 9:45

\$4.00 adults, \$3.00 senior citizens (65+)
\$3.00 for kids (12 & under)

7818 SE Stark St, Portland, OR 97215
503-252-1707 • AcademyTheaterPdx.com
Babysitting: Available for children 2 to 8 years old. Fri: shows after 3:30pm and before 8:00pm. Sat - Sun: all shows before 8:00pm. \$9.50 per child for the length of the movie. Call to reserve a spot, no drop ins.