

THE FANTASTICKS AT COTTAGE THEATRE
(PHOTO COURTESY COTTAGE THEATRE)



STAGING THE HOLIDAYS

*A little something for everyone
in this year's offering of Christmas productions
by local theaters*

The sheer intimacy and immediacy of theater lends itself splendidly to the holidays. It's as though, facing the stage, we are basking as one in the familiar but ever-changing crackle of the Yule log. It might sound corny, but an act of communion — a sense of fellowship and collective dreaming — occurs in a theater audience that will never be replicated by your umpteenth viewing of *It's a Wonderful Life*.

Theater does precisely what the holiday season was always meant to do: Bring us out of our solitary winter hidey-holes and bind us in the enactment of a cultural ritual, to tell us something of who we are. Even if the holidays aren't religious for you, they hold an inescapable spiritual aspect. And live art — music, dance, theater — speaks most clearly to the spirit of the holidays.

Every year our local theaters bring forth their holiday productions, and they prove as various — and variously traditional or non-traditional — as the ornaments on the tree. Here are this season's offerings (with a nod as well to Actors Cabaret's current production of *The Wizard of Oz*, reviewed in *EW* on Nov. 21 and playing through Dec. 15).