

Still, even with what I considered to be a wealth of knowledge on the subject, I never knew there were quite so many verses to “The Holly and the Ivy,” something I am now aware of after seeing Very Little Theatre’s production of *The Long Christmas Dinner*.

A bit of exposition: Thornton Wilder’s play tells the story of 90 years at the Bayard family’s Christmas dinner table, family members coming and going as the years go on. For a play that is supposed to span almost a century, its typical runtime is fairly short — only about a half an hour.

Very Little Theatre’s production adds about an hour to that, with roughly 25 full-length Christmas carols, both spoken and sung, thrown into the mix.

The addition of these carols is often at odds with the story itself. An entire act of carols and poems is essentially added to the one-act play, giving it an odd flow — the story does not begin until about 45 minutes in. The incorporation is a nice, fun idea, but it is executed in a way that is slightly confusing.

Including every single verse to these carols may have been slightly excessive, though it allows every cast member to have a moment to shine, which is especially important for the role of the Nurse (Marcee Long), an otherwise non-speaking role. Long is one of the most pleasant performers in the production, and it is good to see the role beefed up for her.

Phoebe Gildea, playing Lucia II, also thrives in the opportunity to sing. A 14-piece live orchestra accompanies the singing and creates some sparkle as well.

The cast as a whole exhibits a contagious Christmas energy, and their happiness was a joy to witness. Elizabeth Grieve is lovely to watch in the role of the elder Lucia, though the age difference between Grieve and her onstage husband, Rodrick (Steve Mandell), requires a bit more than the typical suspension of disbelief to accept, even considering how times have changed since the 19th century.

Sarah Nesslin plays Genevieve, who adds a bit of zest and conflict to the otherwise fairly uneventful plot, and her enthusiasm is palpable.

Perhaps the cast of *The Long Christmas Dinner* would be better suited to a more modern and exciting Christmas play, possibly even a musical with songs more fully integrated into the story. However, VLT presents a touching message, successfully emulating the Christmas spirit.

The audience walks out of this production more thoughtful than they walked in, and I think that was what Thornton Wilder intended. — Taylor Griggs

White Christmas

AT THE SHEDD THROUGH DEC. 16

World War II nostalgia — think everything from *Band of Brothers* to *The Sound of Music* — may at last be on the wane as the Greatest Generation ages out. The death of former combat aviator George H.W. Bush reminds us that soon no one will be left standing who remembers Pearl Harbor or the Battle of the Bulge.

White Christmas, which opened at The Shedd Nov. 30, transcends its generational roots through exuberant Irving



ERIC LANCHARD, CYRA CONFROTH, LYNNEA BARRY AND WARD FAIRBAIRN IN THE SHEDD'S *WHITE CHRISTMAS* (PHOTO COURTESY THE SHEDD)

JANELLE RAE, MELANIE MOSER AND ERICA TOWE IN OREGON CONTEMPORARY THEATRE'S *MISS BENNET: CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY* (PHOTO COURTESY OCT)





FACTORY STORE



GloryBee's Factory Store makes gift-giving easy!

The GloryBee Factory Store has everything you need to build the perfect holiday gift basket! From sweet local honey to beekeeping gear, you'll find our natural ingredients are good for gift-giving *and* good for the planet.





STORE HOURS | MON-FRI 9:30-5:30 | SAT 10-2

29548 B Airport Road, Eugene | 800-456-7923 | GloryBee.com