



George Bailey, played by Ben Ruderman, right, learns that his youngest daughter Zuzu, played by Aerial Bird, isn't feeling well, as his wife, Mary, played by Emily Dante, and other children look on.



Angel Second Class Clarence Odbody, played by Slab Slabinski, left, works to show George Bailey, played by Ben Ruderman, that he has lived a wonderful life.

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Adaptations for radio and theater, including a musical version, have followed in subsequent decades. James W. Rogers's version at the Coaster — "a faithful adaptation of the 1946 classic film," reads the billing — will probably be enjoyed best by those who've loved the film and who will appreciate the play's many nods to scenes necessarily altered or eliminated for theater.

The actors' challenge, especially for Ben Ruderman who plays George Bailey, is to create fresh characters in a play that reminds its audience of the film whenever it can. To avoid playing Jimmy Stewart playing George Bailey, Ruderman tries to explore, he explains, "an alternate Bedford Falls, an alternate George Bailey."

"It's a Wonderful Life' is one of my favorite films. I watch it probably five times

a year, but I haven't seen it since I got the part," he says. "I don't want to simply impersonate Jimmy Stewart."

If you ask, though, off-stage Ruderman can do a killer Jimmy Stewart imitation.

Directed by Astoria's Sheila Shaffer, the production features a cast of 20 gathered from the length of our coastal community, from Long Beach to Tillamook, including Emily Dante as Mary Hatch-Bailey, Slab Slabinski as Angel Second Class Clarence Odbody, David Sweeney as Uncle Billy and Donald Conner as Henry Potter.

"It's a Wonderful Life" opened in November and will continue to run at 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Dec. 9 and 10; 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Dec. 16 and 17; 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 18, then 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday, Dec. 22 and 23. Contact the Coaster Theatre box office online or at 503-436-1242 for tickets.



Rich businessman Henry Potter, played by Donald Conner, left, would take over Bedford Falls if it wasn't for the hard work of George Bailey, played by Ben Ruderman, right, and his Building and Loan business.