

CATCH A FALLING STAR AT FLORENCE’S FABULOUS ‘FOLLIES’

“Holly Jolly Follies: Starlight”
REVIEW BY BURNAY GARELICK

Deck the halls with boughs of holly — disapproval would be folly. While there’s a lot of jolly and rambunctious folly, no one, not even the Grinch or Scrooge, can disapprove of the 2018 “Holly Jolly Follies” on stage this weekend at the Florence Events Center.

Titled “Starlight” and presented by Children’s Repertory of Oregon Workshops (CROW), this year’s “Holly Jolly Follies” community variety show casts a warm glow of poignancy as the exceptional cast, about 100 strong, most of them youth, tells a story of dreams fulfilled when you open your heart.

“Starlight” was written by prolific playwright and actor Rose Ellen Jacobson, who is the wife of Mike Jacobson, accomplished vocalist, actor and comedian. They are the parents of CROW Artistic Director Melanie Heard, the show’s outstanding director. These professionals comprise Florence’s first family of theater, and we are grateful that they have bestowed their gifts where

the river meets the sea.

Upon listening to “There is a Star that Shines Tonight,” a song by Sheryl Crow, Ellen got to wondering what would happen if a star fell out of the sky. That’s when she was inspired to write “Starlight,” the story of a tiny elf wishing on the stars only to have a star fall at her feet. Try as she might, she can’t put it back. Will she succeed? No spoiler alerts here, except to say that the very song that inspired Ellen opens the show.

When Ellen wrote the script, she had the perfect actor in mind — Zhade Beers, a pint-size, adorable, bright 7-year-old who never misses a cue. Stagecraft runs in families. Zhade’s mother is Maree Beers, who also participates in the show. Maree, an always sizzling singer, swings a medley of the New Year’s anthem and some bluesy Christmas cheer.

Zhade, the tiny elf, is assisted by bigger well-meaning but silly elves and guided intermittently by the Keeper of Stars (Tamara Szalewski), an elegant fairy godmother in a silvery gown and a sparkling cape.



(Right) Zhade Beers stars as the littlest elf, who seeks to help return a star to the heavens with the help of Tamara Szalewski (left) as the Keeper of Stars and the whole cast of the 2018 “Holly Jolly Follies: Starlight,” playing this weekend at the FEC.

From time to time, the Keeper of the Stars’ Star Polish Crew wheels out their cart of mops and brooms to keep the stars shining. When they closed Class Act Theatre earlier this year, Rosemary and David Lauria said they’d return to the stage. Here they are in three funny sketches, polishing the stars once more.

The Holly Jolly Follies is a Florence tradition, the showcase of a plethora of talent. “Starlight” includes singing ensembles, duets and solos; contemporary interpretive dancing, ballet, hip hop, Greek folk dance and not one

but two sets of tappers; and comedy, both gentle and raucous. The latter category is represented by the Tutu Dads, a half dozen pairs of beefy arms and hairy legs, beards and bellies, all adorned in pink and white tutus, cracking frilly ribbons that sound like whips, and pirouetting like Sugar Plum Fairies. Hats off to these hilarious good sports!

“Starlight” includes appearances by local celebrities. Mayor Joe Henry reads a story to pajama-clad kids. Siuslaw News Editor Ned Hickson reprises his role as Elfis. He doesn’t sing as The King, but he does sing as himself in a duet with his wife Alicia, who also plays Prissy the elf, and he illustrates a fake commercial for dunder-drug Poxziva. Wayne Sharpe of KCST Radio joins Zhade elf to sing “When You Wish Upon A Star.”

There are too many wonderful stars in this show to mention everyone by name in this limited space. Know that you are all to be applauded with handfuls of stardust. There are, however, a few highlights among highlights that

need to be singled out: Stunning vocalist and harpist Sylvia Hartman; multi-lingual Mike Jacobson reprising his role as Latin lover Amarillo Snowden singing in Spanish with spouse Dolly Dinkle (Genevieve Meltzer) and as himself singing a lovely aria-like duet in Italian with Denise Dee; Tamara Cole singing a delightful song wishing for a hippo (Trudie Cahoon); inimitable and svelte vocalist Fanny Rugburn (Jason Wood); and superb young pianist Ramiro Ramirez swinging the eighty-eight with “Linus and Lucy.”

Out of town guests include the Revelers Aerial Performers from Eugene, three young women swinging from the ceiling on hoops and ribbon-like ropes — a dazzling display of dexterity, style and grace.

There’s lively music by the Buck and A Quarter Band, wonderful costumes and very special effects.

Now that it’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas, open your heart to “Starlight” and your holiday wishes will come true.

“Holly Jolly Follies: Starlight” opened Friday and plays through Sunday, Dec. 2, at the Florence Events Center, 715 Quince St. For information, call 541-997-1994, go to www.eventcenter.org or visit www.crowkids.com.

Deep Snow in Florence at concert

Judging by the number of snowballs thrown at the Ken Lavigne concert, presented by SEACOAST Entertainment Association on Nov. 24 at the Florence Events Center, the snow must have been at least a foot deep.

Prior to the concert proper, Ken Lavigne performed two carols at Old Town Park as part of the tree lighting festivities in Historic Old Town.

Lavigne is a well-traveled singer, having performed at Carnegie Hall and recently for England’s Prince Charles.

He brought a sextet of musicians, some doubling as backing vocalists. Sound was excellent thanks to Diana Robson. Florence’s own Margaret McDiarmid handled lighting, casting a cheery ambience on the set.

The format of the “Christmas Roadshow” was an old-time radio program and the stage a “chalet” complete with “cheery fire.”

Tunes covered the gamut of Christmas songs from the traditional “O Holy Night” to the pop “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree.”

Lavigne had costume and persona changes to

Ken Lavigne’s
“Christmas Roadshow”
Presented by SEACOAST

REVIEW BY IAN EALES

match the songs, ranging from Bing Crosby to Elvis and perhaps even Don Ho for “Mele Kalikimaka,” complete with Hawaiian shirt.

Lavigne is a thoroughly entertaining singer and the backing vocalists complemented him, always in perfect harmony. The musicians never overplayed, keeping the balance just right for the music. Enthusiastic applause followed every tune.

All in all, another quality production of SEACOAST Entertainment Association.

For more information on future SEACOAST productions, visit www.seacoastea.org.

Tickets available today for Crab Crack annual fundraiser to benefit Food Share

Enjoy great food and company while aiding the less fortunate in this area during the eighth annual Florence Crab Crack

The event will be held at the Florence Events Center (FEC) on Saturday, Feb. 2, 2019, from 4 to 7 p.m.

Oregon coast Dungeness crab, along with pasta, coleslaw, garlic bread, sodas, coffee and dessert will be served by volunteers.

A no-host bar will also be available.

While enjoying the wonderful crab and side dishes, attendees will also have the opportunity to purchase one or many of the special silent auction items.

All the proceeds from this event will benefit Florence Food Share, a local food pantry that provides resources to those facing hunger in West Lane County.

Tickets will be available after

Saturday, Dec. 1, at the Florence Food Share, located at 2190 Spruce St., open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Group seating or more information is also available on the website, florencefoodshare.org, or by calling 541-997-9110.

Tickets to this event are \$45, with only 400 tickets available.

The deadline for ticket purchases is Friday, Jan. 25, and will not be available at the door.

Military museum receives visit from Oregon Memorial Traveling Wall

The Oregon Coast Military Museum is honored to announce that the Oregon Memorial Traveling Wall project is coming to the museum in conjunction with Pearl Harbor Day, Dec. 7.

“We’re very excited to combine a display representing the Vietnam War, with a holiday commemorating our nation’s launch into World War II,” said Military Museum Chief of Staff Geoff Cannon. “It emphasizes our goal to represent all eras of military heritage and all disciplines of military service.”

Sponsored in Florence by Three Rivers Casino Resort, the Wall is a project of the Umpqua Valley Chapter 805 of the Vietnam Veterans of America. It contains six panels that are engraved with the names of fallen Oregonian heroes. Shaped in the likeness of the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C., the center panels in black contain the names of those lost in Vietnam and on the USS Pueblo. There are panels off both sides in sandstone color with the names of those lost in Panama, the bombing of Beirut, Desert

Storm, Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

This is a living Memorial that will annually be updated with the names of Oregon’s fallen in any future conflict.

The Wall will be available for viewing during normal hours, noon to 4 p.m. on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 7, 8 and 9, at Oregon Coast Military Museum, 2145 Kingwood St. in Florence.

Admission on all three days will be free of charge to all who attend.

For more information, visit www.oregoncoastmilitarymuseum.com.



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Florence Food Share provides food to those who are hungry in our community. If you have four hours a week available, we are in need of volunteers to staff our Front Desk and also act as Guides as clients walk through the pantry. Please call our volunteer coordinator, Sarah Lovejoy, @ 541-997-9110 (Monday – Friday, before noon) to learn more about volunteering. info@florence-foodshare.org 2190 Spruce Street.



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