

# Stage Right revives 70s, despite today's gas prices

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Peggie Miller / performing arts columnist

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By Peggie Miller / performing arts columnist

Stage Right has just one regret about its upcoming "Carol Burnett Show" opening April 20 at downtown Conroe's Crighton Theatre. It's the price of gas.

"If only we could just blast gas prices back to the 70s when this show was thriving, it would be perfect," said

Carolyn Corsano Wong, who portrays Burnett in some of the sketches. "Our goal is to transport our audiences back to the 70s."

(I don't recall the price of gas in that era, but it had to be lower than now. However, I do remember waiting in lines because of a shortage.)

"The Carol Burnett Show" dominated television from Sept. 9, 1967, to March 29, 1978. From the 278 episodes, 25 won Emmy Awards for prime time. Known for spoofs of movies, soap operas and music, it presented "As the Stomach Turns," "Went with the Wind" and such.

In addition to Burnett, legendary stars included Harvey Korman, Vicki Lawrence, Lyle Waggoner and Tim Conway. They frequently became convulsed with their own laughter while performing for the camera.

In the Stage Right version, several actresses play the roles of Burnett's characters.

"She was in just about every comedy skit," Carolyn explained. "Having the same person portray her would be impossible on stage. Not adequate time for make up and costume changes, some being rather far-reaching, so we divided the roles Carol played in the skits."

"But," she teased, "I get to wear drapery in one of the spoofs!"

Director Sam Martinez cast familiar actors and two, Jim King and Tom Richard, new to the SR ranks.

Audiences will recognize Meredith Zaritski, Steve Murphree, Steve Dowell, Will Ratcliffe, Cathleen Reagan, Marcia Feldt Bates and Katie Kelly. Assisting Martinez is Megan Nix.

As was Burnett's custom, "guest stars" also appear here in the personas of Ethel Merman, created by Yvonne Nelson, and Madeline Kahn, who Patrice Kentimenos channels.

Nelson appeared as the wicked Miss Hannigan in SR musical "Annie" and as Sophie Tucker in a SR vaudeville show a few seasons back.

In addition to the mirthful Burnett sketches, a group of dancers recently seen in "The Walden Follies" brings captivating numbers. These consist of Angela Graves, Lynn Winkler, Beverly Blair, and Lorraine Counts who danced as Sally Rand in the vaudeville show.

Jeannie Bond, SR choreographer of "The Music Man," has come up with a wonderful tap number and some jazz dances, Carolyn said.

Throughout the show audiences will be regaled with music and commercials from the 70s.

Although Carol Burnett will be nowhere near the Crighton during this show, her personal request was that SR collect funds for her favorite charity, The Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation. Information about this organization will be available in the lobby.

On a local level, SR is giving complimentary admission to every family with a member now undergoing cancer treatment.

"We're calling these 'Carol's Friends' tickets," Carolyn said.

"The Carol Burnett Show" runs in Conroe's Crighton Theatre at 8 p.m. weekends April 20 through May 6, with 2 p.m. matinees on April 29 and May 6. Admission is \$20, with youngsters up to age 16 admitted for \$15. The elderly pay \$17, and groups of 10 or more receive discounts based on the number attending.