

Devices may be needed to track Christmas events

With one Christmas play already opened at the Owen Theatre, another opening tonight at the Crighton Theatre, the CONROE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA concert Monday eve at Ark Church, and the MONTGOMERY COUNTY CHORAL SOCIETY performance on Dec. 10 at First United Methodist Church, a personal palm planner might be the best gift ever, or maybe a GPS.

Then there's the CONROE CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION next weekend, and the two-day CHRISTMAS IN WILLIS scheduled tonight from 6 to 8 with a Charlie Brown theme; plus more Saturday with an 11 a.m. parade in Willis, and other activities until 3 p.m.

Now into its third season STAGE RIGHT goes back to its earliest beginning with a reprise of "Christmas Belles."

Director STEVEN WONG is pleased that most of his cast members are repeating the humorous characters they created the first time around.

Wong invites audiences to "relive the Christmas story in a way you never have before."

"Christmas Belles" is a comical tale with about as many plot twists as it has characters in the imaginary town of Fayro, Texas. The three Futrelle sisters continue their ill humor amid a Christ-



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Performing Arts Columnist

mas pageant where the ousted show director of 27 years intends to win back her position no matter the cost.

Add to this an assortment of quirky individuals with personal — albeit hilarious — problems of their own and you have a frivolous evening of fun, certain to take your mind off all you still have to do before Dec. 25.

Cast includes CAROLYN WONG, AMY SOWERS, DALIN KENNARD, MICHAEL RABBE, CATHEEN REAGAN, MELODY MONTEZ, KATT GILCREASE and more.

Working behind scenes are ROGER ORMISTON on light design; JIM TATUM, sound engineer; GREG KELLY, set designer; KATHLEEN and MAREDITH ZARITSKI and others.

Meredith Zaritski, a Sam Houston State University student, is fresh from her role as the deceitful Lily, who comically played off "Rooster" in SR's "Annie" last summer.

Carolyn Wong clarified the PG rating given earlier. "We

thought young children might question their parents concerning the humorous implications of a Santa Claus with kidney stones and an aversion toward sullied diapers," she explained. "That's all there is to the PG rating. Nothing offensive."

"Christmas Belles" runs at 8 p.m. weekends tonight through Dec. 19 in downtown Conroe's Crighton Theatre. Some Sunday matinees are in the offing, so call JIM BINGHAM, 20-year Crighton manager, at (936) 441-SHOW to reserve, or go to www.stage-right.org. New toys are being accepted for donation.

If your group is looking for an entertaining speaker with a worthwhile cause, call Carolyn Wong. Not only is she passionate and knowledgeable about rescuing pets, she charms crowds with her wit and humor. She might even bring along the intrepid Harley who regularly conveys joy to convalescent center patients. For a pawtagraph maybe?

Meanwhile over at downtown Conroe's other theatre, the Owen, the CRIGHTON PLAYERS roll merrily along with Dickens' classic "A Christmas Carol." Brought by director MICHAEL HAYES, it stars a capable cast headed by DALE TRIMBLE portraying Scrooge.

JOE VISER takes a good turn as the deceased Marley,

pointing menacingly, although bound in chains, to construct his forewarning to Scrooge.

The Christmas ghosts come alive in the personas of TERRY LYNN HALE, MARILYN MOORE and STEVE MURPHREE. During scene changes and intermission, SANDY CAWLEY, KIM LAMBRIGHT and MARGARET MELINDER provide diversions with audience sing-alongs, until Santa himself appears at closing.

The First Nighter party after opening was particularly merry, with each FN member receiving a souvenir photo of the cast, as well as a chance for nice gifts in a drawing. The festive assortment of food offered a variety of favorites. "A Christmas Carol" runs weekends at 8 p.m. in the Owen Theatre through Dec. 18, with two Sunday matinees. Call (936) 539-4090 or visit www.crightonplayers.org.

Also, Saturday eve from 6:30 to 8:30, Councilman TOBY POWELL and VANESSA POWELL host the grand opening of Vanessa's new MAIN STREET GIFT SHOP, in the heart of Conroe. Go by to see all the enchanting merchandise of candies, specialty foods, cards, virtual bunnies, and so much more. The hospitable Powells may even pour up a cup of hot chocolate to your liking.

Back to Christmas in Willis; a gospel group, SEC-

OND CHANCE, will sing tonight with the WILLIS KIDS CHOIR, 150 strong voiced youngsters. THE CRIGHTON KIDZ, with instructor TERRY WOODS presents a Charlie Brown play, and there'll be hand bell ringers. Admission is a cash or food donation for the TENDER LOVING CARE food outreach.

Saturday's parade begins at 11 a.m., and the celebration continues until 3 p.m., with a

steep snow hill, "bounce houses" for children, and vendors selling food and stuff. Seating may be limited to the lawn chairs you bring for yourself.

For particulars, call ROD BROUSSARD at (936) 890-1111. LORI JO COOK is parade coordinator.

Contact Peggie with people and performing arts news at pegmillr@juno.com or call (936) 448-6455.

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CSO offers 'Sights & Sounds of the Season' Monday

A special guest will join the Conroe Symphony Orchestra for its second concert of the season "Sights & Sounds of the Season," at 7:30 p.m. on Monday at The Ark Church, 450 Humble Tank Road, Gladstell Exit off I-45, in Conroe.

The Symphony, currently in its 14th season, will be under the direction of Music

Director and Conductor Dr. Don Hutson. Opening the evening is the recognized Farandole movement from L'Arlesienne Suite No. 2 by George Bizet, followed by "In The Bleak Midwinter" by Gustav Holst and "The Winter's Passed" by Wayne Barlow.

The concert continues with "Gabriel's Oboe" by En-

nio Morricone, made famous by the film "The Mission." The Conroe Symphony Orchestra will be joined by feature guest Oboist Bobby Taylor for this piece.

A Nashville resident, Taylor has recently retired after 41 seasons as Principal Oboe with the Nashville Symphony and as oboe professor at Vanderbilt University's Blair

School of Music. Taylor is one of the most recorded oboists in history, having recorded with some of Nashville's biggest stars such as Elvis, Dolly Parton, Oak Ridge Boys, Alabama, Reba McEntire, Kenny Rogers, Ronnie Milsap, Jars of Clay

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