

Christmas is everywhere – just look around town!

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By Peggie Miller Performing arts columnist

Poet Phillips Brooks, who died in 1893, probably got a simple sentiment right when he wrote —“Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas tonight!” it’s going to look — and sound — like Christmas, not just tonight, but all weekend and beyond in Montgomery County.

First of all is the Conroe tree lighting at 6 tonight, followed by other festivities about town. There still will be time to drive the few blocks to First United Methodist Church to hear a glorious 8 p.m. program by the MONTGOMERY COUNTY CHORAL SOCIETY. Then back to downtown Saturday for all the goodies a productive imagination can conjure in the form of an old-fashioned parade winding through downtown, a Christmas show on stage, sights, sounds, and bustling good cheer enough to last until, oh, at least New Year’s, I’d say.

There are other options that include “a Christmas Carol” at the Owen Theatre, put on by the CRIGHTON PLAYERS also at 8 tonight; again Saturday, Sunday, and next weekend. There’s lots of music in this one too, with golden throated songstress SANDY CAWLEY, and others leading the way.

So many have said that their children and grandchildren are reading Dickens’ masterpiece in school right now, that seeing the excellent production at the Owen might help to anchor this classic in their memories forever. Even if that doesn’t happen, it’s an uplifting experience with a timeless message. You might forewarn the littlest ones about ghosts of Christmas, although there’s really nothing to frighten them, and they’ll probably laugh instead. Call (936) 539-4090 for details and reservations or go to www.crightonplayers.org .

Last weekend STAGE RIGHT opened “Christmas Belles” at the Crighton Theatre, and it proved to be uproarious. It’s a funny script partly devolved by Jamie Wooten, writer and collaborator on some “Golden Girls” television episodes.

Practically the same cast who brought this one to life two seasons ago already knew where the funny bones are buried, and they missed nary a one. Play director STEVEN WONG merely had to wind them up and send them out.

His lighting and sound designers crafted a perfect background, as did costumer KATHLEEN ZARITSKI. Set designer KATT GILCREASE constructed realistic, yet fanciful interiors; plus the church exterior in act two was particularly appealing.

Oh, and there’s great music, too, although all recorded. “I Want an Elephant for Christmas” was a new one to me, but I’ve always been enchanted by “Grandma Got Run over by a Reindeer,” although some selections are a bit more restrained.

Comedienne CAROLYN CORSANO WONG can cause pandemonium just by walking on stage, and she caused a lot on opening night. CINDY TIPPENS proved her professionalism in portraying Patsy, but after all was said and done, nothing matched her curtain call with THOMAS E. LOCKHART, JR. Talk about fortitude!

A skilled cast brings a hilarious play with the best in costumes, set and lights. Can you top that? Probably not, especially given the ending....

Call (936) 441-7469 or visit www.crightontheatre.org. This one continues weekends through Dec. 19, and SR is collecting unwrapped toys in the Crighton Theatre lobby for needy children.

Poet Emily Dickinson died 204 years ago this month, yet her memory is revered wherever poets gather. For the past few years, local bards have remembered her birthday with discussions and readings of her works.

On Thursday, LONE STAR COLLEGE–MONTGOMERY invited Dickinson authority and author BRENDA WINEAPPLE to speak in the library there at 3 p.m.

Wineapple wrote a definitive study of Dickinson’s life and teaches in biography and Master of Fine Arts departments at CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK and at COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.

Later, a Gathering of Poets is planned at THE CORNER PUB, 302 Main, in Conroe, where the festivities broaden to include works of well known Texas poets.

Readings, book signings and a jocular atmosphere will prevail, with refreshments available to purchase from the Pub. This one’s at 7 p.m. More information is offered at (936) 524-6537.

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