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### 'Mrs. Cratchit' cast keeps 'em crackin' up

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There's more to the community Christmas shows than a breathtaking performance — there is the social camaraderie that follows, when everybody already brims with good cheer.

Such was not lacking in recent days, as LYN HAWTHORNE and CARL HOWARD hosted an après opening party for STAGE RIGHT'S "Mrs. Bob Cratchit's Wild Christmas Binge." At the last moment, the setting was moved to the intimate den of Lyn's holiday-ready home. Animated conversation and piano renditions with favorite Christmas sing-a-longs further enlivened parties.

"Mrs. Cratchit" cast members gathered kudos. CAROLYN WONG and MACKENZIE GOODE garnered the most accolades, but some others were not far behind. Audience members praised MELISSA SINGLETON for her unorthodox take on the title character, played just as author Christopher Durang probably intended. Melissa altered the character's whole persona shortly before the final curtain when she became an epitome of the multi-flawed Leona Helmsley, living the life that her alternate ego always craved, tickling funny bones all the while.

Young Mackenzie offered great comedy as an overgrown Tiny Tim, occupying most of his father's frail shoulders in that memorable scene with KATT GILCREASE. As young Tim, Mackenzie's vacant grins and frequently unsuitable reactions brought big laughs from the crowd.

Carolyn Wong is perhaps this area's most talented comedienne, going from Fanny Brice in one show to the ghosts that bedevil Scrooge in another, scattering laughs like delectable sugarplums.

Eventually, the party conversations got around to the subject of offspring as conversations are wont to do wherever folks gather.

A photo of Carl's daughter, CANDY COBURN, a rising star on the country-western horizon, graces the December cover of oh-so-slick 417 Magazine. A Kentucky native like her dad, Candy grew up in southeast Missouri, and the magazine's title comes from that area's postal ZIP code. Candy has released two albums, "Enjoy the Ride" and "Rev it Up;" a third comes out early next year. She's shared the stage with stars Big & Rich, Pat Green, Brooks & Dunn, performing more than 160 shows this year. A Nashville radio station just outfitted Candy with a new custom tour bus, and the country crooner's ready to keep on tourin'. She'll sing in the private Hideaway Club during the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo in March. Hubby, Dr. Mark Coburn, is a highly specialized brain surgeon in Missouri, and the couple are parents of two little boys.

AMY SOWERS, costumer for "Mrs. Cratchit" etc., gave an update on son ADAM SOWERS, who is pursuing training for show biz at the University of Houston. SCATTER!, a U of H improvisation troupe of six students, including Adam, won the six-state Southwestern Regional College Improv Competition last month at the Salvage Vanguard Theatre in Austin. Now it's on to Chicago in February for national college improv competition, where they'll face winners in the other five regional brackets. The high-energy improv troupe performed in the Quintero Theatre at U of H last weekend to raise travel money for the Chicago trip and is guaranteed a gig at Austin's 2010 Out of Bounds Comedy Festival.

Mine and Cliff's wonderful weekend celebration centers around the graduation of our grandson, DEREK CAUSEY, from Texas A&M tonight, and of our older grandson, DUSTIN CAUSEY, from SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE OF LAW tomorrow morn. Dustin is the fourth lawyer in our immediate circle to

graduate South Texas. In addition to Cliff, our son MICHAEL MILLER earned his law degree there, as did Dustin's dad, Johnny Causey. Dustin's mom is our daughter TEDDY CAUSEY, of Willis. Dustin, Teddy, Michael and Johnny also are all Aggies. We bleed maroon!

"Mrs. Cratchit" and friends leave the Crighton Theatre after this weekend's performances at 8 p.m.; 2 p.m. Sunday. Call (936) 441-7369 for tickets. The troupe collects food for the Montgomery County Food Bank. Those who bring nonperishable items get their tickets for \$12 each.

Meanwhile, STAGE RIGHT casting for "Cole!" a musical revue based on Cole Porter's life, began last week, with MANNY CAPEO directing and ANGELA GRAVES working on choreography. More strong singers and dancers are needed for the March show. Individual auditions may be arranged at [info@stage-right.org](mailto:info@stage-right.org).

Sunday afternoon was cold and barren, but the CONROE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA LEAGUE offered a warm retreat for members and guests in the home of PAT and FRAN BOURGEOIS. Pat spent weeks decorating the 29 Christmas trees that fill every room of the expansive home, including the indoor pool area. Guests could hardly take it all in, while enjoying the culinary expertise of restaurateur GEORGE PALLATTA, who presented one intriguing hors'd'oeuvre after another. Almost 100 guests wandered from room to room, not anxious to vacate so much warmth and hospitality — especially when the four members of the SYMPHONY FLUTE RHAPSODY presented lovely holiday sounds, also scattering among them a few Broadway tunes, and breathtakingly beautiful hymns. The four flutists are STEPHANIE HARRIS, CSO principal flute section, KIM BELLINI, JODI WESTERHOLD and GINGER GONZALES. They do play a varied program at private parties, from "Amazing Grace" to "Edelweiss," and any requests in between. Call (936) 760-2144 to book.

Another delightful surprise was the arrival of pianist CAROL HAMILTON poised for a sing-a-long led by assistant CSO conductor JIM PEDIGO, with the assemblage lustily joining in.

Some in that festive gathering were ED and TATIANA GARCIA, of Willis; former CSO board member BENNY PITZER and SHIRLEY PITZER; MILLIE SCOTT; CAROLYN ARNAUD; MCHD'S SANDY and JOHN WAGNER; CSO League president KAREN MAUERMANN; GUY MARTIN; ANNETTE SPIKES; violinist and activity director at The Forum FATIMA HART with hubby CHRIS HART; ANNE MOORE; MARTHA GUSTAVSEN; attorney JOHN DANTCHE and CRISTINE DANTCHE; BOB and THETA JACKSON; CHRISTA MILLS and hubby IAN MILLS, and the list goes on, but not here.

Departing guests took home handmade commemorative ornaments, the creations of PATSY MC LEMORE.

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