IT’S A WONDERFUL LIFE

By Philip Grecian
Evita

Lyrics by Tim Rice
Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber

The Voice of the People Cannot be Denied!
April 30 – May 8 • Queen Elizabeth Theatre

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IT’S A WONDERFUL LIFE

Nov 19 – Dec 26, 2015
Granville Island Stage

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STARRING
(in alphabetical order)
Lindsey Angell Violet Bick/
Mrs. Thompson
Eileen Barrett Mother Bailey
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Bob Frazer George Bailey
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Ernie/Tom
Alistair C. W. Leong Young Harry Bailey/
Tommy Bailey
Jennifer Lines Mary Bailey
Irene Karas Loeper Tilly
David Marr Uncle Billy
John Murphy Bert/Ed
Taylor Dianne Robinson Young Mary/
Tilly’s niece

Sylvie Odette Thomas Zuzu
Toby Verchere Young George Bailey/
Peter Bailey
Alec Willows Henry Potter

CREATIVE TEAM
Dean Paul Gibson Director
Angela Beaulieu Assistant Director
Ted Roberts Set Designer
Marsha Sibthorpe Lighting Designer
Rebekka Sørensen-Kjelstrup Costume Designer
Kiara Lawson Costume Design Assistant
Neil Weisensel Original Music/
Sound Designer
Jamie Nesbitt Projection Designer
Rachel Ditor Dramaturg
April Starr Land Stage Manager
Yvonne Yip Assistant Stage Manager
Tessa Gunn Apprentice Stage Manager

There will be one 20-minute intermission.
Taking photographs or making any mechanical recording is prohibited in the theatre.
Please turn off pagers and cellular phones.

Season Sponsors
Our production of the adaptation of Frank Capra’s iconic movie is one of the most beloved plays we have presented over the years. We asked playwright Philip Grecian to create a stage adaptation of *It’s a Wonderful Life* after we presented his stage adaptation of the movie *A Christmas Story* in our 2006/07 season. (Over at the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage we are presenting the musical version of the same movie in a different adaptation.) Mr. Grecian took us up on the challenge and delivered a script that director Dean Paul Gibson, with the creative team of Ted Roberts (set design), Marsha Sibthorpe (lighting), Rebekka Sørensen-Kjelstrup (costumes), Jamie Nesbitt (projections), and Neil Weisensel (sound), fashioned into this remarkable production, complete with images from the original movie.

The production showcases the incredible talents of our production staff, many of whom are listed at the back of the programme. Thank you to all our dedicated and talented staff, who have spent all year in the service of the great work the Arts Club does. Thank you also to our donors for their support of Arts Club activities that could not exist without them. Thanks to our board for the volunteer hours they put it on our behalf. And special thanks to our outgoing board president, Ross Paul, whose passion for the theatre is boundless and whose work on our behalf is tireless. And thank you to you—for being here, sitting as one in our theatre, embracing our performers and our shows. It means a lot. To us all.

Bill Millerd,
Artistic Managing Director

Peter Cathie White,
Executive Director
The Arts Club Theatre Company relies on your philanthropic support to ensure the strength and vitality of the company. As a non-profit arts organization, the Arts Club could not exist without the generosity of our individual donors. Ticket sales cover only a portion of our production costs, so we rely on community gifts to close the gap. Please consider joining us by becoming a member of the Artistic Director’s Circle today. Contact Parmida Zarrinkamar, Manager of Individual Giving, at 604.687.5315, ext. 261, for more information.

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Philip Grecian’s authorized stage adaptation of the film *A Christmas Story* has had well over 1,000 productions, professional and amateur, since its publication in 2000. His stage adaptation of Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* has been on the boards for 40 years, and his full stage adaptation of *It’s a Wonderful Life* has been produced multiple times by North American professional theatre companies, while his staged radio version of the same story has been broadcast on both radio and television and continues to be produced in theatres throughout the United States and Canada. His other works include *The Dragon of Nitt* and *The Lion and the Lyre* (both translated and performed in Russia); the authorized stage production of *In His Steps*, a drama; *Little Pills*, a farce; *Toby Saves the Farm*, a musical salute to tent shows; and a translation of Mozart’s opera, *The Magic Flute*. His staged and televised radio dramas, in addition to *Dracula* (Emmy winner) and *It’s a Wonderful Life*, include *Twisted Tales of Poe* (winner of a Gold AVA Digital Award), *A Christmas Carol*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (nominated for an Emmy and winner of a Telly Award), *The Blood Countess*, *Frankenstein*, *The Invisible Man* and others. His work has been produced at theatres throughout North America.
Rachel Ditor is the Arts Club’s Literary Manager, and Dramaturg of It’s a Wonderful Life. We sat down to talk about this timeless work.

What makes It’s a Wonderful Life such a popular story?

The message is uplifting without being saccharine. The holidays are hard for lots of us, for many reasons, and It’s a Wonderful Life tackles that and leaves us feeling more connected to each other, which is a real gift. One that can’t be bought in a shop or online.

Does the transition from the screen to the stage pose any special challenges?

The process of adapting was tricky. We knew people would have expectations about the story, all derived from the famous film. So the adaptation had to deliver some of the iconic moments in a way that really resonated with people, things like Jimmy Stewart diving from the bridge into icy waters, Mary breaking the window of the abandoned house and making a wish, Jimmy calling out for Mary while running through the streets, Zuzu at the Christmas tree in her father’s arms, the list goes on. Using portions of the film helped convey some of those moments, as well as limiting the set pieces to the most iconic structures (such as the bridge) helped the feel of images from the film translate to the stage.

There was a draft where the audience participated in the show, acting as members of the town. It was fun and a little chaotic, but it took us too far away from the period tone of the film. This is why we workshop all the new plays we produce. You need time to experiment, to try out ideas and see what works, and what fails. Sometimes miserably. That’s a useful experience to have BEFORE you get an audience. Theatre is a collaborative art, and the development process is all about trial and error, whether it’s here in Vancouver, or in London’s West End, or on Broadway, every play was once new and had a period of time, likely years, when the script was a work in progress.
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THE COMPANY

LINDSEY ANGELL
Violet Bick/Mrs. Thompson
For the Arts Club: It’s a Wonderful Life (debut, 2010), Becky’s New Car, Venus in Fur.
Other Theatre: Comedy of Errors and Love’s Labour’s Lost (Bard on the Beach), Liberation Days (Theatre Calgary and Western Canada Theatre), Iceland (Dirt Road Productions), The Romeo Initiative (Touchstone Theatre), The Odd Couple (Main Street Theatre).
Other: 2010, 2014 Jessie Richardson Award nomination—Actress in a Supporting Role; 2015 Jessie Award—Actress in a Supporting Role; 2015 Betty Mitchell Award nomination, Lead Actress in A Drama. 2007 Hnatyshyn Foundation grant for promising young English theatre actor in Canada.

EILEEN BARRETT
Mother Bailey
Other Theatre: Scratch (Theatre Plexus), The Duchess (Ruby Slippers), Small Parts (Solo Collective), Harvest, My Fair Lady (Gateway), My Mother’s Story (Presentation House), Dead Man’s Cell Phone (Vancouver Fringe), The Dissociates (Sea Theatre), How I Learned to Drive (Overdrive Productions), The Attic, the Pearls and Three Fine Girls (Western Canada Theatre).
Film & Television: Motive, iZombie, Bates Motel, Supernatural, The Watchmen, Santa Clause 2, Scary Movie.
Other: Vancouver TheatreSports League—over 4,000 performances; voice actor in hundreds of cartoons; graduate of Studio 58.

TED COLE
Rieneman/ Gowar/Man at Bank
Other Theatre: Vigil (Persephone), Killer Joe (ITSAZOO), Measure for Measure (Honest Fishmongers), Dracula (Chemainus), Copenhagen (Globe), Jitters (Belfry).
Film & Television: Motive, iZombie, Bates Motel, Supernatural, The Watchmen, Santa Clause 2, Scary Movie.
Other: Vancouver TheatreSports League—over 4,000 performances; voice actor in hundreds of cartoons; graduate of Studio 58.

BERNARD CUFFLING
Clarence
For the Arts Club: First appearance in 1975. Some favourites as an actor or director: It’s a Wonderful Life (original cast), The Philanthropist, History Boys, My Fair Lady, Absurd Person Singular.
Other Theatre: Recently, Jeeves Intervenes, The Mousetrap, Jeeves in Bloom (Chemainus Festival Theatre), The Tempest, A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Bard on the Beach).
Film & Television: Recent credits include Mr. Right, Hector and his Search for Happiness.
Other: BC Walk of Fame inductee, Sam Payne Award, Lifetime Achievement Jessie Award.

BOB FRAZER
George Bailey
For the Arts Club: It’s a Wonderful Life, Cabaret
Other Theatre: Hamlet, Richard III, Petruchio (Bard On The Beach)
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Other: Artistic Director of osimous theatre. Graduate of Studio 58

EMILY GRABOVAC
Young Violet
Arts Club debut
Other Theatre: Seussical the Musical (upcoming), Honk!, Little Mermaid (Acting UP!), Thoroughly Modern Millie (Encore). Miss Vancouver, Heaven Help Us, Ocean’s 11 1/2 (Gotta Sing, Gotta Dance).
Other: Arts Umbrella Dance Professional Training Program. Emily wishes to express her heartfelt thanks to her family and teachers for their support.

KYLE JESPERSEN
Harry/ Peter Bailey/Ernie/Tom
For the Arts Club: It’s a Wonderful Life (original cast, six seasons).
Other Theatre: Ash Rizin (Green Thumb Theatre/Alberta Theatre Projects), The Valley (Alberta Theatre Projects), Proud (Firehall Arts Centre), Penelope (Rumble Theatre), Shelter from the Storm (Touchstone Theatre), The Rick Hansen Story (title role, 2010 Cultural Olympiad), The Fighting Season (Vancouver Fringe/upcoming run at The Cultch).
Other: Vancouver Mayor’s Arts Award (2013 Emerging Theatre Artist), Jessie Award (Significant Achievement in Ensemble Acting—Steel Kiss), Betty Award (Outstanding Actor in a Supporting Role—Ash Rizin), Globe & Mail Top Ten Theatre Picks of the Year (Best Hip Hop Musical Performance, personal mention—Ash Rizin). Graduate of Studio 58.
www.kylejespersen.com

IRENE KARAS LOEPER
Tilly
For the Arts Club: Gypsy (debut, 2007), In the Heights.
Other Theatre: Thoroughly Modern Millie, Lend Me a Tenor, Radio Daze (Gateway Theatre), Anything Goes (TUTS), Mambo Italiano (Firehall Arts Centre/Western Canada Theatre), The Wild Party (Pint Size Theatre), Gypsy (RCMT), Tony and Tina’s Wedding (Hoarse Raven Theatre).
Film & Television: Impastor, Continuum, Package Deal, Motive, Fringe, The L Word.
Other: Ovation Award Anything Goes; Jessie Award nominee/Ovation Award nominee Thoroughly Modern Millie; Ovation Award nominee The Wild Party; Leo Award nominee The Staff Room; Wifey Markus Loeper. Special thanks to Dean, Bill, Stephanie, KarasLoeperWilkinsonSeegerFamily, Arts Club Theatre Company cast and crew, and RED Management. A-list!

ALISTAIR C. W. LEONG
Young Harry Bailey
Arts Club debut
Other Theatre: Heaven Help Us; Ocean’s 11 1/2 (Gotta Sing Gotta Dance); Carmen; Tosca; La Bohéme (Vancouver Opera); Choralstage.
Film & Television: The Descendants (Disney); Falling Skies (Spielberg)
Other: Vancouver Children’s Choir; Vancouver Bach Children’s Chorus; St. George’s School Band and Clarinet Choir. Special thanks to my teachers for their continued support in all my endeavours and to my family and friends for cheering me on at what I love to do best.

JENNIFER LINES
Mary Bailey
For the Arts Club: High Society, The Real Thing, It’s a Wonderful Life, Here on the Flight Path, and Sylvia.
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THE VANCOUVER SUN

14 It’s a Wonderful Life

Film & Television: *The Whispers*, *Fringe*, *Left Coast*, *Killer Instinct*, *Da Vinci’s City Hall*, *Da Vinci’s Inquest*.

Other: Thirteen-time Jessie Award nominee and double Award winner. BFA in Acting UVic. My love and gratitude to Haig Sutherland and our four-year-old son, Stuart.

**DAVID MARR**  
*Uncle Billy*  

Film & Television: *Continuum*, *The Killing*, *Stargate Universe*, *Alcatraz*, *Hiccups*, *Stargate SG1*, *The L-Word*.

Other: John’s play, *True Story*, won the Jessie Award for Best New Play. Check out John’s band China Repair at http://chinarepair.bandcamp.com/releases.

**TAYLOR DIANNE ROBINSON**  
*Young Mary*  
Arts Club debut  

Other Theatre: *The Sound of Music*, *King & I* (Gateway Theatre), *Annie* (Royal City Musical Theatre), *Shrek the Musical* (Align Theatre), *A Place Called Whisper* (Pi Theatre), *The Sound of Music*, *Vaudeville Varieties* (Footlight Theatre Co.).


Other: Thanks to Tracy, Perry, and her parents for their support and encouragement.

**SYLVIE ODETTE THOMAS**  
*Zuzu*  
Arts Club debut  

Other Theatre: *Ours Brun*, *Ours Brun – Lord Selkirk Kindergarten*, countless home theatre productions.

Film & Television: *PARKED* webseries.

Other: Awards—lots of high fives.

**TOBY VERCHERE**  
*Young George Bailey*  
Arts Club debut  

Other Theatre: *Boys*
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from Syracuse (Applause), The King and I—Louis (Gateway Theatre), The Old Curiosity Shop—Kit (United Players), The Raymur Mothers (Theatre in the Raw), The Wizard of Oz, Little Shop of Horrors, Hamlet (St John’s School).

Film & Television: Fringe
Other: Young Artists and Joey Award nominee, theatre. Thanks to family and many wonderful voice and dance instructors past and present. Be sure to see my twin brother Graham in A Christmas Story at the Stanley!

ALEC WILLOWS
Henry Potter
For the Arts Club: Various and many since the early ’70s. Recently, The Odd Couple, Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story.
Other Theatre: Canadian tour of original National Arts Centre production of John Gray’s Rock ‘n’ Roll, performed at the Goodman in Chicago Flying Karamazov Brothers, Comedy of Errors, Lincoln Centre, New York, Let Me Call You Sweetheart (Belfry), Of Mice and Men (Little Mountain Gallery).
Film & Television: Airwaves and Max Glick on TV, films Harmony Cats and Tokyo Cowboy.
Other: Plays drums with China Repair. Jessie Award winner (Of Mice and Men).

DEAN PAUL GIBSON
Director
For the Arts Club:
Director—Spamalot, She Stoops to Conquer, Xanadu, The 39 Steps, Black Comedy, The History Boys, It’s A Wonderful Life, The School for Scandal and A Flea in Her Ear; Actor—Saint Joan.
Other Theatre: Directing: Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike (MTC/Mirvish), A Midsummer Night’s Dream, King John, Much Ado About Nothing, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, and many more (Bard on the Beach); One Man, Two Guvnors, 7 Stories, The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee (Theatre Calgary); Toronto, Mississippi, True West, No Great Mischief, and Noises Off (The Playhouse); The Boyfriend (Studio 58); Lend Me a Tenor, Good Night Desdemona—Good Morning Juliet (Gateway Theatre). Acting: Major Barbara, Tosca Café (American Conservatory Theatre/Theatre Calgary co-production), Jitters (Belfry), Falstaff, Cymbeline (Bard on the Beach), Vigil, The Drowsy Chaperone (Theatre Calgary). For the Vancouver Playhouse, The Overcoat, Romeo and Juliet, The Dead Reckoning, The Music Man, The Rise and Fall of Little Voice, Stones in His Pockets (remounted at the Belfry Theatre), Humble Boy (also at Tarragon Theatre and the National Arts Centre).
Other: Studio 58 graduate. Awards: Won some, lost some.

ANGELA BEAULIEU
Assistant Director
For the Arts Club: Stage Management—The Waiting Room, Godspell; One Man, Two Guvnors; The Odd Couple; Venus in Fur; The 39 Steps; She Stoops to Conquer; It’s a Wonderful Life.
Other Theatre: Stage Management—One Man, Two Guvnors (Theatre Calgary), Miss Shakespeare (Escape Artists), Urinetown (Firehall Arts Centre), Crazy for You, Lend Me a Tenor, Shirley Valentine (Gateway Theatre), Rage, The Shape Of A Girl, Problem Child (Green Thumb). Upcoming: The Wizard of Oz (Gateway Theatre).
Other: Angela is very happy to be a part of this talented group of artists. In 2008, Angela was the recipient of the Mary Phillips Prize for her work behind the scenes. Love and thanks to DPG & SJT.
TED ROBERTS
Set Designer
Other Theatre: Chelsea Hotel, Urinetown (Firehall Arts Centre); Hedda Gabler, My Chernobyl (Persephone); Driving Miss Daisy, A Closer Walk with Patsy Cline (Magnus).
Other: Twenty-time Jessie Award nominee and six-time Award winner; Graduate of University of Alberta Theatre Design program.

MARSHA SIBTHORPE
Lighting Designer
For the Arts Club: Over 400 productions over 43 seasons. Favourites include The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds, Creeps, Matka King, Miss Saigon and Mary Poppins.
Other Theatre: Numerous credits for, Western Canada Theatre Company (Kamloops), Magnus Theatre (Thunder Bay), Belfry Theatre (Victoria), and the Vancouver Playhouse (Vancouver).

REBEKKA SØRENSEN-KJELSTRUP
Costume Designer
For the Arts Club: Spamalot, She Stoops to Conquer, The 39 Steps, Buddy, It’s a Wonderful Life, Disney’s Beauty and the Beast, The School for Scandal, Enchanted April, The Diary of Anne Frank, Miss Saigon, and A Flea in Her Ear.
Film & Television: You Me Her, Spooksville, Signed Sealed Delivered, Into the Grizzly Maze, Tortured, numerous other features.
Other: Member, Associated Designers of Canada. Emmy Award winner, 2014/15, Spooksville, Jessie Award winner, The School for Scandal and Enchanted April. Costume and set design BFA graduate of UBC. She thanks the wardrobe department for all their great work, her husband for all his support, and her three little girls, who bring so much love and joy into her life.

NEIL WEISENSEL
Original Music/ Sound Designer
For the Arts Club: It’s a Wonderful Life, She Stoops to Conquer, The School for Scandal.
Other Theatre: Stickboy (libretto by Shane Koyczan), Vancouver Opera, upcoming at Manitoba Opera and on tour with Vancouver Opera. Six other operas, including Gisela in her Bathtub, City Workers in Love, and Merry Christmas, Stephen Leacock.
Other: Other career highlights include a big band collaboration with superstar Michael Bublé (earning the team a Genie nomination), performing for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Bill Clinton at Vancouver fundraisers, and an exclusive engagement performing solo piano at the Vancouver 2010 Olympics. Holds advanced music degrees from UBC (Composition) and the University of Manitoba. He lives in Winnipeg with wife Rachel and daughter Miracle. Currently teaches theory at Canadian Mennonite University and co-directs the Music Theatre program at University of Manitoba.

JAMIE NESBITT
Projection Designer
For the Arts Club: It’s a Wonderful Life (debut, 2007), Poster Boys, Farewell...
My Lovely, How Has My Love Affected You?, History Boys.

Other Theatre: Evangeline (Citadel/Confederation Centre), Stickboy (Vancouver Opera), Stuff Happens (NAC), The Other Place (Canadian Stage), Macbeth (Kentucky Opera), Avenue Q (Citadel), Otello (Pacific Opera), Sherlock Holmes (Vertigo Theatre), Liberation Days (Theatre Calgary) Jamie has designed for almost every major theatre in Canada.

Other: Graduate of Studio 58, eight Jessie nominations, one Jessie Award, three Critter nominations, one Critter Award, one Sterling nomination, two Betty Mitchell Nomination, one Betty Mitchell Award, a Capitol Critics Circle nomination, 2008 Mayor Arts award, 2007 Sam Payne Award, and the 2006 Earl Klein Memorial Scholarship.

RACHEL DITOR
Dramaturg
For the Arts Club: Dramaturgy; Helen Lawrence, How Has My Love Affected You?, Do You Want I What I Have Got? A Craigslist Cantata, The Patron Saint of Stanley Park, Mom’s the Word: Remixed, Sister Judy, Farewell, My Lovely. As Literary Manager, Rachel runs the Silver Commissions and ReACT public readings programs.

Other Theatre: Rachel has worked in new play development with companies across the country since 1992 at Playwrights Workshop Montreal, including two seasons as faculty dramaturg at The Banff Centre’s PlayRites Colony.

Other: A freelance theatre director for this company and others, Rachel is also an Adjunct Professor at UBC; member of Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas; author of several articles on theatre for publications including Canadian Theatre Review, and Theatre Topics (John Hopkins University Press); editor of The Arts Club Anthology: 50 years of Canadian Theatre in Vancouver published by Playwrights Canada Press.

APRIL STARR LAND
Stage Manager
For the Arts Club: She Loves Me (debut, 2000).

Favourites: It’s a Wonderful Life, Disgraced, Sister Judy, Avenue Q, The Odd Couple, Bombitty of Errors, Patsy Cline, Becky’s New Car, The Penelopiad.

Other theatre: Freud’s Last Session (Pacific Theatre), the re-enactors Surrey’s True Stories (Surrey Heritage); past seasons with Bard on the Beach and the Stratford Festival of Canada.

Other: Studied stage craft at Douglas College. Plays mom to Noah and aunt to Elizabeth in real life.

YVONNE YIP
Assistant Stage Manager
Arts Club debut
Other Theatre: Barefoot in the Park (Classic Theatre Festival), Big Bad, Fall Away Home (Boca del Lupo), The Competition Is Fierce, The Road to Canterbury (ITSAZOO), Valley Song, Sisters, The Sound of Music, Forbidden Phoenix (Gateway Theatre), Jade in the Coal, The Life of Paper, The Gull, Butterfly Dream (Pangaea Arts), The Blue Horse, Mother Courage and Her Children (Caravan Farm Theatre), Extraction (Theatre Conspiracy), My Mother’s Story (Presentation House), Billy Bishop Goes to War and others (Theatre North West), The Very Hungry Caterpillar Canada, US, Bahrain, and South Korea Tour (Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia).

Other: Graduate of University of Victoria.
The Arts Club Theatre Company thanks its government and corporate partners for their support of the 2015/16 season.

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