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Beloved television special comes to life at Keith-Albee

By DAVE LAVENDER
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Courtesy of the Marshall Artists Series The national tour of "A Charlie Brown Christmas Live on Stage" brings the beloved holiday TV special to life on stage at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 5, at the Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center as part of the Marshall Artists Series.

In the words of Lucy Van Pelt, "We all know that Christmas is a big commercial racket. It's run by a big eastern syndicate, you know."

And sure, good grief, it is easy to get caught up in all the hurry and worry of the season, but, thankfully, since 1965 Charles Schulz's rag-tag creation of friends has been shining a light on the true reason for the season in "A Charlie Brown Christmas."

The simple joy and magic of the TV classic comes to life on stage as the Marshall Artists Series presents the national tour of "A Charlie Brown Christmas Live on Stage" at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 5, at the Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center, 925 4th Ave., Huntington.

Tickets are \$68.40, \$54.21 and \$43.30 at the Marshall Artists Series Box Office in the Joan C. Edwards Playhouse on the Marshall University campus. Box office hours are noon to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Tickets also are available by calling 304-696-6656 or online at [Ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com).

Marshall Artists Series marketing director Angela Jones said the Artists Series is always looking for a unique holiday show to present, and this is a perfect all-ages classic produced by the same production company that brought to life the Rankin-Bass TV special "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," which the Artists Series presented in 2014 at the Keith.

"I didn't know what to expect when I walking into that ('Rudolph') show, but I was like everybody else - I walked out saying, 'Wow, it was a really cool show,'" Jones said when the season was announced. "It will be the same way with 'Charlie Brown,' no doubt."

In "A Charlie Brown Christmas Live on Stage," Charlie Brown is saddened by the materialism surrounding the holiday season. Lucy helps Charlie Brown by convincing him to direct the neighborhood Christmas play, however things go amiss when Brown selects a tiny fir tree for the show. It's up to Linus to save the day and remind everyone of the true meaning of Christmas.

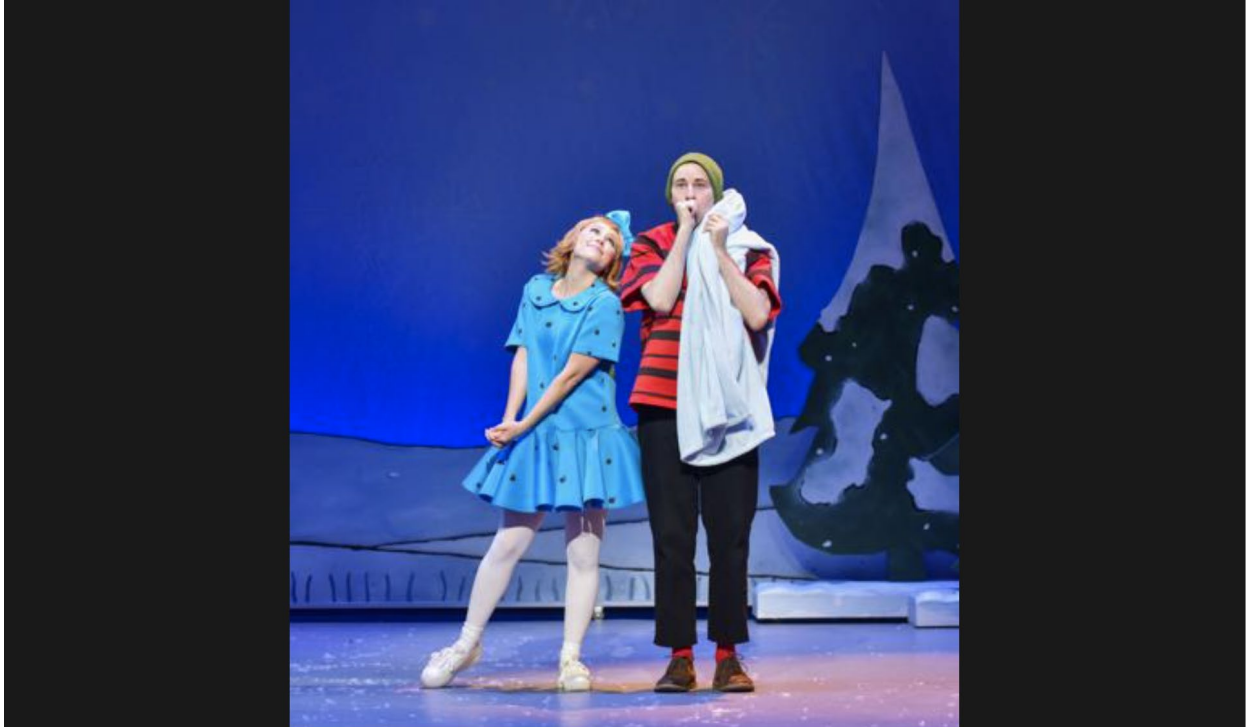
Schulz's timeless story is brought to life in this faithful adaptation featuring the unforgettable music of Vince Guaraldi, a neighborhood Christmas play, a scraggly fir Christmas tree, and the whole Peanuts gang.

Gideon Chickos, who plays Charlie Brown, said the Emmy and Peabody award-winning story has stuck around for a good reason - because it truly entertains people of all ages.

"He does such a good job of balancing humor that is intended for adults versus humor intended for kids, so it is one of those perfect shows for everyone," Chickos said. "Adults who come to the show have just as much fun as the kids do."

And Chickos, who is 21, said in the timeless character of Charlie Brown are many great lessons for life.

"There is something about him that is great," Chickos said. "A lot of people look at him and think he is a pessimist, but one thing Jim our director has talked about is how he really is an optimist because he goes into every situation expecting the best. He is surprised when things don't go his way, but still he is always eager to try again. That is a great quality to have, and everyone should aspire to be like that."



Courtesy of the Marshall Artists Series The national tour of "A Charlie Brown Christmas Live on Stage" features all the characters and scenes audiences will recognize from the television special, including Linus, Sally, Lucy and Charlie Brown, as well as a live trio performing the iconic Vince Guaraldi score.

Chickos, a Durham, North Carolina, native out on his first tour, said the live production of the show has all of the magic of the TV show - the classic jazz of Vince Guaraldi, the neighborhood, the world's most famous scraggly Christmas tree and Charlie Brown's wide assortment of friends, added with the magic of a live audience.

"We have 12 people in the cast, and three of those are the on-stage band of Schroeder playing piano, Shermy on bass and Pig Pen on drums, so it is a live trio playing the Guaraldi music that is featured throughout the entire show," Chickos said. "And this is a brand new show and a new adaptation of it based upon the TV special that we all know and love, and trying to stay as true to the special as possible. Every day after rehearsals, the director was like, 'Go give the special another watch and look for inspiration from it.'"

Chickos said for the cast inspiration is easy to come by in sharing the magic of such a wonderful story as well as the magic of live theater with audiences around the country.

"It is a lot of fun performing this and a lot of fun performing for kids. That is very rewarding," Chikos said. "We just finished a school show with more than 1,000 kids in the audience, and it was so cool because you hear all of the statistics about the impact that theater has on kids' lives at that age, so that was very exciting and something that drew me to the show. Kids just don't hold back at all; when they love something they audibly love it."

More about the show

WHAT: Reynolds and Associates, American Babbitt Bearing, Prichard Electric, Chapman Printing, and Hoops Family Children's Hospital present "A Charlie Brown Christmas Live on Stage."

WHERE: The Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center, 925 4th Ave., Huntington.

WHEN: 7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 5 .

TICKETS: Tickets are \$68.40, \$54.21 and \$43.30 at the Marshall Artists Series Box Office in the Joan C. Edwards Playhouse on the Marshall University campus. Box office hours are noon to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Tickets also are available by calling 304-696-6656 or online at [Ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com).

SPONSORS: "A Charlie Brown Christmas Live on Stage" is also sponsored by Northwestern Mutual, Huntington Federal, Marshall Orthopedics, KEE 100, B-97, The Brew, WSAZ, The Herald-Dispatch, Marshall University and the Marshall Artists Series.

On deck with the Marshall Artists Series

"Sleeping Beauty": One of the world's most beloved stories is told through ballet at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2018. The State Ballet Theater of Russia's full-scale production will feature 55 dancers and is choreographed by Vladimir Vasiliev, former principal dancer with the Bolshoi Theatre Ballet. Ticket prices are \$91.32, \$76.04, \$65.13 and \$54.21.