

THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER

AUDITION NOTICE

Marshfield Community Theatre is proud to announce auditions for The Best Christmas Pageant Ever!

Director: Carolyn Billingsley

Music Director: Sandee DePriest

THE STORY:

As *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* begins, the narrator introduces the Herdmans as the worst kids the world has ever seen. These six kids – Imogene, Claude, Ralph, Leroy, Ollie, and Gladys – smoke, curse, bully other kids, steal, and once set fire to an abandoned toolhouse. Their father abandoned them when they were young, and their mother works two jobs and has no time to look after her rowdy kids. The Herdman siblings take care of themselves. The narrator's little brother Charlie is a frequent target of Leroy Herdman, who likes to steal his dessert at school. Charlie mentions that it does not matter because he gets all the snacks he wants at Sunday school. The Herdmans decide to show up next Sunday to see what they can get.

They are only planning on a one-time visit, but when they hear about the upcoming Christmas pageant, they decide to stick around and participate. The pageant's usual director has an accident that puts her in the hospital, so the narrator's mother is brought in to lead the rehearsals. The Herdman kids push their way into the lead roles of Mary, Joseph, the three Wise Men, and the Angel of the Lord. They have never heard the Christmas story before, but they want to learn everything they can. They are angry about the injustices that Mary and Joseph faced when they were put in the stable, and when King Herod tried to kill baby Jesus. They are confused by the three rich kings bringing jars of oil as a gift and start questioning and asking real questions that even make the narrator question her own beliefs about the Nativity story.

However, not everyone is happy with the Herdmans, and at the top of that list is Alice Wendleken, a prim and proper girl who always used to play the role of Mary, until she was pushed out by Imogene. She keeps track of every wrong thing Imogene does and says, hoping that the Herdmans will make one major mistake so she can get her mother involved and force them out of the pageant. She sees her opportunity when one of the church ladies enters the bathroom during the dress rehearsal and finds it filled with Imogene's cigar smoke. The fire department is called, and the church is evacuated in a

panic. The dress rehearsal is called off, and the pastor is flooded with phone calls complaining about the Herdmans. The pastor, Reverend Hopkins, talks to the narrator's mother and asks her if they should call off the pageant this year, but she has faith and asks him to let the show go on, saying it will be the best one they have ever done.

When it comes time for the pageant, it begins as usual, but the Herdmans soon start adding their own unique flavor to the show. However, the Herdman children have been changed by their studies and are more subdued and respectful than usual. Amid all the usual candlelight and singing, the three Herdman children playing the Wise Men bring a ham that was given to them from the food basket by the church. Imogene is overwhelmed by the kindness and begins to cry at the beauty and wonder of the scene, which she is now a part of. Everyone leaves the church buzzing about the play, talking about how the play was different this year though they do not know exactly why. The narrator, however, says that she understands why. The Herdmans did not portray the Holy Family and the story of Jesus's birth as if it were something dry from a book. Rather, they understood the needs of the family and related to it in a genuine, powerful way that let them truly put their hearts into their roles.

AVAILABLE ROLES:

Father (Bob Bradley) - solid family man, 35-38

Mother (Grace Bradley) - trim, attractive, 35ish

Beth Bradley - the narrator, strong voice and presence, 10-11

Charlie Bradley - traditional kid brother, 8-9

Ralph Herdman - ragged, scroungy, slouching manner, touch of adolescent cool, 12-13

Imogene Herdman - loud, bossy, crafty, 11-12

Leroy Herdman - tough, sure of himself, 10-11

Claude Herdman - tough, combative, 9-10

Ollie Herdman - looking for trouble, Claude's usual partner in crime, 8-9

Gladys Herdman - small, wiry, feisty, 7-8

Alice Wendleken - prim, proper, pain in the neck, 10-11

Mrs. Armstrong - largish woman, managerial in voice and manner, 50ish

Mrs. Slocum - pleasant, motherly woman, 35-60

Mrs. Clark - 35-60

Mrs. Clausing - 35-60

Mrs. McCarthy - a younger, less imperious version of Mrs. Armstrong, middle 40s

Maxine - 10-11

Elmer Hopkins - 12-13

Hobie - 9-10

David - 8-9

Beverly - 7-8

Firemen (2) - 25-30
Shirley - 5-6
Juanita - 5-6
Doris - 9-10
Reverend Hopkins - middle to late 40s
Children's Ensemble

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

There will be a \$20 fee collected from all cast members at the first cast meeting. Cast members will be required to provide their own footwear. A shoe list will be given to the cast at a later date. Cast and families will also be given the opportunity to purchase (OPTIONAL) show T-shirts, as well as opening night gifts for cast members and MCT Education messenger bags to carry rehearsal materials.

WHAT TO PREPARE:

Auditions will consist of cold readings from the script, as well as some voice and movement exercises.

WHEN:

AUDITIONS will be held October 23 and 24 at 6:00 pm.

CALLBACKS will be on October 25 at 6:00 pm.

REHEARSALS will begin Sunday, October 29th. After this initial meeting, most rehearsals will take place between the hours of 6-10 pm on Sunday through Thursday evenings.

PERFORMANCES will be held December 6-8 at 7 pm and December 9 at 3 pm. Cast members are required to be at every performance, with *no exceptions*.

Please be prepared to list all possible conflicts on your audition form.

WHERE:

Any questions regarding The Best Christmas Pageant Ever may be directed to Grace Billingsley at education@marshfieldtheatre.org.