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Wednesday, December 11, 2013

### Review: (Toronto) The Christmas Story



### Bring your Christmas cheer (and a blanket)

by Dave Ross

Every December for the past 76 years, the Church of the Holy Trinity has embarked on an ambitious Christmas pageant, sharing the story of Christmas with tens of thousands of audience members. On opening weekend, there were members of the audience that had been attending every year for 60 years. It is a Christmas tradition in the hearts of many Torontonians.

The pageant is performed entirely with a volunteer cast, supplemented by a handful of professional vocalists and a skilled organist providing the music. Aside from programming a program of favourite Christmas music, director Susan Watson has another challenging task – the pageant format calls for only mime from the performers, and it is arguably quite difficult to express characterizations when limited in this way. The volunteer cast does a bang-up job, managing to convey the feelings and actions in the story without becoming trite or laughable. The lighting design by Elizabeth Woodley-Hall is simple, yet also well-executed for the space. The only area for improvement I noted was in the professional vocalists – there were a couple of moments of questionable harmony, as they were unfamiliar with the material. I expect this will be ironed out shortly. I also would have loved to hear some of the lovely descants for the hymns that were simply drowned out by the audience singing. As I've mentioned previously, the cast does a lovely job with the story, but special mention is due to the two narrators, who are clearly well-rehearsed. And of course, the choir of angels, composed of a dozen or so children who seem to range in age from 3-13 steal the show whenever they take the stage.



@dmjross

The Church of the Holy Trinity is a functioning parish in the Anglican Church of Canada, and known for their outreach and advocacy services. As a result, the show does lean toward the ecclesiastical, opening and closing with a prayer. Whether you are a church-goer or not, there will be something for you to enjoy in this pageant. On the whole, it is a community pageant writ large, and a delightful way to spend a holiday afternoon or evening with the family. The church can get rather chilly, so I would suggest bringing warm clothing, and be sure to arrive early to get the best seat, and plunk your children down on the rugs at the front of the church, where they can see everything with the best views, and marvel at the costumes up-close. And be ready to sing along – the finale is the most Christmas feels you'll feel all year.

The Christmas Story runs at the Church of the Holy Trinity Dec. 6 - 22.

Posted by THE CHARLEBOIS POST at 4:20 PM