

Miracle on 34th at the Brumder (//thesmallstage.weebly.com/blog/miracle-on-34th-at-the-brumder)

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Milwaukee Entertainment Group presents a whimsically classy, little holiday show this month as it presents *Miracle on 34th Street: A Live Musical Radio Play*. The 108 year-old **Brumder Mansion** radiates warmth in a Lance Arthur Smith adaptation of the classic 1947 Lux Radio Hour broadcast of the classic holiday tale with added musical songs and arrangements by Jon Lorenz.

Co-Directors **Tom Marks** and **Amanda J. Hull** have come to know the tiny subterranean stage at the Brumder quite well over the course of many, many shows. The cozy space serves as a tiny live studio audience for an old-timey radio-style adaptation of the 1947 film.

Connor Blankenship plays announcer and host of the show as well as a diverse variety of other roles in a variety of accents and attitudes. Mialdo is a relative newcomer to the local stage having arrived from Louisville. His substantial charisma brings the diverse elements of the show together in a tone and timbre that feels very authentic to 1940s radio. **Hayley San Fillippo** also lends an air of authenticity to the proceedings. She's appeared in old-timey radio shows with Cabaret Milwaukee and at the Brumder last September in Matthew Konkel's *Jake Revolver--VCR Repairman*. Fillippo has extensive experience with this kind of show and a great nonchalant talent for it. Contemporary old-timey radio feels that much more authentic with her in the cast. **Matthew Ecclestone** also makes a familiar appearance at the Brumder having made memorable appearances in Liz Shipe's Sherlock Holmes series. Here he appealingly swaggers through a couple of roles around the edges of the central plot.

Dapper **James P. Iaquina** has a robust dramatic dynamic in the role of Kris Kringle--a department store Santa who believes himself to be the real thing. He runs into some difficulty proving his identity to others--particularly a pragmatic, little girl named Susan Walker. To their credit, Marks and Hull have elected to cast a pair of alternating child actresses as Susan. It would be difficult to overstate the importance of casting a girl in the role of the girl. On a small stage it's really difficult for an adult actor to convincingly portray a normal kid...let alone one who is as pragmatically precocious as Susan. Milwaukee has some really great kids' theatre training programs. It's great to see kid actresses **Ellie Christian** and **Aven Spahn** have an opportunity with this kind of classic.

Kira Walters has a sweet June Cleaver-like presence as Susan's mother Doris, who works in the office for Macy's. Like her daughter, she's reluctant to accept Kringle as Santa, but chance and circumstance gradually convince her of the magic of Christmas.

Musical theatre talent **Travis Cheever** rounds out the cast as Doris' love interest...a lawyer looking to help Kringle prove his identity in court.

Milwaukee Entertainment Group's production of *Miracle On 34th Street: A Live Musical Radio Play* runs through **Dec. 22** at the **Brumder Mansion** on **3046 West Wisconsin Avenue**. For ticket reservations and more, visit Milwaukee Entertainment Group online. (<http://milwaukeeentertainmentgroup.com/miracle-on-34th-street>)

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