

December 2010

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be downloaded at
www.ctmtheater.org

Happy Holidays!



Thank you for Choosing CTM

If you're like most decision makers, you have many choices and limited resources to invest in out-of-classroom learning opportunities. That's why we are so very grateful that you have chosen CTM's production of *A Wonderful Life* to enrich the lives of the young people you brought to the theater today.

This guide is designed to help you delve more deeply into the history, language and social studies of the story and explore the world created by CTM's artistic staff. Topics explored in this guide are curriculum-based to help you make the most of your CTM experience.

Look for the **black bold type** to find activities throughout your study guide. From the youngest audience members to grown-ups who are yet young-at-heart, there's an activity inside the guide to engage every imagination.

Suggestions for Preparing Youth for Attendance

Live theater differs from watching television or movies.

Performers can see and hear you. As an audience member you are a vital contributor to the performance experience that you and those around you will have.

How you behave and how you react to the show will affect the artists' performances. That is why each performance is a unique experience, it will never be repeated exactly the same.

Talking to your neighbor, sending text messages, and other similar behaviors are distracting to the rest of the audience and to the artists. Please be respectful of the artists on stage performing for you by listening quietly.

Of course, it is appropriate to react to what you are seeing – some things may make you laugh, gasp out loud, or you may be asked to respond by answering questions from the performers, singing along or clapping. Most of all, it is important to be present “in the moment” by being attentive and enjoy the performance.

And of course – show your enthusiastic appreciation by applause at the end of the performance! CTM thanks YOU for coming to the show!



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A Wonderful Story

A Wonderful Life is a musical stage adaptation of the famous 1940s film *It's a Wonderful Life*. What does that mean? There will be some differences in the details, secondary characters, and in what was chosen to recreate on stage versus what is seen in the film. However, the basic storyline remains the same. If you've never seen the film or heard the radio play version of *It's a Wonderful Life*, here is an overview of the story:

IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE in Bedford Falls, and in a moment of desperation the entire town prays for the salvation of George Bailey. Something of a local hero, George has always put the welfare of others before his own, costing him all of his hopes, dreams and ambitions. Though he's made a career of saving others, tonight George stands penniless and alone on a bridge, contemplating suicide as he is unable to save himself.

UP IN HEAVEN, angels are on duty. They hear the town's prayers and send Clarence (an angel in training attempting to earn his wings) down to save George. But before Clarence can land on the bridge and stop George from committing suicide, he must take a trip through George's life to see how he can save him.

GROWING UP, George had big dreams of leaving his small town and exploring the larger world, but even at a young age, he would be called upon to sacrifice himself and his dreams for others. When he was just 12 years old, he pulled his kid brother Harry from an icy lake, saving his brother's life though losing his own hearing in one ear. After graduating high school and saving up money for his great explorations, George was forced to stay home and take over the family business (Bailey Building & Loan) after his father died of a stroke. And years later, after marrying his long-time sweetheart Mary Hatch, another opportunity to see the world (on his honeymoon) was dashed by a failing economy and the greed of local banker and landlord Mr. Potter. George was forced to give up his honeymoon in order to save the family business and the town from Potter's clutches.

THROUGH GEORGE'S WORK (and sacrifice) in the family business, he was able to help others in town to escape Potter's greed (and high rent costs) by helping them build and own their own homes. Meanwhile, old friend Sam Wainwright rolls into town in a giant car flaunting his money and a trophy wife. He's had great success in manufacturing plastics from soybeans, a venture he tried to get George to join. Sam's success serves as a painful reminder of George's lost dreams, and in a moment of weakness George considers giving up the family business for a lucrative position under Mr. Potter. While he has the fortitude to remain firm, news that Mary is pregnant ratchets up the tension. To make matters worse, Uncle Billy loses \$8,000 of their business money, and Zuzu, George's daughter, falls severely ill.

HAVING NO OTHER OPTIONS, George crawls back to Mr. Potter. Potter (knowing about the lost money) accuses George of squandering the company's money away for his own personal whims and calls the police. George flees to the bridge, contemplating suicide so that his family may collect his life insurance money and continue on without him. Amid all of this turmoil, he wishes that he had never been born.

AS GEORGE IS to take his final breaths, Clarence drops in, taking George on a journey through a world where he was never born. Clarence reveals to George all of the lives that he has touched, and what a gift his life has been—not only to himself, but also to all those around him.

INSPIRED BY HIS ENCOUNTER with the angel, George returns home with a renewed vigor. To his surprise, he finds that the town has pitched in to help him and his family. In the end, as Clarence earns his wings, George realizes that it is a **wonderful life** after all.

Themes in A Wonderful Life

SELFLESSNESS

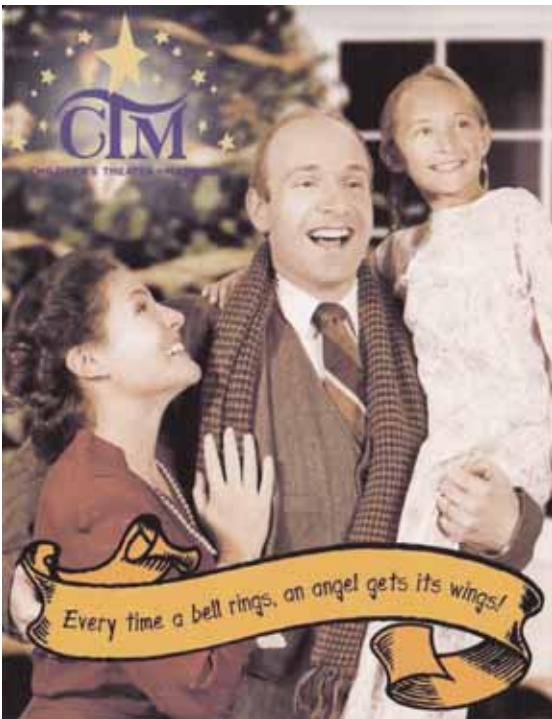
A major theme that *This Wonderful Life* deals with is selflessness, or the ability to put others' needs before your own. In the play, George is forced to give up his dreams of seeing the bigger world outside of Bedford Falls and doing bigger things than the town allows, but always in order to help someone else. **Can you think of people who have given up things for you? Are there ways that you can be selfless for those around you, particularly those less fortunate than yourself?**

DREAMS

Over the course of the play, George seems to continually put his dreams aside in order to fulfill the wishes of others. As he contemplates giving up all that remains, his life, he wishes that he had never been born. Clarence reveals to him, however, that George never really lost his dreams at all. In fact, he achieved all of the bigger and better things he had hoped for, all in his backyard. In the end, what was bigger and better was touching the lives of everyone around him. **What are your dreams? How can you use your talents and aspirations to help those around you?**

VALUE OF LIFE

The title tells us from the beginning—this is a wonderful life. And though George doesn't see it until the end, he realizes that there's no problem too big to handle. There are always friends, family and other loved ones around who will lend a hand if you just ask. It's okay to be afraid sometimes, we all are! That's why we're here—to help when you need it! **Have you ever helped a friend when they were sad? Have you ever felt like George, that your problems were too big to solve? What happened to make your mood change?**



Musical Theater

Musical theater is a form of theater combining music, songs, spoken dialogue and dance. The emotional content of the piece – humor, pathos, love, anger – as well as the story itself, is communicated through the words, music, movement and technical aspects of the entertainment as an integrated whole. Since the early 20th century, musical theater stage works have generally been called simply, "musicals". Musicals may be presented in large venues, such as big budget Broadway productions in New York City, or in smaller theaters, Off-Broadway or regional productions, on tour, or by amateur groups in schools, theaters and other performance spaces. **Have you ever seen a musical before today? Can you name other musicals that have been inspired by films or novels? How about films that have been made based on stage musicals?**



Here are a few things you won't see in CTM's musical version of *A Wonderful Life*: The sledding scene...the soda foundation scene...dramatic close ups on people's faces...and the scene during the school dance when the gym floor opens up to reveal the swimming pool!

When Life doesn't Feel Wonderful

WHILE THE TITLE of the play rings with optimism about life and the joyous holiday season, a central issue in *A Wonderful Life* is George's depression. While he may just be under the weather momentarily, there is a more serious medical condition that afflicts as many as a half a million people in the United States— seasonal affective disorder (also called SAD).

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER is a particular type of depression, one in which symptoms typically begin in October or November and subside in March or April, corresponding with the shortening hours of sunlight in the day (though they can be known to afflict a patient as early as August or as late as January). Some of the key symptoms include a change in appetite (especially a craving for sweet or starchy foods), weight gain, daytime fatigue, difficulty concentrating, lethargy and avoidance of social situations.

THE MOST EFFECTIVE and common treatment for winter SAD is light therapy. Light therapy is administered via a special light box or a light visor that you wear on your head like a hat. Season Affective Disorder isn't limited to the winter months, as there is a corresponding (though less common) condition for the summertime as well. Summer SAD may be triggered by high heat and humidity, and is often treated with summer trips to cooler climates. Most people who feel sad do NOT suffer from this type of SAD.

Do you know anyone who has depression during the holidays? This time of year is often very stressful.

Stress can get anyone down.

Have you ever felt depressed during the winter months? How did you combat it? How did it affect your life?

The World of A Wonderful Life

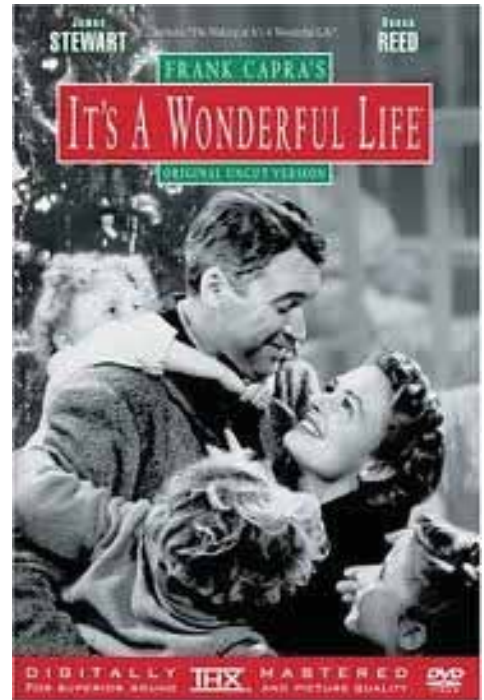
TAKING PLACE in the 1940s, *A Wonderful Life* spans a time in American history that was rife with tension, conflict and drama. Over the course of two decades (the 1930s and the 1940s), the world would rise, fall and be born anew with determination, hope and the strength to move forward.

THROUGH THE '30S AND '40S, Americans slid from the liberality and economic success of the '20s into a more conservative lifestyle inspired by the key events of the two decades—the Great Depression (1930s) and World War II (1940s). There was a marked rise in militarism (the building, maintenance and use of large, strong, national military forces), which played a key role in lifting America from the Depression during the war.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION, a time of dramatic economic downturn, is typically acknowledged to have spanned from about 1929 to 1939 in the United States. Starting with Black Tuesday (October 29, 1929) and the crash of the stock market, the decade of the Depression was marked by a sharp decline in international trade, personal incomes, tax revenues and prices. Though America was hit hard by the Depression, the economic effects reached across the world, affecting both industrialized nations and those providing the raw materials for industry. There was no sector left unscathed, as construction was halted, crop prices plummeted, and mining and logging reaped little rewards. Most people were left penniless and without work for much of the decade, hardly able to scrape by and survive.

IN THE UNITED STATES, the end of the Great Depression is often marked with America's entrance into World War II. Nazi Germany seized control of Denmark, Norway, Benelux, France and the Soviet Union over the course of 1940–41, though the United States did not directly respond until December 7, 1941, when the Japanese (an ally of the Germans) attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The attack marked America's official entrance into World War II, which fostered a renewed sense of national patriotism and economic growth through production of war implements. Alongside President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's economic stimulus plan (known as the New Deal), this production boosted the economy, bidding farewell to the hard times of the Great Depression. After suffering a series of defeats, both the Germans and Japanese surrendered, with the war officially ending on September 2, 1945.

THOUGH THE GREAT DEPRESSION and World War II were prominent during the time in which *A Wonderful Life* takes place, there were other things going on. In fact, in the 1930s Hollywood entered its Golden Age, a time in which studios churned out more than 50 classic films. Among the classics still widely watched today are *The Wizard of Oz*, *Gone with the Wind* and, of course, *It's a Wonderful Life* (the movie on which this play is based). Radio also came into its own golden age, becoming the most popular mass medium in industrial nations. The board game Monopoly was born during the 1930s, and in its first year became the best selling game in America.



Who is Frank Capra?

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE, the inspiration for *A Wonderful Life*, is a classic 1946 film directed by the legendary Frank Capra. Known for his ability to tread the delicate line between sentimentality and insight, Capra's work as a director spans nearly four decades and over 50 films.

ODDLY ENOUGH, films that were considered some of Capra's best work— It's a Wonderful Life (1946) and State of the Union (1948)—were both box office flops. Now, what would George Bailey have to say about that?

BORN IN ITALY to a fruit picker on May 18, 1897, Frank Capra would not get to taste the American dream until he came to the United States at age six. Despite his family's wishes (they always pushed for him to quit school and work), he pursued his dreams of success and achievement.

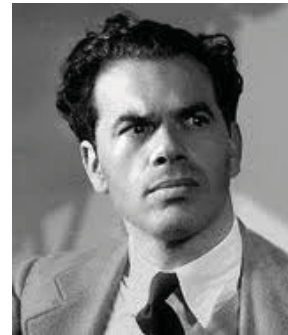
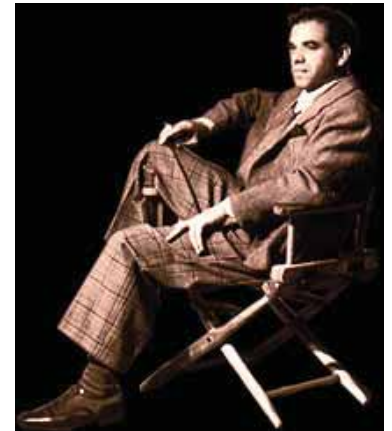
A TALENTED and intelligent young man, school proved to be an inspiration to Capra as he was coming up. Among the top in his high school class, he pursued a degree in engineering before making his way to Hollywood (though he was bitten by the theatre bug in high school).

AFTER EARNING his degree, Frank served in the armed forces during World War I. Upon his return, he attended a "cattle call" (casting call for extras) for a film starring Harry Carey (an Oscar-winning actor of the day). Frank boldly introduced himself to Carey while on set, an introduction that would serve him later in his career when he and Carey collaborated on the film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*.

FROM THERE, Capra nudged his way further into the business as a gag writer, slowly inching his way toward directing his own feature films by working with great names of the day like Hal Roach, Mack Sennett and Harry Langdon. It wasn't long before Capra's talent was recognized, and he linked a deal with Columbia Studios.

ONCE ON HIS OWN, Capra converted his seemingly limitless potential into astounding productions. His early film *It Happened One Night* (1934) became the first film to win all five major Oscars (Best Lead Actor, Lead Actress, Director, Picture and Screenplay), and marked the beginning of Capra's critical acclaim. From there he won two more Best Director Oscars for his work on *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936) and *You Can't Take it with You* (1938). By this point in his career, Capra had established his optimistic tone with stories about underdogs taking on the larger establishment.

WHILE HE CONTINUED to direct into the 1960s, his work never rivaled that of his earlier efforts. Capra died in 1991, having accrued three Oscars and a Lifetime Achievement award for his work as a writer and director in Hollywood.



A Wonderful Time of Year

A Wonderful Life centers around events that take place on Christmas Eve, a widely celebrated Christian holiday here in the United States.

THE CHRISTMAS holiday depicted in *A Wonderful Life* has roots far deeper than the Christian holiday that we know today. In fact, Christmas has a rich lineage that can be traced as far back as the ancient Romans, who celebrated the winter solstice on December 25 by honoring the sun gods and goddesses. The winter solstice was known as a “rebirth” of the sun, and early Christians saw a strong connection between the birth of the sun and the birth of the Son of God. Another pagan contributor to the holiday was Scandinavia, which celebrated a winter festival called Yule, usually in late December or early January. It was a time of togetherness, family, feasting and fun.

AS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH came into being, the celebration of Christ’s birth waivered from December 25 to March 25, since the New Testament gives no specific date as to when Jesus was born. It was not until the Middle Ages that the Twelve Days of Christmas would be designated as December 25–January 5. Religious wars and reformation banned the holiday and brought it back into being time and time again, though by 1870 (when President Ulysses S. Grant signed a law declaring it a federal holiday) Christmas was here to stay.

“WHERE’S SANTA AT?!” Well, Santa Claus did not arrive on the Christmas scene until German-American cartoonist Thomas Nast conceived of him in 1863, though he was inspired by legendary figures like Saint Nicholas, Father Christmas and Kris Kringle. And that whole gift giving thing actually has two roots. The first is found in the three kings who went to Jesus when he was born, bearing lavish gifts. While that was enough to give us our generous inspiration, to create the gift giving tradition of today, we also call upon Saint Nicholas and the reputation he had for leaving small gifts in children’s stockings on December 5th.

TODAY, CHRISTMAS has evolved into a multi-billion dollar extravaganza that spans all industries far and wide, from bakeries to car dealerships and everything in between. Sounds of the season jingle to the tune of new holiday music released each year. Hollywood has immortalized the classic tales of Christmas characters like Rudolph and Frosty. Commercials on TV try to sell us everything from jewelry to Chia Pets. Toy companies compete for children’s (and adults’) attention with their latest and greatest rewards for good boys and girls.

Amid all the commercialized craziness, it’s easy to lose sight of what Christmas is really all about, and what it means to you. That’s why CTM is committed to presenting intergenerational holiday productions emphasizes themes like generosity, community and the importance of family. We hope that you are reminded of what is truly important.



Christmas isn't the only holiday that takes place during the winter, as various cultures, faiths and peoples celebrate a vast array of winter holidays.

What are your holiday traditions and expectations? Are the holidays just parties, or reminders of what a precious gift life is, as it ended up being for George Bailey?

HANUKKAH

Every year, Jews celebrate a rededication to Temple during the Festival of Lights. The holiday spans eight days, in late November to late December. On each of the eight nights, candles are lit on the menorah while friends and family celebrate their culture, eat potato latkes, play dreidel games and exchange gifts. It is a time to give thanks and revere the glory of God.

KWANZAA

Often called the fastest growing holiday in the world today, Kwanzaa may be one of the youngest as well. Created in 1966 by Long Beach State University professor Maulana Karenga, the holiday is a non-religious celebration of African culture and community. The holiday focuses on seven principles to carry on throughout the year—*umoja* (unity), *kujichagulia* (self-determination), *ujima* (collective work and responsibility), *ujamaa* (cooperative economics), *nia* (purpose), *kuumba* (creativity) and *imani* (faith).

SAINT NICHOLAS DAY

Celebrations honoring Saint Nicholas take place all around the world. While in most countries "St. Nick's Day" occurs sometime in December, some countries celebrate Saint Nicholas as late as the spring and summer months. Historically known as a festive gift giver, it is believed that Saint Nicholas is the real-life root for Santa Claus. On the evening of December 5th, put out an empty shoe or sock. If you've been good, Saint Nicholas may just leave you a treat!

TA CHIU

This Taoist festival occurs every year on December 27th. Celebrating peace and renewal, people use this day to summon the ghosts of their ancestors to renew their lives and grant wishes for the coming year. In some localities, a priest will read aloud the names of every townsperson. Once complete, this list will then be burned so that the smoke will carry to the heavens and the people will be remembered by the gods.

EID AI-ADHA

This Feast of Sacrifice is an important time in the Islamic faith. Commemorating Abraham's great sacrifice in giving up his son, the feast reenacts Abraham's obedience to God by sacrificing an animal and then sharing it with the poor. Held in the last month of the Muslim calendar (November or December each year), the Feast of Sacrifice is a time for visiting friends and family, and exchanging gifts.

BODHI DAY

Observed on December 8th, Bodhi Day is the day Buddhists celebrate Siddhartha Gautama's realization of Enlightenment. In monastic Zen practice, Bodhi Day is marked by a 10-day retreat during which the monks meditate 10 to 12 hours a day. On the final night, monks sometimes stay up through the night, symbolically imitating Buddha's commitment to meditate until he attained enlightenment.

Quotes & Questions

“Big—see! I don’t want one for one night. I want something for a thousand and one nights, with plenty of room for labels from Italy and Baghdad, Samarkand...”

- George is after a suitcase large enough to take him around the world. He’s clearly very excited by the possibility of leaving home to explore. Do you think his excitement is really just about seeing new places?
- If not, what else might be driving him to leave?

“I couldn’t face being cooped up for the rest of my life in a shabby little office. Oh, I’m sorry Pop, I didn’t mean that. But this business of nickels and dimes... I just feel like if I don’t get away, I’d bust.”

- Some people are expected to join the family business after they get out of school, but what if they have different plans?
- Where does one’s duty to family end?
- Is it more important to follow your own path or help your family?

“You’re right when you say my father was no business man...But he did help a few people get out of your slums, Mr. Potter. People were human beings to him, but to you...they’re cattle.”

- George’s father was known as a good man, willing to put his own needs aside for the needs of others, but it didn’t get him very far in the business world. Do you think it is necessary to be money-hungry like Mr. Potter in order to be successful?
- Is there a way to be a good person and still a good at business?

“Strange, isn’t it? Each man’s life touches so many other lives, and when he isn’t around he leaves an awful hole, doesn’t he?”

- Clarence shows George just how important he is in the world. Have you ever felt as small as George, like your life didn’t matter?
- What do you do to make yourself feel better?
- How can you help others do the same?

“Mary did it! She told a few people you were in trouble and they scattered all over town collecting money. They didn’t ask any questions. Just said ‘If George is in trouble—count on me.’”

- Without even knowing it, George has been the best kind of person—one who everyone cares about. How can we all be that kind of person?
- What does it take?
- Do you think it’s difficult to be giving and selfless, or is it easier than we might think?

“...remember, no man is a failure who has friends.”

- Clarence reminds George just how important it is to have friends. Do you ever think about your friends and how important they are to you?
- Do you ever consider what it would be like if they weren’t around? How would your life be different without them? How would theirs be different without you?



Savings & Loan

Have you ever borrowed money? Borrowing something means you are expected to give it back. This is also called a "loan." Have you ever wanted to buy something, but didn't have quite enough money? If you've accepted a loan from friends, family, or anyone else and promised to repay them, then you are "indebted" to pay it back. A loan is also called "debt."

Debt is money one person, organization, or government owes to another person, organization, or government. Typically, the person who borrows the money has a limited amount of time to pay back that money with interest (an additional amount you pay to use borrowed money). Grown ups take out loans for many expensive things, such as a house, a car, or to pay for tuition as a school or university.

Money, loans and debt in particular, are spoken of often in *A Wonderful Life*. There is a big difference between how the Baileys and the Mr. Potter do business. There is a big difference why each business decides to loan money and a big difference in their loan practices. George Bailey is keen on providing people reasonable loans so that they can purchase homes. **Why is home ownership important to George? What do people gain when they own a home of their own?**

What coin and monument both honor another "Washington"?

The first coin to feature an African-American was the Booker T. Washington Memorial Half Dollar. It was minted from 1946 to 1951. A National Monument was designated to Washington in Hardy, Virginia, on April 5, 1956.

Interested in African American History? Check out CTM's February production of *MVP, the Jackie Robinson Story!*

US Debt in Your Lifetime

The 1990s and 2000s At the beginning of the 1990s, the U.S. economy was still fairly strong. Continued growth in the stock market helped increase the amount of money some people had to spend. It also increased the amount of taxes the Government collected. However, the debt continued to grow.

Starting in 1998, the Government worked to balance its budget. That means it spent no more money than it collected from taxes and other fees. For a short time the amount of debt did not increase a great deal.

But after 2000, changes in Government spending caused the debt to grow again. After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks the economy stalled and for a time tax receipts slowed. The debt continued to increase. Toward the end of 2007, the U.S., along with many other countries around the world, was in a recession or general slowdown in the economy. During this recession we also discovered a great deal of corruption and wrong doings in the Savings and Loan industry. Private and public investors were brought before the courts and many frauds were exposed. It was a turning point for some, but work continues to "clean up" dirty business. By 2010, the debt had reached more than \$12 trillion.

For interesting facts and games about saving money go to <http://www.treasurydirect.gov>.

Homeownership & Generosity

Two strong messages that run through *A Wonderful Life* are homeownership and generosity. These two ideas are at work together right in Dane County. In your community you can find people who strive to make the dream of homeownership a reality.



CTM shines a spotlight

Habitat for Humanity of Dane County

Mission

Bringing the community together to build homes with God's people in need.

Operating Principles

We build quality, affordable, simple and decent homes.

We are an organization founded on Christian principles; we welcome all people to participate in our organization.

We provide the opportunity for home ownership to people who might not otherwise become homeowners.

We recognize that one strength of Habitat is the central role volunteers play in our work.

We work in partnership with the people who purchase our homes, providing support and counsel to help them succeed in home ownership.

We bring the community and our partner families together in the home building process.

We work to assure that our families and homes are assets to the surrounding neighborhood.

We seek to partner with others in the community to address affordable housing issues.

We strive for environmental stewardship through our sustainable building practices and re-use of materials through our ReStore and in other areas of our operations, where practical.

For more information about Habitat for Humanity of Dane County go to www.habitatdane.org.

From Page to Stage Who, What & Where

Cast - the people who perform in a show. The people you see on stage **audition** (an event that is held during which time people may be asked to read from scripts, perform material they have memorized on their own, and/or engage in acting games in front of the director who will then choose who will play which character during the actual performance of the play). After a play has been **cast** (used here as a verb, meaning the action taken by the director in making choices), the cast will rehearse for several weeks in the day or evenings. **Rehearsal** is how theater people refer to "practice." **Have you ever been in a play? How do you think the cast felt today while they were performing this story?**

Choreographer - the person who creates dances and arranges movements for a musical. **How does movement help to tell the story or let you know something about a character? What kinds of dances are used in this show? Try some of the dances on your own!**

Company - the cast and crew of a show and any other staff who work on the show. It has been said that being part of the making of a play or musical is like a "team sport" or a "big family." Everyone has a job to do and by working hard doing something fun and rewarding, it's only natural to come together as a single unit, team or group. Company is another way of describing everyone without whom this play wouldn't happen. **Have you ever been part of a group like this? How does it feel to work together with people to create or accomplish something you can share with others?** "Company" is also a word commonly used to describe a core group of people that regularly work with a certain theater company. CTM holds auditions for each different show during our season. Even though each show is cast (used here as a *verb*, meaning how the director chooses actors to play certain roles or parts) from auditions, many of the same actors will be seen on CTM's stage each season. Sometimes a theater will have an "acting company," which is a group of actors who will DEFINITELY be seen on stage during on or more show during a season. **Have you ever seen one of the actors on stage in a different CTM production?**



Costume Designer - the person in charge of the costumes for a show, costumes may be "built" (make from scratch) or "pulled" (chosen from costumes already made). Most CTM shows are costumed by a combination of both. **How did the costumes help you to understand the story?**

Crew - all the people who work together on a show except for the cast. The crew is very important before and during a show! Among other things, the crew makes sure that people and things are where they need to be when they need to be there. **After seeing *A Wonderful Life*, what do you think happened because of the crew? How many people were in the crew?**



Director - the person who provides the vision of how a show should be presented, who works with the actors on their roles, develops the blocking, and is in charge of the rehearsals

Ensemble - a group of actors, singers or dancers who perform together on the stage. In *A Wonderful Life*, as in many other plays and musicals, the actors in the Ensemble play many different parts. **Did you notice anyone who played more than one part?**

What did they do to create the other role?

Lighting Designer - the person who designs the lighting for a show and works with the director to get desired effects. Lighting is a very important element because it helps to tell the story, move the action, and create mood. **How does the lighting in *A Wonderful Life* do these things?**



Prop Mistress/Master - the person in charge of all the props and who usually works with them during a show. Everything that an actor touches or uses (that are not worn like a costume) are considered props. Some props are made from scratch, others are found in CTM's warehouse. We have thousands of props stored on shelves and in drawers. **What are some of the props in *A Wonderful Life*? What do you think was made JUST for this show?**

Set Designer - the person who designs the sets for a show...in smaller theaters this person also builds the sets. The set designer, like other designers, works very closely with the director before rehearsals begin. The director will need to understand how the set works, and what kind of surfaces the actors will “play upon” before rehearsals begin. **Why do you think the set designer chose to create the locations in this way?**

Sound Designer - the person who designs the sound direction for the show. Each of the sounds you hear that are not created by people on stage were decided, found or made, and recorded by the sound designer. **Listen closely...what sounds do you hear that are part of the sound design?**



Stage Manager - the person who runs the show from opening curtain to closing curtain and is in charge of everything on the stage and in the back of the stage. **Who is the stage manager in your class? How about in your home?**

Control Booth - the place in a theater from which all the sound and lights are controlled. The Stage Manager sits in this room with headphones on, giving directions to people in the booth and back stage throughout the show. He/she is not communicating with the actors, however. If you turn around you will see the control booth at the back of the theater. **Did you find the control booth? Who or what did you see?**

House - used to describe the audience and where the audience sits. You will both sit in the house and be the house while you are watching the play. Sometimes actors will say to one another “great house!” because when audiences are attentive and polite. **What do you think the actors said about the house after the performance you attended? If you liked today’s show, please tell your friends and family so that the actors have a full HOUSE for other performances of this show!**

Offstage (Backstage) - the area of the stage which the audience cannot see. This is a very busy place during the play. It is important for everyone to be very quiet and focused. Trained or experienced actors will not try to communicate with the audience when they are backstage, like peeking out of the curtains. **Did you see actors or stage crew offstage during the show? If so, what were they doing?**



Set - the setting of the stage for each act and all the physical things that are used to change the stage for the performance. CTM builds the set from new and used materials in an enormous warehouse in Madison. It takes many artists and builders to construct, paint, and prepare each set. Get this: a few days before the first performance of each different play, the technical crew takes apart the set at the warehouse, drives across town with it in a big truck, and then puts all of the pieces back together on the stage in the theater. This is accomplished in a few hours or a day. The actors will have a few days or nights to rehearse on the set before you see the play. **How would YOU have made the set for this play? What would you have done differently?**

CTM productions feature children and adults, novices and professionals working side-by-side.. Young people acquire a sense of accomplishment, increased confidence, and a greater sense of community.

Activity

Choose a familiar book to adapt into a live play. Choose a director, designers, actors and musicians to tell the story. Don't forget your audience! Theater requires an audience.

The Angels of CTM

CTM's sky is filled with many angels! Some of the brightest halos can be found twinkling in CTM's business office, in the community, in stores, businesses and in government buildings throughout Dane County.

CTM Staff: CTM employs nearly a dozen people who work in various positions all year. Some of the jobs that people do include answering your questions on the phone, making sure your teachers and parents know about the shows and classes at CTM, and finding the right people to do all of the jobs on the last two pages and more!

CTM Board of Directors: Twenty grown ups from all walks of life volunteer their time to help CTM in lots of important ways. They spend their time and resources with us because they believe in CTM's ability to do important things in the community.

Ticket Buyers: By coming to today's show, your teacher, principal or parent organization helped to make *A Wonderful Life* possible.



Acting is make-believe. However, theater rent, costumes, posters, wood and paint aren't pretend. Putting on a show costs a lot of money.

It takes a lot of this



to make magic on



this

CTM pays for a show like *A Wonderful Life* by charging money for tickets. Please be sure to thank the grownups that paid for your ticket today. We are so grateful that you could be here.

Ticket sales aren't the only way that CTM pays for productions like *A Wonderful Life*.

Sponsors & Donors: Through the year, people generously give gifts of money to CTM because they want to make sure that we can continue offering fun and educational experiences like this to you! Sometimes people wish to give these gifts privately and you won't see their names. When you do see names of people, companies and restaurants when you're looking at CTM posters or programs, it means these people helped CTM pay for the show you're watching. They want to make sure you opportunities to see wonderful live performances with your classmates. We are grateful for their support! Just a few of the people who helped to make today's show possible are:



See the movie that started it all!

It's a Wonderful Life, 130 minutes,
Paramount, 2006, DVD.

**Check out the short story on which the plot was based,
and see how many differences you can spot!**

The Greatest Gift. Studio Books, 1996.
Van Doren Stern, Philip.

**Get a better understanding of one of the biggest
economic problems in our country's history.**

Six Days in October: The Stock Market Crash of 1929.
Atheneum, 2002.
Blumenthal, Karen.

**Take a look at this site from Seneca Falls, NY, which
suggests that this town was the real-life basis for *A
Wonderful Life*.**

www.therealbedfordfalls.com

**Depression and stress around the holidays are
quite common and can have many causes.**

www.nmha.org/go/information/get-info/depression/holiday-depression-and-stress

**This Study Guide was prepared by CTM
with help from the following resources:**

<http://www.repstl.org/studyguides/>

<http://www.overturecenter.com/community/overture-onstage/educators-resource-guides>

http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Frank_Capra&oldid=397187033

http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=It%27s_a_Wonderful_Life&oldid=398298655

<http://www.treasurydirect.gov>.

Children's Theater of Madison
228 State Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53703
(608) 228-2080

www.ctmtheater.org

To book your next school show: Jane@ctmtheater.org

To book group tickets: Kathy@ctmtheater.org

To sponsor a school or underwrite tickets: Christina@ctmtheater.org

Extend the experience!

Check out these additional
resources for curriculum tie-
ins. CTM supports teachers
and celebrates learning
through live theater
experiences and study.

Keep the curtain open!