

PRESS KIT: A Christmas Memory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – November 2, 2009

***A Christmas Memory* opens at Centre Stage December 3**

Local film star shines in Truman Capote classic

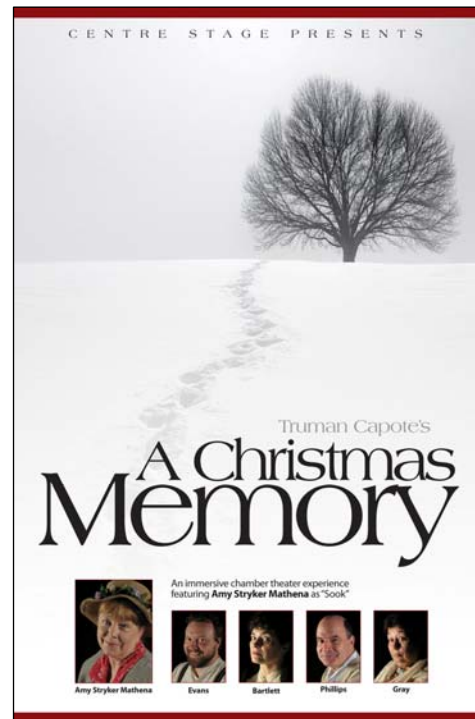
First published in 1956, Truman Capote's recollection of his rural Alabama boyhood conjures the unforgettable portrait of an odd but enduring friendship between two innocent souls ... one young and one old ... and the memories they share of beloved holiday rituals.

A Christmas Memory will be paired each evening with another Capote classic, *The Thanksgiving Visitor*, as well as **carols of the season** and **complimentary hot apple cider**. Don't miss this warm, immersive and delicately directed feast for the heart and the senses. Picture the perfect Christmas ... at Centre Stage!

This special **chamber theater** double-bill runs at Centre Stage December 3-19 and features **Amy Stryker Mathena** whose film and television credits include starring roles opposite such notables as Carol Burnette, Farah Fawcett-Majors, Hume Cronyn, Meg Tilly and Tim Matheson. Cast by director Robert Altman as the bride in his 1978 film *The Wedding*, Mathena's on-screen leading men include Randy Quaid, Keith Carradine and Desi Arnez, Jr.

Rounding out director Benjamin P. Robinson's cast are Christopher Evans, JeanE Bartlett, Beau Phillips and Mary Sparks Gray.

A Christmas Memory and *The Thanksgiving Visitor* will run December 3-19 with 8 p.m. performances December 3-5, 10-12 and 17-19 and 3 p.m. performances December 6 and 13. Performances will be given on **Thursdays-Sundays ONLY**. Ticket prices are \$25 for adults, with discounts available for students and seniors. \$10 Student rush tickets are available 30 minutes before show time with student ID. **Holiday Family Package: \$60 for family of four, \$10 per additional family member up to total of nine family members**. All seats reserved. The box office can be reached at 864.233.6733 from 2-6 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and 2 hours before performances. The theater is located at 501 River Street inside the Citi Smith Barney building just one block off Main Street in downtown Greenville. For more information, visit the web site at CentreStage.org.



MEDIA ONLY: FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Production details

Play title: *A Christmas Memory* and *The Thanksgiving Visitor* by Truman Capote

Play type: Family holiday classic

Dates/times: **December 3-19, 2009**
Evening shows: December 3-5, 10-12 and 17-19 at 8 p.m.
Matinees: December 6 and 13 at 3 p.m.

Location: **Centre Stage**
501 River Street (first floor of the Citi-Smith Barney building, one block behind the Westin Poinsett Hotel)
Greenville, SC 29601



Tickets/box office: Ticket prices are \$25 for adults, \$23 for seniors (65+) and \$18 for students. Prices vary depending on seat location.
Holiday Family Package: \$60 for family of four, \$10 per additional family member up to total of nine family members.
Box office hours are 2-6 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and 2 hours before curtain.
Student rush tickets \$10 cash at the door 30 minutes prior to curtain (with ID)

Media contact: **Tim Brosnan, Marketing**
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Web site: www.CentreStage.org

Production staff

Benjamin P. Robinson, *Director*
Kim Granner, *Scenic Designer*
Marlaina Seay, *Lighting Designer*
Wade Powell, *Sound Designer*
Elyse Middlebrooks, *Costume Designer*
Donna Smith, *Props Master/Set Dresser*
Wofford Jones, *Stage Manager*

Cast

Amy Stryker Mathena (*Sook*)
Christopher M. Evans (*Buddy*)
JeanE Bartlett (*Aunt 1, Ann (Jumbo) Finchburg, Mary Taylor Wheelwright, Mill Owners Wife*)
Beau Phillips (*Odd, Mr. Morrison, Mr. Haha*)
Mary Sparks Gray (*Aunt 2, Miss Armstrong, Annabel, Town Lady*)

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Cast biographies



Amy Stryker Mathena (Sook) grew up in Greenville and appeared in numerous productions at Greenville Little Theatre while still in high school. She then attended UNC School of the Arts in Winston-Salem where she earned a BFA in acting and a Certificate of Study during the year-long London Arts Course program in London, England. After graduation, she embarked on a nine-year film career that carried her from New York to Los Angeles where she garnered screen credits that included starring roles opposite such notables as Carol Burnett, Farah Fawcett-Majors, Hume Cronyn, Meg Tilly and Tim Matheson. She was discovered by director Robert Altman who cast her as the bride in his 1978 film *A Wedding*. Thanks largely to that casting decision, the roster of her on-screen leading men grew to include Randy Quaid, Keith Carradine and Desi Arnez, Jr. Amy’s television appearances include

guest star roles in “Charlie’s Angels” and “Gaucho,” an ABC Afterschool Special.

Christopher M. Evans (Buddy) last appeared as Richard of Gloucester, one of Shakespeare's most cunning and memorable villains, in the Upstate Shakespeare Festival's production of *Richard III*. Just before that, he played numerous roles in the classic ensemble piece *The Dining Room* at Centre Stage. Christopher's other credits include Garry LeJeune in *Noises Off*, Kent in *King Lear*, Austin Tichenor in *The Complete History of America (abridged)*, and *Greetings!*, in which he played Mickey/Lucius. He thanks his friends and family for not trying too hard to talk him out of being an actor.



JeanE Bartlett (Aunt 1, Ann (Jumbo) Finchburg, Mary Taylor Wheelwright, Mill Owners Wife) has been working behind the scenes at Centre Stage recently, running crew or stage managing our productions of *Mauritius*, *The Dining Room* and *Country Queens*. JeanE's on-stage credits at Centre Stage include *The Buddy Holly Story*, *Sordid Lives*, *The World Goes 'Round*, *Quilting the Sun* and *The Laramie Project*. She also stage managed *Bus Stop*, *Crimes of the Heart* and *Skin of Our Teeth*. During the day, JeanE works diligently for her buyer clients as a



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Greenville. Pro Realtor with REMAX Foothills in Greenville.

Beau Phillips (Odd, Mr. Morrison, Mr. Haha) last appeared at Centre Stage as announcer Bob Hale in *Clear Lake: The Rock N Roll Reunion*. His other credits include Carl the Bus Driver in *Bus Stop*, Teddy Roosevelt in *The Edith Whartons*, and Dwayne Hightower in John Culbertson's *Messiah on the Frigidaire*. Beau has worked as an actor at GLT and The Warehouse Theatre and admits to a particular fondness for character roles. He is a founding member of the And Some Players and, by day, manages the Centre Stage box office. He holds an MFA degree in performance from UGA.



Mary Sparks Gray (Aunt 2, Miss Armstrong, Annabel, Town Lady) hails from Chicago, Il, where she got her first acting gig at the age of four. After appearing as a baby angel in a Christmas play, she was smitten with the stage and never veered far from the boards again. Armed with a BFA in Theatre and an MA in Communications, she did acting and directorial stints around the Midwest and South, eventually arriving in Spartanburg as Artistic Director of the Youth Theatre. In 2001, she moved to Ellijay, Georgia, to helm the Gilmer Arts and Heritage Association and to serve as the director of the community theatre.



Production Staff

Ben Robinson (Director) earned his MFA from Bob Jones University where he also taught theater. He's listed in *Who's Who in Arts and Entertainment* in the South and Southwest. With over 50 years experience as a director, actor, writer and educator, Ben has appeared in numerous productions at Greenville Little Theatre, The Warehouse Theatre and Centre Stage. He has taught and directed at Greenville Fine Arts Center, North Greenville University, Lander University and Furman University. He was associated with *The Singing Christmas Tree* for sixteen years and was director of the Apprentice Program at Flat Rock Playhouse and the SC Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities. At Centre Stage, Ben has directed *The Edith Whartons*, *Beehive*, *Sophie Tucker: Last of the Red Hot Mamas* (which he also wrote), *Moonlight and Magnolias*, *The Fantasticks* and *Crimes of the Heart*.

Kim Granner (Scenic Designer) discovered a long-hidden talent and passion for theater in 1992 when she first became involved with South Carolina Children's Theatre. There, she has served not only as a set and costume designer, but as a guest director for such productions as *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Winnie the Pooh*, *Pinocchio* and *Jungle Book*. A South Carolina Arts Commission-approved artist, Kim enjoys doing residencies at various schools in Greenville County. By day, she's a Program Associate at The Children's Museum of the Upstate, as well as a freelance artist and graphic designer.

Wade Powell (Sound Designer/Engineer) began his association with Centre Stage during our 2007 production of *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story*. Since then, he's become our go-to guy for major sound projects like *The Fantasticks*, *Souvenir*, *It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play* and *Country Queens*. Later, he attended

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The Recording Workshop in Chillicothe, Ohio where he studied the audio recording. He now owns his own recording studio - Workhorse Studios and has worked as live engineer for such artists as Browning Bryant, Sandy Patti, The Tams, Bill Pinkney and The Original Drifters, Cravin' Melon, Cliff Barrows and George Beverly Shea (Billy Graham Crusade).

Elyse Middlebrooks (Costume Designer) is a recent graduate of North Greenville University where she earned a degree in Technical Theatre. She spent a summer with the Kentucky Shakespeare Festival as a costume design intern and now lives in Greenville. Her Centre Stage credits include *The God Committee*, *Dining Room*, and *Mauritius*.

Donna Smith (Props Master) is an active theater volunteer, singer and musician who recently ran sound for *Always Patsy Cline* at Greenville Little Theater. She has extensive experience both backstage and onstage with Live Arts! (Charlottesville, VA) and The Naples Players (Naples, FL).

Wofford Jones (Stage Manager) has studied acting in North and South Carolina, Georgia and Los Angeles. His stage credits include *Mercutio (Romeo and Juliet)*, *Barnette Lloyd (Crimes of the Heart)*, *Tony Kirby (You Can't Take It With You)*, *Rev. David Marshall Lee (The Foreigner)* and *Frank Lubey (All My Sons)*. Wofford's other interests include photography and screenwriting. He hopes to see his novel *Soul Dreams* published this year. In January, he will direct a one-act he co-wrote Jason Underwood entitled *Stealing the Show* at Greenville Little Theatre.

Marlaina Seay (*Lighting Designer*) is the Assistant Professor of Design at North Greenville University, where she teaches and designs scenery, lighting, and costumes. She earned an MFA in scenography at the University of NC at Greensboro. Marlaina has

designed for the Academy of Fine Arts in Virginia, Theatre Tuscaloosa in Alabama, as well as here at Centre Stage for *The Uncurled Hand*. She is married to Todd, a seminarian, and together they have four young daughters, who keep them laughing.

Our current gallery artists

NOTE: Centre Stage partners with the Metropolitan Arts Council (MAC) to present the works of Upstate visual artists in our public areas during the run of each production. The two featured artists during *A Christmas Memory* are Judy Iselin Cromwell and Beth Sager. The exhibition is free and open to the public 2-6 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays.

Artist statement: Judy Iselin Cromwell

My painting has been inspired by wilderness adventures, and especially with involvement in conservation organizations in preserving our mountains & forests, rivers & green



spaces, as well as historic architecture. I want to capture the essence of my experiences in these special places using transparent watercolors or opaque acrylics in creating an abstract landscape with rhythmical lines, bright colors and flickering light.

Beth Sager holds a BA in creative writing, a degree in accounting, and is pursuing an MFA in playwriting and fiction. She's written dozens of plays, many of which have been produced, and currently is writing a book titled *Monkey in the Middle*. She owned a hand-painted fabric design firm in her younger days and in 2009 was a recipient of the Metropolitan Arts Council's "Flat Out Under Pressure" juried show award. She lives with her two Shih-Tzu's, Truman and Sammy.

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Promotional photos available

Christmas Memory promo 01.jpg



Christopher M. Evans (left) and Amy Stryker Mathena in the Centre Stage production of Truman Capote's *A Christmas Memory*. (Photo courtesy Centre Stage)

Christmas Memory promo 02.jpg



Christopher M. Evans (center) with (from left) Mary Sparks Gray, Beau Phillips and JeanE Bartlett. (Photo courtesy Centre Stage)

Mathena archive 01.jpg



Amy Stryker Mathena with Dennis Quaid in the 1980 western film, *Long Riders*. (Photo courtesy Amy Stryker Mathena)

Mathena archive 02.jpg



Amy Stryker Mathena (right) with Tim Matheson and Meg Tilly in the 1984 sci-fi thriller *Impulse*. (Photo courtesy Amy Stryker Mathena)

Mathena archive 03.jpg



Amy Stryker Mathena (seated) with Mia Farrow (right) and others in the 1978 Robert Altman film *A Wedding*. (Photo courtesy Amy Stryker Mathena)