

THE GOULET!-O-METER™

We rank holiday theater

BY JOEL BEERS

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Along with December serving as National Drunk- and Drugged-Driving Prevention Month, it's the time of year when theaters gleefully goose-step in perfect synch with one another, all intent on the same mission: staging something, anything, that whispers, coos or screams Christmas.

Rare is the theater that doesn't try to stage something heart-warmingly prosaic (or savagely satirical) about the holidays during December. There are cash cows such as South Coast Repertory's *A Christmas Carol* and the Crystal Cathedral's *The Glory of Christmas*, and then there's everything else. But what binds every play together is that each has to do with the holiday and is solely devoted to spreading the eternal message of peace on earth and goodwill toward men.

The following is a list of the county's less-established seasonal shows. And since Robert Goulet died in October and the world is no longer gifted with his presence, we'll use this occasion to inaugurate our Goulet!-O-Meter™, in which every show is measured in terms of how it relates to the famed Tony-, Emmy- and Grammy-winning star of stage and record—the man who once caused Elvis Presley to shoot up his TV, when Goulet's moustachioed visage flashed across the screen.

Inspecting Carol at the Cabrillo Playhouse, San Clemente; www.cabrilloplayhouse.org. Through Dec. 16. Community theater attempts to produce a staged version of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Hijinx and hilarity ensue. **Goulet!-O-Meter: 94%**. Goulet! inspected a bit of Carol himself—his second wife was Carol Lawrence.

It's a Wonderful Life at the Camino Real Playhouse, San Juan Capistrano; www.caminorealplayhouse.org. Through Dec. 16. George Bailey thinks the world would be better off if he'd never been born. Then an angel descends and fucks up that dream. **Goulet!-O-Meter: 1%**. Any life not led by Goulet! isn't worth much.

A Christmas Show at the Costa Mesa Civic Playhouse, Costa Mesa; www.costamesaplayhouse.org. Dec. 7-22. Don't know much about this other than it's a musical written by John Blaylock. **Goulet!-O-Meter: 50%**. As Goulet (or was that Will Ferrell?) once remarked, when a professional gets his mitts on a song, it just takes off. Here's hoping there's a couple of pros lurking in this show.

The Eight: Reindeer Monologues at the Chance Theatre, Anaheim; www.chancetheater.com. Through Dec. 22. One of the few holiday-themed plays that won't make you want to puke up your eggnog, this Jeff Goode riff on the truth behind Santa's chosen transport system is very, very funny. **Goulet!-O-Meter: 92%**. Goulet! spent his formative years in Canada, where, for all we know, he might have violated a reindeer.

Last Christmas at the Hunger Artists Theatre, Fullerton; www.hungerartists.com. Dec. 7-15. A late-night offering presented by Theatre Out, OC's only gay and lesbian company. The tagline: "Last Christmas, I gave you my heart; the very next day, you said you were gay." **Goulet!-O-Meter: 100%**. Using a Wham! song as a marketing tool? This nearly broke the Goulet!-O-Meter.

Sister's Christmas Catechism at the Laguna Playhouse, Laguna Beach; www.lagunaplayhouse.com. Dec. 17-23. A spin-off of the incredibly popular one-woman show *Late Night Catechism*, this one puts the audience at a crime scene helmed by a Catholic nun. **Goulet!-O-Meter: 86%**. Goulet! was of French-Canadian stock, which probably means there was plenty of mackerel-slapping around the dinner table on Fridays.

Santa Claus Conquers the Martians at the Maverick Theatre, Fullerton; www.mavericktheater.com. Through Dec. 30. Staged version of the 1964 cult classic, regularly listed as one of the worst "films" ever made. **Goulet!-O-Meter: 100%**. In 1961, a New York *Daily News* writer called Goulet! "just the man to help stamp out rock & roll." Probably the same guy who called this piece of dreck a "film."

The Kind-of-Annual A Dolt's Only Xma\$ Pageant at Stages Theatre, Fullerton; www.stagestheatre.net. Dec. 23. Downtown Fullerton's annual homage to buggery and skullduggery returns for one night only, and this year, OC sheriff-in-exile Mike Carona, the Burger King king, bird flu, and Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band are either praised or scorned. **Goulet!-O-Meter: 8.5%**. Of course, if Goulet! himself is skewered, it goes up to 99.9 percent.