

# Iconic Jimmy Stewart characters come to Sierra Rep

Two iconic roles created on film by the celebrated actor Jimmy Stewart will find their way to the Sierra Rep stage to close out the 2013 season. We thought it might be fun to ask the actors who will recreate the roles how they are approaching the challenge. Actor Jeffrey Peters will play Elwood P. Dowd in Sierra Rep's Fallon House production of the classic American play, *Harvey*, while at the East Sonora Theatre, Tom Andrew will play George Bailey in *It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*.

Peters has watched the film version of *Harvey* at least 40 times, has seen every Jimmy Stewart movie ever made, and says that Stewart is one of his favorite actors.

He said his main goal in recreating the role of Elwood will

be to leave audience members adamant that they actually saw Harvey. He believes that letting

Elwood's deeper sense of mischief, wisdom and whimsy bubble to the surface from time to time will help differentiate his performance from that of Stewart.

"I often wonder how Frank Fay (who originally

nated the role of Elwood on Broadway) played the character, and even more fascinating to me is the fact that (rubber-faced American actor and comedian) Joe E. Brown toured the country as Elwood for a decade or so," Peters said. "A friend of mine even has a version with Art Carney (of TV's *The Honeymooners*). So while I have a deep love of

Stewart's Elwood performance, I don't feel the need to pay homage to his performance as I would if playing George in *It's a Wonderful Life*. After all, Jimmy is George Bailey, the role was written for him and performed by him."

When actor Tom Andrew originally played the role of George in *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play* at Cygnet Theatre in San Diego in 2006, the company asked him to avoid imitating Stewart, but reviewers still wrote that he channeled and sounded like the actor. Andrew continued to develop the role for each of Cygnet's five reprises of the play, and he added in bits of Stewart as they fit.

"The thing to remember is that I am playing Jake Laurens, an actor who is playing George Bailey," Andrew said. "I have tried to incorporate how George's journey affects the character of Jake. I think Jake would try to sound like Stewart, and as George's life begins to spiral out of control, so does Jake's.

"This production was taken from an actual radio show that Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed did. What makes this work is the aspect of the radio station and these

iconic film characters coming to life in that live broadcast. I think audiences get a sense of the film and the iconic actors that played these characters."



A young Jimmy Stewart

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