



December 14, 2021



The Des Moines Community Playhouse presents

Final Act Ensemble Holiday Showcase 2021

The Final Act Ensemble is a group of actors that rehearses weekly to bring live radio performances to audiences young and old across Central Iowa. The repertoire includes classic radio scripts and original pieces.

Director: **Jerry Eisenhour**

Music Director/Rehearsal Pianist: **Susie McCauley**

Vocal Coach: **Phyllis Wolfe**

Sound Effects: **Katie Brooks, Melinda Leseney, & Susie McCauley**

Accompanist: **Francine Griffith**

Ensemble

Ann Barfels	Melinda Leseney
Ralph E. Bowman	Hu Lundberg
Katie Brooks	R.J. Lundgren
Victoria Christian	Susie McCauley
Al Downey	Mark Pullen
Ruth Downey	Marsha Szymczuk
Barbara Keck	Ed Truslow
Elysa Koss	Phyllis Wolfe
Molly Ketchum	

Act I

George Burns & Gracie Allen: Gracie Becomes a Detective
Fibber McGee & Molly: Fibber McGee has a Stomach Ache

Act II

Easy Aces: Jane Thinks Mink
Father Knows Best: The Best Christmas Ever

*Final Act Ensemble Holiday Showcase is
performed with one 10-minute intermission.*

CAST NOTES



Ann Barfels is a recent transplant from Ohio where she performed with a variety of community theatres in *12 Angry Jurors*, *The Man Who*

Came to Dinner, *Blithe Spirit*, *Mornings at Seven*, and *Everybody Loves Opal*. Her favorite role was Miss Geneva in *Christmas Belles* (Mariemont Players). She has also volunteered behind-the-scenes on props crew and set construction and as a producer. Ann enjoys volunteering, walking, reading, and traveling with her spouse of 52 years, Wayne.



Ralph E. Bowman taught high school for 36 years. He has directed 138 shows in high schools and community theatres and acted in shows.

Ralph says his favorite stage role was Joe Benjamin in *God's Favorite* at Independence (MO) Community Theatre. He has written 43 books, mostly westerns. Ralph and his wife of over 50 years, Sandra, have one son and two grandchildren.



Katie Brooks (*Sound Effects*) joined Final Act Ensemble in 2010 after seeing them perform at her granddaughter's school. She has spent

most of her time ever since having fun slamming doors, ringing bells, and dragging chains at the sound effects table. Katie worked with her husband, Steve, for almost 40 years and, believe it or not, they're still having fun!



Victoria Christian, a former editor at Meredith, debuted at The Playhouse as Helen Keller in *The Miracle Worker*. She's been in Final

Act Ensemble for 11 years. Her roles have included Glenda the Good Witch in *The Wizard of Oz* and Ghost of Christmas Past in *A Christmas Carol*. Her late mother, Rena Rae, was also an FAE member.



Shirley Dalby says acting – whether voice, film, or live theatre – is her passion. She's played numerous characters in Final Act Ensemble

shows over the past six years. She has been in commercials and corporate training films that have aired locally, and has posed as a truck driver, a farmer, a princess, and a grandmother (to name a few) in print media. She has also had many musical adventures, one of which allowed her to sing in an international choir in Israel during the Feast of Tabernacles.



Al Downey was named a Playhouse Legend in 2011. He made his Playhouse debut in 1960 in *The Madwoman of Chaillot*. Since then,

he has appeared on stage in more than 25 shows. His last Playhouse stage role was as Crooks in *Of Mice and Men*, and his favorite role was Lucien P. Smith in *The Boys Next Door*. He also performed with the Drama Workshop and Charlie's Showplace. Al has served on virtually every

backstage crew and stage managed several shows. His interests include drawing, reading, and playing the piano.



Ruth Downey was a classroom teacher for Clarke Community Schools during which time she helped create a traveling theatre group, The

Piccadilly Players. She retired after working 30 years in the accounting field. Ruth's Playhouse credits include the Principal in *There's a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom*. She has also worked backstage on props crew, shift crew, and as a dresser, and in guest services as an usher and ticket taker. She enjoys music, serving as a church organist for more than 50 years, and traveling and spending quality time with her husband, Al.



Jerry Eisenhour (*Director*) is a 2013 Volunteer of the Year for his many hours spent helping paint sets at The Playhouse and his

time directing the Final Act Ensemble. Before retiring, he taught theatre for 30 years. Jerry, along with his wife, Susan, lent their Foley artist skills to the Playhouse's 2020 holiday show, *Playhouse on the Air Presents: Miracle on 34th Street*.



Francine Griffith (*Accompanist*) is a musician/educator in the Des Moines area. Some of her collaborations include staff accompanist

at Drake University, private piano instructor, Kinder Choir Director at

Plymouth Congregational Church, and musical director and pianist/repetiteur for area theatre productions. Francine earned her B.M.E. from Drake, studying piano with Chiu-Ling Lin, and has taught elementary music in the Waukee School System.



Barbara Keck has been a part of Final Act Ensemble for the last 10 years. Her favorite role has been Mrs. Uppington in *Fibber McGee and*

Molly radio shows. Barb received her B.A. in elementary education from Cornell College. When she's not rehearsing for the next Final Act Ensemble production, she enjoys basket weaving, singing, and playing with her great-grandchildren.



Molly Ketchum has been an active member of the theatre community for many years. Her favorite role to date, Ethel Thayer in

On Golden Pond, was at the Boone Community Playhouse. She has also worked on several films including *The Crazies*, *Molly's Girl*, and *Peace Patch*. A retired elections administrator, she participates in women's suffrage reenactments. Molly's significant other, R.J. Lundgren, is also a member of the Final Act Ensemble and is her partner in steampunk and Renaissance faire activities.



Elysa Koss has appeared in *Fiddler on the Roof*, *A Little House Christmas*, *Meredith Willson's The Music Man*, and *Leaving Iowa* at The

Playhouse. Other area credits include period melodramas and medicine shows at Living History Farms, shows with the Final Act Ensemble, One Actor/One Writer/One Week, and local commercials. Elysa plays handbells and guitar and likes to bike with her husband, Frank.



Melinda Leseney
(*Sound Effects*) made her Playhouse debut more than 20 years ago playing the narrator in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

She appeared in Meredith Willson's *The Music Man* twice and *The Sound of Music*, was on the shift crew for *Camelot*, and stage managed many Playhouse musicals over the years. Her favorite role to date was playing the Scarecrow in Final Act Ensemble's production of *The Wizard of Oz*. Melinda is a retired chemist for the University of Iowa's Hygienic Lab. In her free time Melinda enjoys reading, acting, and writing.



Hu Lundberg retired from the US Postal Service after working there for more than 36 years. He voiced the role of Scrooge in a Final Act Ensemble

production of *A Christmas Carol*. Hu has taken part in classes and building sets at the Playhouse and enjoys traveling to visit his adult children.



R. J. Lundgren has an extensive background in theatre, acting and directing with the Olde Creamery Theater Company (Amana), Prairie Fire Children's

Theatre (Barrett, MN), Repertory

Theatre of Iowa, Tallgrass Theatre Company, Black Hawk Children's Theatre (Waterloo), Oster-Regent Theater (Cedar Falls), and many more. With his "housekeeper," Molly Ketchum, R.J. participates in many Renaissance faires performing as the first Irish Pope, His Hooleyness Malarkey I, or as the steampunk Pope, His Radiance Brother Barnabas Brass-Boilerplate. A leather artist (RJLeather), he also designed the Black Hawk County Iowa Vietnam Veteran's Monument.



Susie McCauley
(*Music Director/ Rehearsal Accompanist/Sound Effects*) made her debut performance

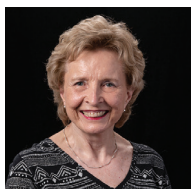
in 2007 as a foley artist (sound effects) with Mystery Loves Company. Her favorite role to date is Jane Ace in *Jane Visits the Psychiatrist*. Other experience at The Playhouse includes stand-up comedy, radio performance, and song/dance classes. She likes reading, walking, music, and writing new radio plays to be performed by Final Act Ensemble.



Mark Pullen is a very active member of The Playhouse community and received the 2013 Dick Brown Superior Volunteer of the Year Award for his time

spent constructing sets, running lights, ushering, and working backstage for countless shows. He has also had his share of roles on stage including his favorite, Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* at the Cherokee Community Theatre. This spring, he played Mr. Turner in the Pyramid Theatre Company/Playhouse co-production of *A Love Offering*. Mark received his degree in engineering

from Iowa State University and is retired as chief pilot for Hy-Vee.



Marsha Szymczuk had no background in acting when she attended a Final Act Ensemble performance shortly after retiring as a

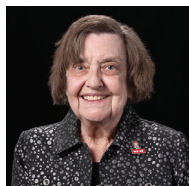
hospice nurse in 2013. She was immediately drawn to the art and is so grateful to have been accepted into this fun and supportive group. Marsha was taught how to release her inner ham and particularly enjoys the wide variety of roles available, from circus performer in one act to femme fatale in the next. She also enjoys using her voice as a church lector and reading books in character to her grandchildren.



Ed Truslow has been an active member of The Playhouse community since 2010, when he made his debut in Final Act Ensemble's

The Shadow. He voiced the role of

the Wizard in Final Act Ensemble's production of *The Wizard of Oz*. Ed has been in productions at The Playhouse and Urbandale Community Theatre, where he played his favorite role to date, FDR in *Annie*. In his free time, Ed enjoys motorcycles, Studebaker cars, model trains, and driving the real thing as an engineer on the Boone & Scenic Valley Railroad.



Phyllis Wolfe (*Vocal Coach*) retired from The Des Moines Register in 2000 and started volunteering for the student creative-problem-

solving programs Odyssey of the Mind and Destination ImagiNation. For the latter, she served as an international challenge master for six years, both writing challenges and administering tournaments. She found helping to nurture teamworking skills rewarding. A member of Final Act Ensemble since 2007, her favorite role has been the Wicked Witch of the West for the FAE production of *The Wizard of Oz*.



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THE PLAYHOUSE

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The Final Act Ensemble, a group of performers 60 and older, has been bringing the Golden Age of Radio back to life since 2007, when it started out as a radio production class at The Playhouse. Students liked the class so much they took it on the road. Since then, they've performed vintage radio scripts for retirement communities, libraries, nursing homes, churches, and schools all over the Greater Des Moines area, Boone, Huxley, and Madrid, not to mention the Iowa State Fair, the Okoboji Performing Arts Center, Terrible's Casino, Meskwaki Casino, and the State Historical Museum.

A typical show features actual scripts and songs from the era, snappy announcer repartee, dizzy commercials, and live sound effects. Anyone who recognizes "The Shadow knows!," "A little dab'll do ya!," "What a revoltin' development this is!," or "Tain't funny, Magee" is in for a good time—and some great memories—with the Final Act Ensemble.

If you would like to book Final Act Ensemble, contact director Jerry Eisenhour at 515.974.5357, finalact@dmplayhouse.com.

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Des Moines Community Playhouse

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