

# HERALD-PROGRESS

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## Literary icons come to life just in time for Christmas

*Posted on Wednesday, November 30, 2016 at 1:53 pm*

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Ashland's Whistle Stop Theater Company will be celebrating the season and American heritage with five performances of their adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's classic novel, *Little Women*. The group will premiere the first performance at the Hanover Arts and Activities Center as part of Ashland's Light up the Tracks event.

"This is a show we've been wanting to do since we started," Whistle Stop Theater artistic director and actress Louise Ricks said.

Alcott's novel is set in Civil War-era New England, where the March family is living while their father is at war. Four sisters, ranging in age from 12 to 16 at the story's opening, navigate life together while facing struggles and triumphs. The story has captured the hearts of readers since its publication in 1868.

This 45-minute long adaptation includes some of the most memorable moments of the book, set in one day.

"We want to introduce, young audiences especially, to a really iconic story in a short amount of time."

Ricks said that her adaptation of the novel stays close to the original storyline, but doesn't include any death that was present in the book. Instead, Ricks said that she focused the show around important values.

"I've been a writer my whole life and I've been in a lot of groups," Howard said. "But this really is a special group of women."

"It's just such an Ashland show," Ricks said. "I feel like it really encompasses what Ashland is really about. It's community, it's family, it's putting virtue over materialism."

"Here we are, able to see four girls with no gifts on Christmas, their father away at war, and coming together and trying to remember what's really important."

Ricks and the Whistle Stop Theater have adapted several family-friendly stories, books and shows to create performances fit for young children and their families. This summer, the Whistle Stop Theater adapted such classic stories as *Alice in Wonderland* and *Beauty in the Beast* with a modern twist.

"We try to find stories that have resonated with audiences over eons of time and figure out what makes those stories so powerful for audiences, and make them relevant today," Ricks said.

"We were a Civil War town—Hanover Arts and Activities Center was a Civil War hospital so we wanted to find a way to promote the museum, promote the Arts and Activities Center, and promote the [Mercy Street] premiere," Ricks said.

"And the best way I know how to promote anything is by putting on a play."

The Theater group will be performing this show with their newest member, Patrick Bello.

This performance will also be directed by awarding winning director James Ricks, who directed Ricks' adaptation of Cinderella, which was chosen to be performed at the New York Children's Theatre Festival in 2014.

"I really tried to stay as true as I could to the book while condensing it and setting it at Christmas," Ricks said. "I wanted to reinforce the scenes of family and charity, which I think are very important during the holidays."

The show's attendees will also have the opportunity to give back to their community while watching the performance. Butterfly Babies Ministries Incorporated will be collecting donations of gently used baby clothes for Hanover families in need.

This Ministry has a clothing closet for newborns through eight year olds, and provides baby items like cribs and cars seats.

"They're just a wonderful group of people and we're excited to have an opportunity to really include as much of the community as possible," Ricks said.

This giving nature is part of what the Whistle Stop Theater is truly about.

"One of our goals is to make theater accessible to families," Rick said.

The show will be performed at the Hanover Arts and Activities Center Dec. 3, 8, 9, 15 and 16.

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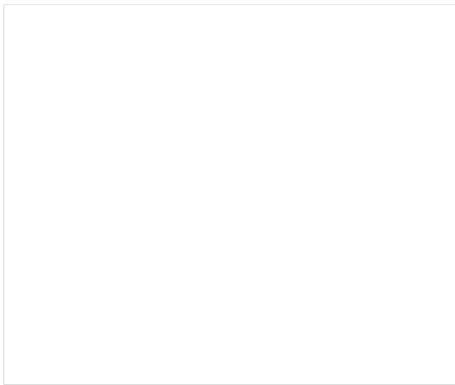
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4	Washington	6
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