

# 'Christmas Carol' makes annual return to Shuler

By Tim Keller  
The Chronicle-News

RATON — Charles Dickens's yuletide classic "A Christmas Carol" returns to the Shuler Theater this week for its 10th annual community theater production. With such iconic characters as Ebenezer Scrooge, Bob Cratchit, Tiny Tim, Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig, Marley's Ghost, and Christmases Past, Present and Future, the local production brings to the stage more than 60 cast members from several generations and from all over Colfax County — Raton, Springer, Cimarron, Capulin, Folsom, and Des Moines.

Add the unseen crew members making it all possible and there are closer to 100 people for artistic director Gail Dixon-Willden to wrangle. "This is my fourth year directing "Christmas Carol," she says. "The mark of a good script is being able to fall in love with the show year after year. And this play does that for me. It gets me in the mood for Christmas, and reminds me what this season is all about. I feel blessed to be able to work on this play with my children and with the marvelous group of people in the show this year."

She's assisted by music director Michael D. Higgins, kids' music director Bill Crary,



Tim Keller/Special to The Chronicle-News

Charles Dickens's beloved "A Christmas Carol" returns to Raton's Shuler Theater this week for its 10th annual yuletide production. The community theater favorite, with its cast of more than 60 players and singers, will be presented Thursday and Friday nights, plus a Sunday matinee.

and production stage manager Mariah Fleming who herself directs three crew chiefs and three assistant stage managers. Part of the fun will be seeing how everyone

manages to pull off such a huge production of mostly amateur actors.

Willden explains, "It's a huge cast again, but that's what makes 'Christmas Carol' so special. We have some new faces, as well as many returning for another year. So much talent in this area, and this is the play to showcase it. With the start of Raton's children's chorale programs, the number of children playing orphans has doubled."

Joe Zink returns for his fifth consecutive season inhabiting the lead role of Scrooge. Mark Jansen moves over to the role of Marley's Ghost. After last year's absence, Sue and John Martin return to their roles as the Fezziwigs. Carol Crary, Michael Porter, and Chickey Lee Gomez are Christmases Past, Present, and Future. Bob Cratchit is played by Matt Fleming; his son Tiny Tim is Zebediah Medina.

General admission tickets will be available at the door — adults \$10, seniors \$8, children \$5. Showtimes will be 7 p.m. Thursday and Friday nights. A Sunday matinee begins at 2 p.m. Produced by the Santa Fe Trail School for the Performing Arts, information is available from the Shuler Theater office, 575-445-4746.

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