

Settle in for 'Scrooge': Holiday must-see features a new Tiny Tim, twists and costumes

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When he began auditioning boys for the role of Tiny Tim, *Scrooge* director Troy Arnold Fisher was feeling none too excited.

Fisher, who chose to have an open audition for the pivotal role of the winsome orphan, wasn't seeing and hearing the right Tim for Capital Playhouse's holiday production, which opens Friday.

"The one boy who looked absolutely perfect for the part could not stay on pitch," he said. "And there were a couple of other boys who had nice voices, and they were cute, but they weren't exactly what I was looking for."

Then, in came Tiny Tim - also known as 9-year-old Jay Spivak.

"About 20 minutes into the auditions, this little boy walked in," Fisher said. Jay and his parents had heard there was going to be an audition but didn't know the details until they saw a small notice in *The Olympian* that morning, so they hadn't stopped by in advance to pick up a copy of the audition song.

"I was a little irritated that he came late and didn't have the song," Fisher said.

But clearly, Jay, in fourth grade at Olympia's Roosevelt Elementary School, was meant to be Tim.

"Every time I would say something to him, he would smile, and he had these gorgeous dimples," the director said. "He learned the song really quickly."

His mom, Maria Spivak of Olympia, said, "Jay loves to perform. He loves to be in front of an audience.

"I don't know that I necessarily would have chosen Tiny Tim for Jay, because I think he looks like a healthy little kid. But I thought it would be a really neat opportunity for him."



And it has been.

"I've been in school plays before, but not a real play," Jay said. "It's great."

A new Tim isn't the only change to this year's production, which marks the fourth time the playhouse is producing the musical based on Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol."

There also will be a new elaborate set by assistant technical director Dennis Kurtz and ornate costumes by resident costume designer Tom Hudson.

"I don't want to give away any secrets," Fisher said, "but the ghosts make their entrances in different ways this year. There are hidden compartments and secret trapdoor openings."

But some things will be familiar as well: For example, playhouse artistic director Jeff Kingsbury is reprising the role of Scrooge.

It's not change audiences are seeking at holiday time, Fisher said.

"During the holidays, a lot of people are tied into the traditions," he said. "There are certain things you have on your list: You have to see 'Nutcracker,' you have to watch Jimmy Stewart in 'It's a Wonderful Life,' and you have to watch 'A Christmas Carol,' whether it's a movie or on television or live theater.

"Amidst all the other concerts and things that go on, that's one of the things you have to do. When we do another play, that's optional in people's holiday schedule, but 'Scrooge' is one of those things you have to do, or it doesn't seem like Christmas."