

Dec. 8, 2011 - Article from the

Daily Advance:



Photo courtesy Rocky Hock Playhouse New York stage veteran Ouida Wiggins plays the "storyteller" in Rocky Hock Playhouse's latest version of the Christmas story, "A Star in the East."

‘A Star in the East’ adds to the Christmas story

By Robert Kelly - Goss

The Daily Advance

Thursday, December 8, 2011

When the Edenton-based Rocky Hock Playhouse moved to Washington, N.C. a few years back, co-founders Jeff and Gloria Emmerich kept their roots in the small historic town along the Chowan River. The couple continues to call Edenton home, and even the box office number for the theater troupe has a local exchange.

So it should come to no surprise that they've brought their popular Christmas production back to Edenton for a two-show engagement today. "A Star in the East" plays today at the Leon Nixon Catering Banquet Facility at noon and 6:30 p.m.

But don't despair because if you can't make it today, the show still runs in Washington Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, 2 p.m.

"We're kind of spreading our wings a bit, doing shows in Rocky Mount, Morehead City and Edenton," says Emmerich, who also does double duty as the College of the Albemarle director of theatrical arts.

The Emmerichs launched their theater troupe back in 2000. It was also that year that they first performed Gloria Emmerich's original production of "A Star in the East." And since that time, each year's production of the Christmas story — you know, the birth of Jesus — has been what you could call an original production.

"It changes every year, somewhat," says Emmerich. "Some of the story doesn't change too much because it is the Christmas story."

There are some pretty consistent scenes in the production such as Mary's visit from the angel Gabriel, or Joseph's shock at the news that Mary is pregnant. All of it is taken from bits and pieces of the four Gospels of the Bible.

"Gloria has crafted it over the years," says Emmerich.

She has crafted her original production so much, he says, that each year she files for a new copyright on the material. And that is part of the appeal to this annual show; it offers repeat visitors something fresh each year.

This year the newest aspect of "A Star in the East" is the performance by Windsor native Ouida Wiggins. She plays the storyteller, a part that Gloria Emmerich wrote into the play after she met with Wiggins.

Wiggins, 69, is a veteran of the New York stage. Once she returned home to northeast North Carolina, she contacted the Emmerichs telling them that she would like to perform with their company.

"So my wife and I thought, hmmm, that would be interesting," recalls Emmerich.

And apparently it was an interesting meeting for the couple. Wiggins told the Emmerichs what amounted to her life's story and Gloria Emmerich quickly realized that the theater veteran was an incredible storyteller.

So they wrote the part into the production. Wiggins appears between scenes in modern clothing amidst a modern setting. She essentially narrates the story of the birth of Jesus, but does it like no one else might do it.

"She's a modern person reflecting back," says Emmerich.

You can learn more about "A Star in the East," the Emmerichs and Wiggins by logging on to their website, rockyhockplayhouse.com. For tickets, call 252-482-4621.