

AISLE SAY San Francisco

A CHRISTMAS STORY

By Philip Grecian, based on the movie written by Jean Shepherd, Leigh Brown & Bob Clark

Presented by San Jose Repertory Theatre

Directed by Chris Smith

At San Jose Repertory Theatre

101 Paseo de San Antonio, San Jose, CA / (408) 367-7255

Reviewed by [Judy Richter](#)

When you were a kid, was there ever anything you wanted for Christmas so badly that it was all you could think and dream about? That's what it's like for 9-year-old Ralphie Parker (**Garrett Meyer**, a good little comic actor), the young hero of **Philip Grecian's "A Christmas Story,"** presented by **San Jose Repertory Theatre.** There's only one catch -- Ralphie wants "a Red Ryder 200 Shot Carbine Action Air Rifle with a compass and this thing which tells time built right into the stock," but adults in his life say, "You'll shoot your eye out."

Grecian bases his play on the 1983 film of the same name written by **Jean Shepherd, Leigh Brown and Bob Clark.** It didn't last long in movie theaters, but since then it has become a holiday tradition on TV. Some stations broadcast it nonstop on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The secret of its success is not so secret, for it touches on what it's like to be a kid in a warm, loving but sometimes eccentric family. The story was originally penned by Shepherd in his "**In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash,**" one of several books about growing up in Shepherd's hometown of Hammond, Ind., (my hometown, too) in the 1930s.

The play proved so popular with San Jose audiences in 2006 that the Rep has brought it back for this holiday season with the same cast of adults. **Dan Hiatt** plays the low-key adult Ralphie, who serves as narrator and steps into some smaller roles. **Nancy Carlin** and **Howard Swain**, married and parents in real life, play young Ralphie's parents, known as Mother and the Old Man. Carlin also plays Ralphie's teacher, Miss Shields. The seven kids are all new to the show, but director **Chris Smith** has directed them well so that their scenes work better than in the previous production

Emilio Fuentes is amusing as Ralphie's younger brother, Randy. He doesn't have many lines, but he's in most scenes and not only stays in character but also develops it with his actions and expressions. Ralphie's classmates are well played by **Leah Kolchinsky, Max Mifsud, Ali Molaei, Elara Rivers** and **Nicolas Sancen.**

The plot slips seamlessly from Ralphie's adventures with his classmates to his daydreams about and campaign for that prized Red Ryder air rifle. Mixed in are vivid scenes of his home life, especially the Old Man's battles with the furnace and its clinkers and his penchant for entering contests. When he finally wins one, the play has some of its most hilarious moments as the Old Man cherishes his prize -- a lamp in the shape of a woman's leg. And who can forget Ralphie's expression when he's forced to model the pink bunny PJs from Aunt Clara?

Robert Mark Morgan's set moves easily between scenes, often aided by a turntable. The lighting is by **Lap Chi Chu**, the costumes by **B. Modern** and the sound by **Jeff Mockus.** "A Christmas Story" makes a terrific holiday gift for San Jose Rep audiences, one that's suitable for all ages.