

***Renowned International Actress to Appear
in Sierra Madre Playhouse's "A Christmas Carol Story"***
by Fran Syverson



Perhaps we should ask, "What is a nice Jewish lady like you doing in 'A Christmas Carol Story'?"

And Caroline Langford would likely say something to effect that "I'm a performer! I do theater for my soul!"

However, she did find when rehearsals began at the Sierra Madre Playhouse that she was the only cast member who didn't really know the Christmas carols. This, despite being a Dickens aficionado. Langford says she really connects with Dickens, especially his lower class characters, such as cockneys.

For Langford, all the world's a stage (to quote another English playwright.) She has performed in England, Australia, South Africa and the United States, where she arrived a couple of years ago. This is, however, her first time on the Sierra Madre Playhouse stage, and she says she loves it.

Langford brings not only her international theatrical experience, but also a worldly acculturation. Her charming, strong accent denotes the countries where she spent many of her childhood years, England and Australia. When she

was 14, the family immigrated to Israel. "And that's an accent I don't have," she laughs, even though the ancestral genes lie within her.

She recalls that television was only black-and-white when she lived in Israel in the '70s, and it was on just three hours a day. But it was very much a part of her life, because her father was a TV director. Her mother was a professional dancer.

After completing her education, Langford, like all Israeli females, spent the compulsory two years in the Israeli army, where she served in the entertainment corps. Later she starred in both film and television roles. She retains strong connections with the Israel community, both in her native land and in Southern California.

"A Christmas Carol Story" marks the first time Langford has worked with director Alison Kalmus. "It's good casting," she says, adding that they all work well together—albeit hard—in their daily rehearsals.

In the Playhouse's traditional holiday offering, Langford takes on three widely varying roles—Mrs. Fezziwig (jolly, generous, chatty), Mrs. Dilber (Scrooge's avaricious, opportunistic housekeeper), and Prudence (charitable, "Lady Bountiful" gentlewoman.)

Two things have surprised Langford about theater here. One, she says, is how short the runs are—only a few weeks. In Israel, the troupe would take their show and travel from town to town, large and small, over many months. "Of course, in Israel distances are much shorter," she acknowledges.

The second difference she notes is the plethora of small theaters to be found in the Los Angeles area. Many, however, are inconspicuous—virtually indistinguishable from shops. In contrast, she says, “Sierra Madre Playhouse is so nice!”

Langford works in movies and does commercials, but she is in her element in live theater. “I come to life for the audiences,” she says. “Each night you can find something else in the character you’re doing.” Moreover, every audience has its own dynamic, and responds differently.

We have the opportunity to watch how this Jewish lady interprets her three Dickens characters in “A Christmas Carol Story” during its holiday run at the Sierra Madre Playhouse which began Fri., Nov. 28. For performance times, which include special weeknight dates in December, go to www.sierramadreplayhouse.org or phone 626-256-3809 for information or reservations.

Photos courtesy of Sierra Madre Playhouse. In photo at right, Ms. Langford is shown with Kirk Smith, from “A Christmas Carol Story” at Sierra Madre Playhouse.

