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Photo 1 by Sarah Dean

For immediate release

Ouachita presents 30th annual Festival of Christmas on Dec. 2-3

By Kaitlyn Stoddard

November 14, 2022

For more information, contact Ouachita's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Ouachita Baptist University's School of Fine Arts will present its 30th annual holiday program, A Festival of Christmas, on Friday and Saturday, Dec. 2–3, in Jones Performing Art Center.

The Friday performance begins at 7:30 p.m., and the Saturday show starts at 2:30 p.m.

“We are so excited to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Festival of Christmas and Jones Performing Arts Center,” said Dr. Joshua Brown, co-director of the performance and director of choral activities at Ouachita. “This year we will have cookies and hot chocolate with Santa one hour prior to each performance, as well as an alumni choir for the 2:30 p.m. performance on Saturday. We would love for folks to join us.”

Adam Wheat, director of career and calling at Ouachita, serves as stage director of this year's production.

"After the distance caused by the pandemic," Wheat said, "coming together alongside talented faculty, staff, students and alumni to create this Christmas spectacle for our community is making it even more meaningful."

Festival of Christmas Movers and Shakers and featured dancers are choreographed by Abby Shourd, a 2021 Ouachita graduate. The Festival choir, which includes Concert Choir, Ouachita Singers and Women's Chorus, is choreographed by Wheat and Noah Warford, a junior musical theatre major from North Little Rock, Ark.

Additionally, the program will include three small student-led vocal ensembles, handbells, a live pit band and dancers from DancePraize, an Arkadelphia dance studio owned by Ouachita alum Melissa Carozza.

To celebrate the production's 30th anniversary, School of Fine Arts alumni are invited to campus for a brunch on Saturday at 10:30 a.m.

There also will be a silent auction of student artwork at the event. All proceeds from the ticket sales, reunion brunch and art auction will directly benefit unique, high-impact learning opportunities for students, reducing or covering the cost for them to gain valuable experience outside the classroom.

Wheat said, "We have several classic favorites in the program this year, but we are enhancing the magic of this beloved tradition with new music, dancing, fun characters and some other fresh surprises."

The program will feature a combination of 17 traditional Christmas songs and modern favorites such as "Silver Bells," written by Jay Livingston and Ray Evan and arranged by Mark Hayes; "Winter Wonderland," written by Felix Barnard and Richard Bernhard Smith; "Run, Run Rudolph," written by Chuck Berry; "Once in Royal David's City," written by Sufjan Stevens; "Breath of Heaven," written by Amy Grant and Chris Eaton; "Mary, Did You Know?" written by Mark Lowry; and "O Holy Night," written by John Sullivan Dwight.

"I remember fondly my times in A Festival of Christmas at Ouachita, so I am thrilled to be stage-directing the production for its 30th year," said Wheat. "I hope everyone will kick off their holiday season with the lively dose of Christmas spirit that only A Festival of Christmas can provide."

A Festival of Christmas is open to the public. Tickets are \$12 – students can get one ticket free with their Ouachita ID – and can be purchased at the JPAC Box Office, open weekdays from 1-5 p.m.; at www.obu.edu/boxoffice; or by calling (870) 245-5555. There is a discount for groups of 10 or more tickets purchased together.

For more information, contact Ouachita's School of Fine Arts at (870) 245-5129.