

## Radio Theatre tunes up 'Carol'

Company puts music to Christmas tale

**T**he Golden Age of Radio returns — right here in River City.

John L. Williams has created a company to recreate the age of radio drama. Radio Theatre Productions goes public with a tape-release party for its new production of Charles Dickens' classic *A Christmas Carol* at Top of the Marc today from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

The production is based on an adaptation of Dickens' tale with original music by Williams. "I wrote this music for last year's Paramount Theatre production," Williams said. "Then I got a copy of the original Dickens novel, and adapted that as faithfully as I could. I tried to keep the sequence the same while I shortened it to an hour. Every chance I could to use the exact language of the book, I did."

Though this is not the first radio-drama adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*, it is



Segall

unique in its combination of music and drama, Williams said.

"There are about five versions out there, but they're all narratives. We thought maybe we'd create a new niche here by putting the music and drama together."

The tape was produced in Austin using local actors Lynn Segall, Shawn Sides, Craig Kanne and Gail Threinen. While he was trying to figure out the proper balance between the music and the language, Williams said, the actors could be relied on to perform take after take without losing enthusiasm. "These guys are just so incredibly talented, so incredibly professional," he said.

Now Williams is marketing the tapes and trying to figure out how to syndicate the production. "This is Austin," he said. "We're learning as we go."

Locally, about 50 stores are carrying the tape. Mix-93.3 (KMDX-FM) will air the program Christmas Eve, said program director Bob Corbell.

In looking for Christmas fare that would fit his station's music format, Corbell found Williams' production to be a fresh alternative. "There's a lot of Christmas material syndicated out there," Corbell said. "There are probably 500 recordings of *White Christmas* — but there's only so many times you can listen to *White Christmas*. I really enjoyed it (the Williams' tape)," he said.



### Radio

John Herndon

"This is professionally done, an excellent show, and we liked the local involvement."

At the tape-release party tonight, Williams said he and the actors will try to reproduce the old-time, live radio drama feel. "We're going to start the production about 6 p.m. The actors will read for about 10 minutes, and the singers will sing one of the songs," he said.

# Austin News

neighborhoods of West Austin, Rollingwood and West Lake Hills



John Bustin  
Encore

### 'Carol' on radio

If you're a real radio oldtimer, you probably remember the annual broadcasts of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* with Lionel Barrymore as Scrooge. In those innocent days of the '30s and early '40s, they were highlights of the season. (This was before "The World's Tallest Man-made Christmas Tree" started lighting up Zilker Park, you understand.)

Well, radio is enjoying a kind of vogue these days—the *Christmas Carol* broadcasts in particular—and this season, we can find two incarnations of those nostalgic days

next week), and another enterprising group has brought out a cassette recording of what it describes as "a musical radio play of *A Christmas Carol*."

The tape is the work of composer John L. Williams, and it uses a conventional approach to Dickens' celebrated tale. Lynn Segall does the narration, with Craig Kanne supplying the voices of Scrooge and the ghosts, Shawn Sides doing the children's voices and Gail Threinen playing Mrs. Cratchit. And Mark Gibson is the sound effects man, an integral company member of the oldtime radio shows. There's also a chorus.

Mr. Williams' script, nicely augmented by his original score, is a wonderful treatment of the story we all know and love, and it'll be a permanent part of the holiday trappings of any household, with or without radio dramas of the charm-

# WEST LAKE Picayune

## Dickens' classic 'Christmas Carol' available on cassette

Radio Theater Productions, an Austin-based production group, has released Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* as a musical radio play on audio cassette.

John L. Williams, president of RTP, adapted the script from the Dickens' classic and wrote the original music score, which premiered in the 1991 Zachary Scott stage production at the Paramount Theatre.

Four Austin actors recreated the spirited drama in a "Golden Age of Radio" performance cued with music and sound effects. Narrated by Lynn Segall, the story comes to life as Craig Kanne, Shawn Sides and Gail Threinen perform the multiple character



Lynn Segall

voices of Ebenezer Scrooge, the Christmas Ghosts, the Cratchit family and other players of Victorian England.

"Christmas Carol" is a time-

less story, just as relevant today as it was for Londoners of 1843," Williams said. "We have created a special listening treat for the entire family to enjoy for years to come."

RTP's "Christmas Carol" musical radio play will be available in Austin area book, music and children's stores during the upcoming holiday season. An accompanying recording of background music and vocals is also available in a boxed set.

William's previous production credits include the Austin Circle of Theatre's 1991 Coalition for Children's Theater, "Sneak in a Weekend" and "Send Us Some Parents," sponsored by the Austin Jaycees at the Paramount Theatre.