

Paper Mache for 12-5-25 by David Read

The curtain closed last Sunday, metaphorically speaking since we don't have an actual curtain in the Clark Family Black Box Theater, on the last performance of "The Charitable Sisterhood Christmas Spectacular." The six-show run was a big success and helped raise much needed funds for the renovation of the Main Stage, 299-seat theater at the Sutter Theater Center for the Arts. During the planning and rehearsals and while watching the performances, I was reminded yet again about the profound impact local theater productions and the wonderful people involved can have on a community. I have written about this before, but here's my homage to the person who arrives before anyone else, turning on the lights, sweeping the stage, and unlocking a space that will soon hum with creativity. To the person who transforms an empty room into a haven where people of all ages feel welcomed, valued, and brave, the Yuba Sutter Arts & Culture team wants to say thank you.

We are thankful for the work that is visible to anyone who takes their seat when the house lights fade. The blocking, the character development, the endless rehearsals, the notes sessions that somehow end in laughter, the shows that appear effortless only because the cast and crew have spent weeks creating the conditions where effort becomes art. The late-night drives home during tech week when you wonder how everything will possibly come together. The moments when you patch costumes, reset props, adjust lighting cues, or repair scenery because opening night is just days away. We see all of this, even if the wider world does not always understand the labor, heart, and artistry that community theater requires. Even if audiences are unaware of the hours actors and crew spent making sure they could escape into a story for a little while, we see it, and we are deeply thankful.

We celebrate the actor who finally finds the emotional truth of a scene. The pair of actors who discover that teamwork isn't a chore but a joy. The brand-new volunteer who realizes they belong backstage or in the light and sound booth, that this collaborative art form has a place for them too. You make those moments happen. People come into community theater uncertain and walk out with a sense of belonging. Many walk in feeling invisible and walk out knowing they are part of something bigger than themselves. In a world that measures worth in numbers and screens, you create something far more meaningful, connection, empathy, courage, and joy. Audiences see a finished performance. You see a hundred tiny triumphs that no one else will ever know.

So, if no one else says it this week, if no donor, volunteer, friend, or board member remembers to acknowledge what you pour into this work, I want to say it now, sincerely and clearly, thank you to the cast and crew of "The Charitable Sisterhood!" Thank you for the early mornings and the late nights. Thank you for your patience, resilience, humor, artistry, and heart. Thank you for creating a space where people can discover their voice, their creativity, and their community. Thank you for insisting that the arts matter, not just in big cities, but in small towns like ours and every place in between. Thank you for lighting stages in a world that sometimes tries to dim them. This holiday season, we celebrate *you*. We give thanks for the magic you shape, the humanity you nurture, and the light you keep burning. Here's to more great theatrical experiences to come in 2026. Huzzah!