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Vaudeville comes to the Crighton via Stage Right

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Vaudeville offers audiences something no other show can match – variety.

For the first time in Crighton Theatre history, vaudeville will be presented by theater group Stage Right. Featuring acts ranging from comedy to music to magic, this show will try to encompass all vaudeville had to offer in its heyday of the late 1800s and early 1900s.

"It has really been an adventure," said Carolyn Wong with Stage Right. "We thought of the idea for vaudeville when we first started the theater company.

"Since this year is the 75th anniversary of the Crighton, we thought we'd do something kind of special to celebrate," she added. "In doing some history of the theater, we came upon a clipping where Mr. Crighton stated his intention for the theater was to have movies and vaudeville shows. By the time the theater opened in 1935, vaudeville was kind of waning. Movies houses were more the thing."

And so it went that the Crighton Theatre never had a true vaudeville variety show – until now. Director Glen Lambert has helmed the show from the beginning and Wong said it's been a labor of love for him.

"He's a big vaudeville aficionado," she said. "He loves the old time entertainment and comedy gags. This show has really been his baby.

"He has collected old vaudeville skits that were done and found songs that were from the time period," she added. "It's going to be a terrific show. It's been a lot of fun, but it's a challenge."

Comedy sketches in the style of Abbott and Costello, Burns and Allen and Fanny Brice will be performed, as well as musical acts and even magicians.

"We have the Gumm Sisters, who were a vaudeville act where the youngest sister was known as Frances "Baby" Gumm," Wong explained. "Of course, she later changed her name to Judy Garland.

"Our 'Gumm Sisters,' will be singing two songs that Judy Garland made famous," she added. "Our youngest 'sister' is Kaylie King who was in our last show. She's a little, quiet redheaded gal, but boy when she opens her mouth to sing she can belt it."

For the evening's magical acts, two magicians will alternate performance nights. Bloodstone the Magnificent (Shan Griffith) will be doing an act that includes levitation and Matthew Elston will be doing tricks and juggling, according to Wong. Also on tap for the evening will be a performance by a fan dancer, as well as barbershop music presented by The Statesmen Chorus.



Rebekah King, 9, of The Woodlands is a featured vocalist – appearing as Baby RoseMarie.

"We got hooked up with The Statesmen Chorus during our Christmas show last year," Wong explained. "Each night will be different, because different quartets will perform."

Because there are so many acts and so many people involved to put on a variety show, Wong said scheduling has been the biggest obstacle to event organizers.

"There's probably a reason they don't do vaudeville shows anymore," she laughed. "It's been very chaotic and it's been an enormous undertaking. It's incredible trying to organize this."

"Everyone is excited, though, and it's so much fun to sing the old songs and dance and do these corny comedy sketches," she explained. "It's all clean humor. There's nothing off-color about it. It's nice to remember a time when our country and our people were more innocent."

Stage Right of Texas will present "Vaudeville (Finally) Comes to the Crighton," at the historic downtown Crighton Theatre, 234 N. Main Street in Conroe. Show times will be Friday and Saturday nights at 8 p.m. Sept. 11-27 with two Sunday matinees Sept. 20 and 27 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$17 for adults, \$15 for senior citizens and \$12 for children and students with ID.

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