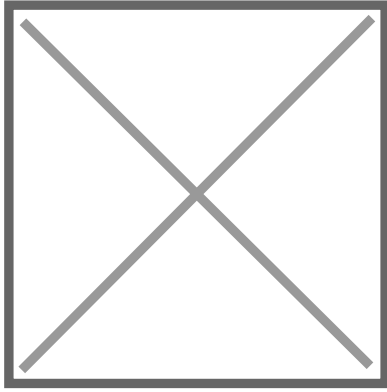




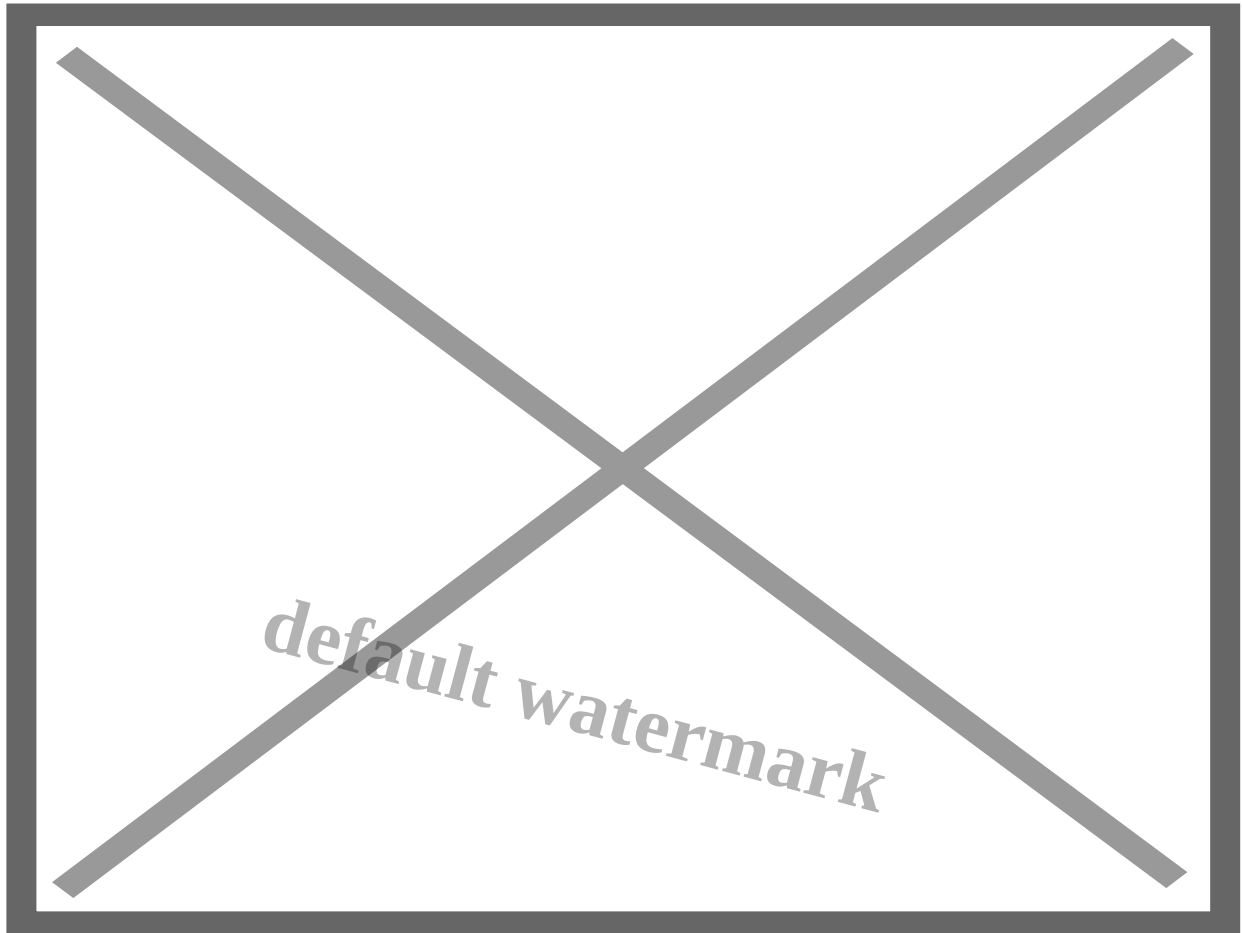
Rabbit Tales: A Heartwarming Leap into PG Playersâ?? â??Harveyâ?•

Description

Review by Rachel Wagner

One of the most exciting aspects of being a theatre critic is discovering high-quality productions in unexpected places. Such is the case with the Pleasant Grove Players, who perform in the **Keith Christeson Little Theater**, nestled within the **Pleasant Grove Library**. Never in a million years would I have thought some of the best theatre in the state would emerge from a small space in a library, but itâ??s true. Their latest production of the classic comedy *Harvey* is no exception and should not be missed.

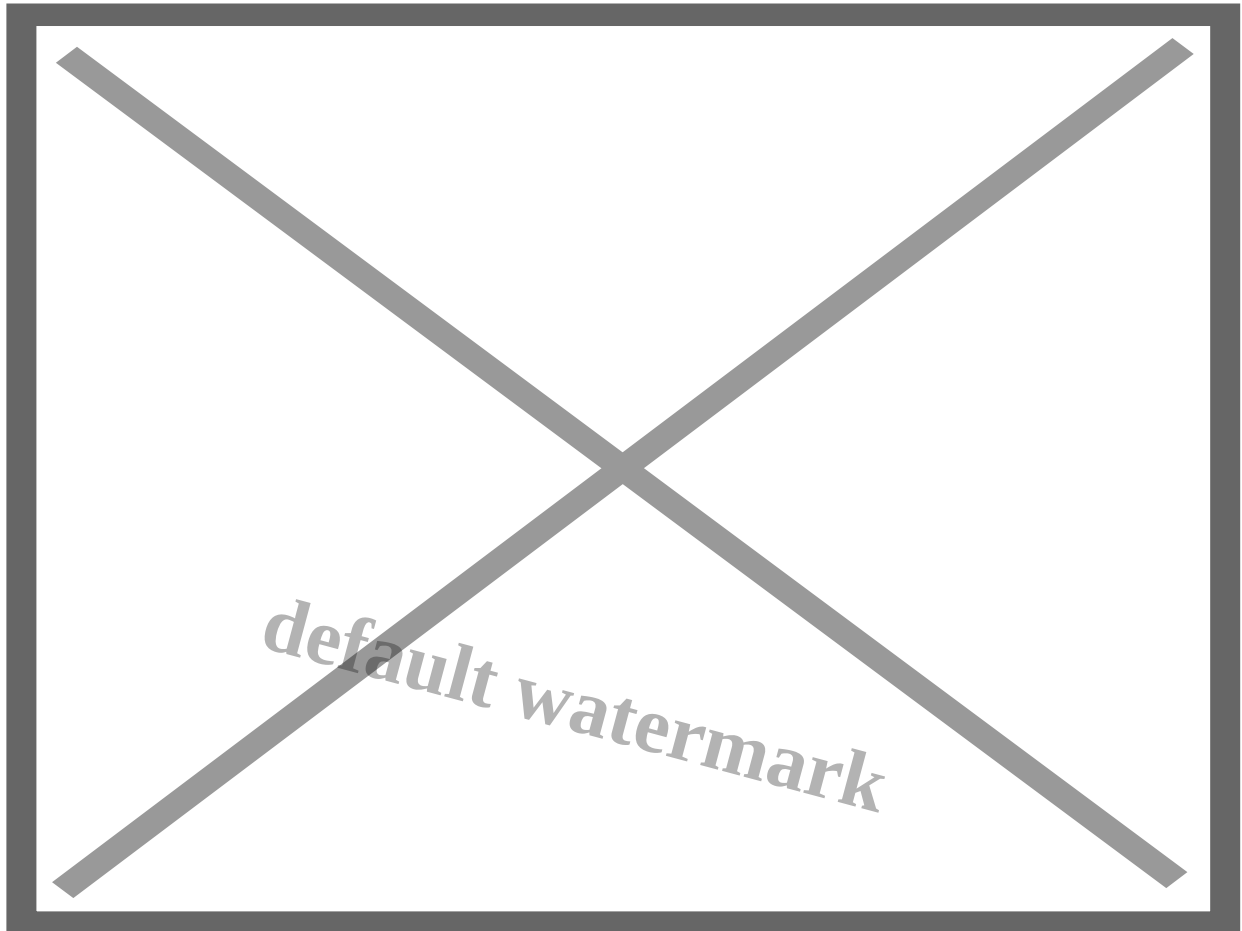
The key to what makes the PG Playersâ?? productions so exceptional is the creative team, led by directors **Howard and Kathryn Little**, who are masters at getting the most out of their actors and using a small space to its full advantage. *Harvey* continues this tradition with its careful direction and engaging comedic timing, particularly with a character like Harvey, an invisible six-foot-tall Irish PÃ°ca (a shape-shifting spirit that comes from Irish folklore). The direction expertly accounts for his presenceâ??or where Elwood imagines him to beâ??making the illusion both convincing and playful.



Speaking of Elwood, the lovable heart of *Harvey*, Dennis Purdie delivers a charming and endearing performance in the role. Not only is he perfectly cast, but this also marks Purdie's 50th role with PG Players—a wonderful milestone for such a talented actor. His attentiveness to Harvey's presence is particularly impressive, as Purdie often makes space for the rabbit or gives a knowing wink and nod to his mischievous imaginary friend.

For those unfamiliar, *Harvey* is a play by **Mary Chase** about Elwood P. Dowd, who befriends a giant invisible rabbit. The play, written in 1944, was an instant hit, winning the **Pulitzer Prize** for Drama in 1945 and inspiring the iconic film adaptation starring James Stewart.

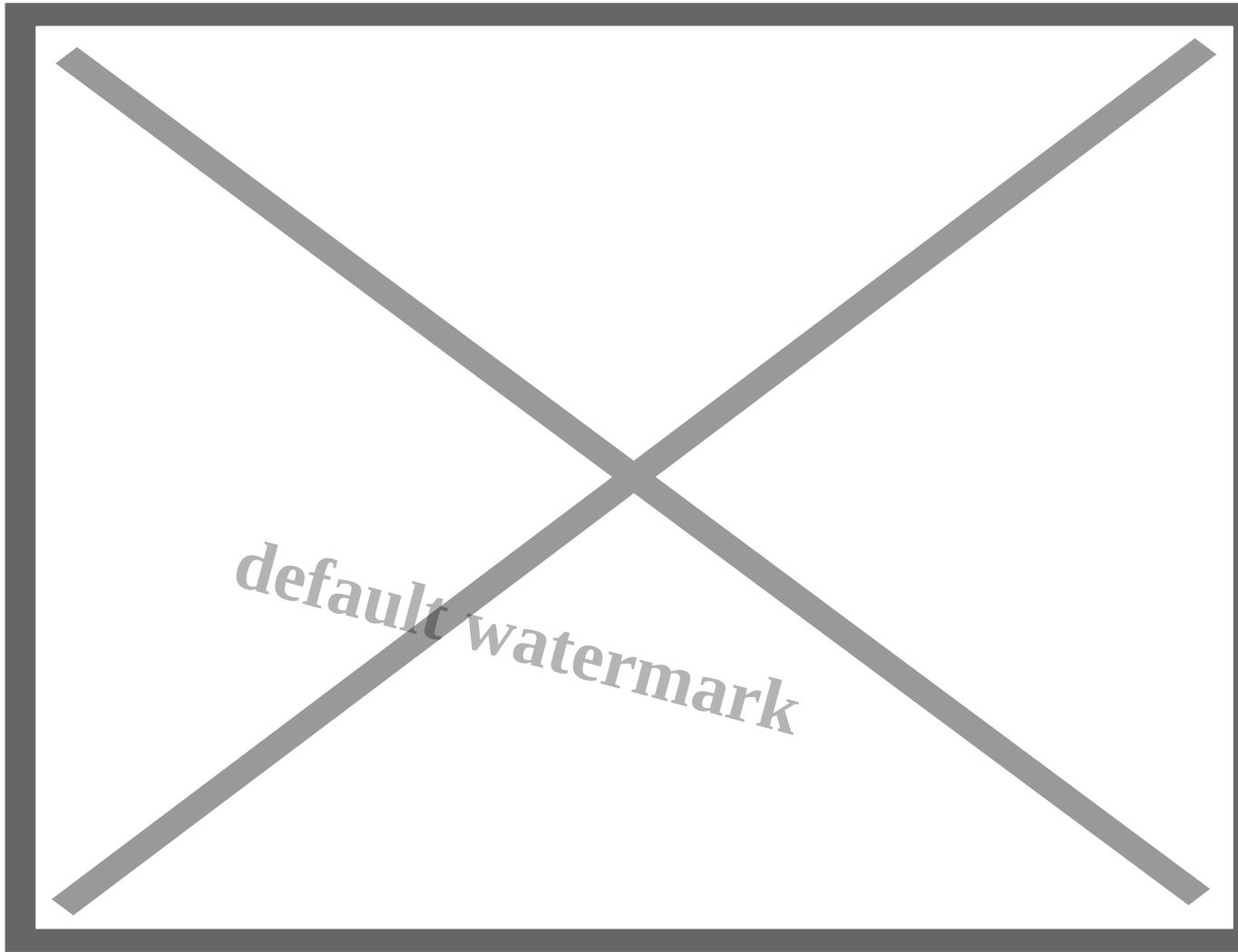
The production itself is simple, requiring just two sets: a doctor's office and the Dowd family's living room. Scenic designer **Tina Fontana** cleverly divides the small stage while props are smoothly transitioned between scenes. **Emily Thompson**, the stage manager, keeps everything running seamlessly, and special mention must be made of the comedic timing of Elwood and Harvey's portrait, which is a delightful addition.



As much as I loved Purdie’s performance, the rest of the cast also shines. **Luone Ingram** strikes the right balance between outrage and sweetness as Veta, and **Brenna Brown** (Miss Kelly) and **Gregory Rampton** (Dr. Sanderson) deliver a standout scene of romantic comedy when they engage in a heated argument that ends with an unexpected kiss—a highlight of the evening.

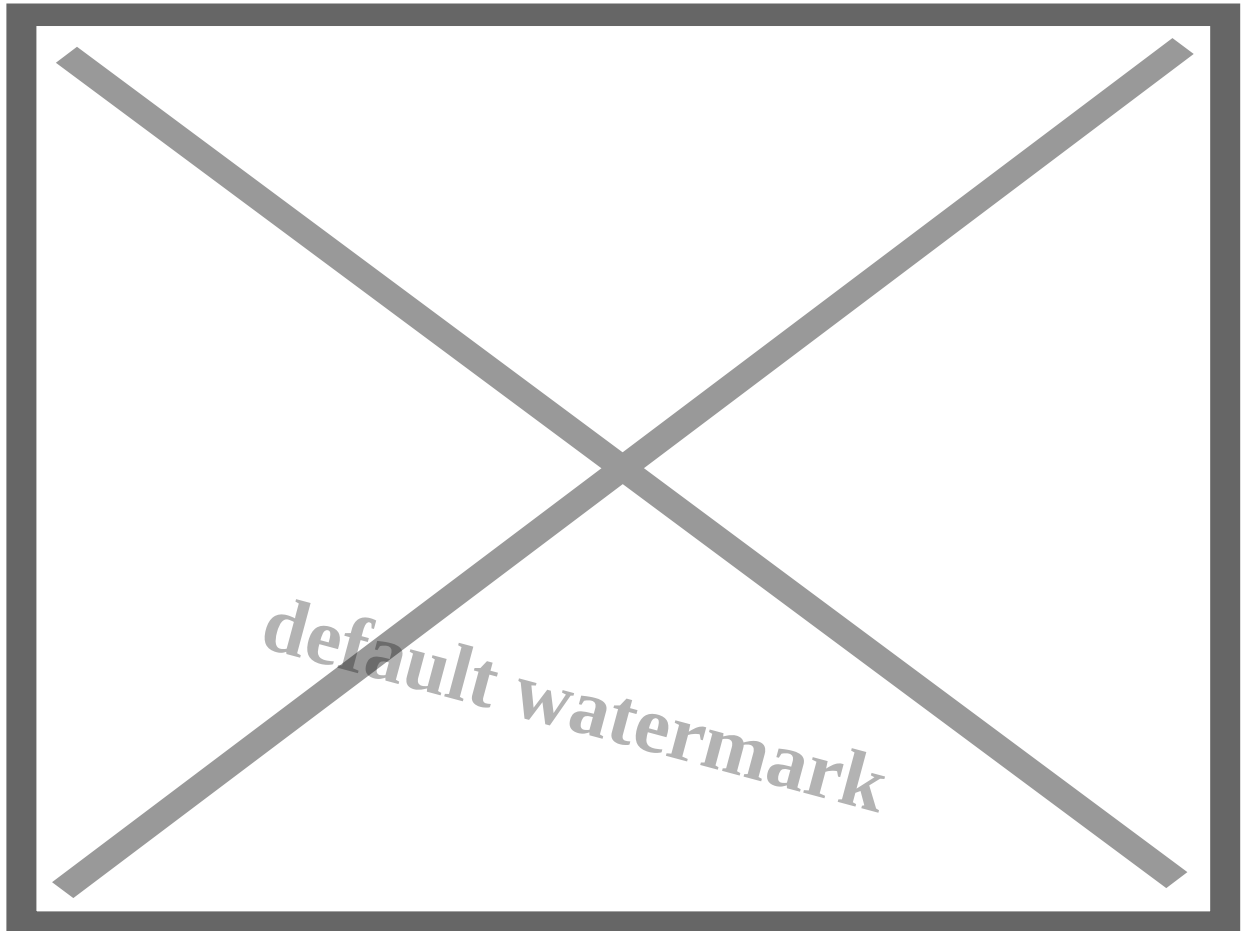
Ron Holcombe is memorable as Dr. Chumley, especially in a humorous scene where he dreams aloud about relaxing with a beautiful woman in Akron, Ohio. Despite the outdated chauvinism of the fantasy, Holcombe’s wistful delivery allows the audience to reflect on their own silly dreams.

But *Harvey* isn’t just about laughs. It carries a poignant message about how we treat others. Elwood’s famous line, “In this world, you must be oh so smart or oh so pleasant. Well, for years I was smart. I recommend pleasant,” resonates deeply. In a world where we often strive to appear smarter or more informed than others, Elwood’s advice to simply be kind feels especially relevant.



Elwood's affable nature stems from his complete disregard for societal norms and the pressure to fit in. While his lack of awareness about how his behavior affects his family, particularly Myrtle and Veta, is evident, Elwood is remarkably attuned to the comfort of strangers. He treats everyone he meets as a friend, extending genuine invitations to dinner or drinks, not out of mere politeness but with a sincere interest in connecting. His warmth extends to a magazine saleswoman over the phone, inviting her to a party with the same earnestness as if she were a long-time acquaintance. This openness and genuine kindness make Elwood an endearing character, reminding us of the value of simple human connection.

At the play's conclusion, Veta faces a choice: allow Elwood to receive an injection that will cure him of his belief in Harvey. The taxi driver warns her, "After this, he'll be a perfectly normal human being. And you know what stinkers they are!" This humorous yet profound observation captures the play's enduring charm: be yourself and let others be themselves, even if that includes an imaginary giant rabbit.



Harvey runs at the PG Players in Pleasant Grove until October 14th. Don't miss this delightful production!

Grab a friend and see our next show at our theater on the library's first floor!

Dates: September 10-15, 2024

Location: Keith Christeson Little Theater

30 East Center Street

Pleasant Grove, UT

Lower level of the public library

Tickets: Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$14 for students and seniors. Tickets can be purchased online, and if available, at the door. **Monday, Thursday & Saturday.** 7:30pm, Matinees at 3:00

Contact: 801-613-0473 or visit pgplayers.weebly.com

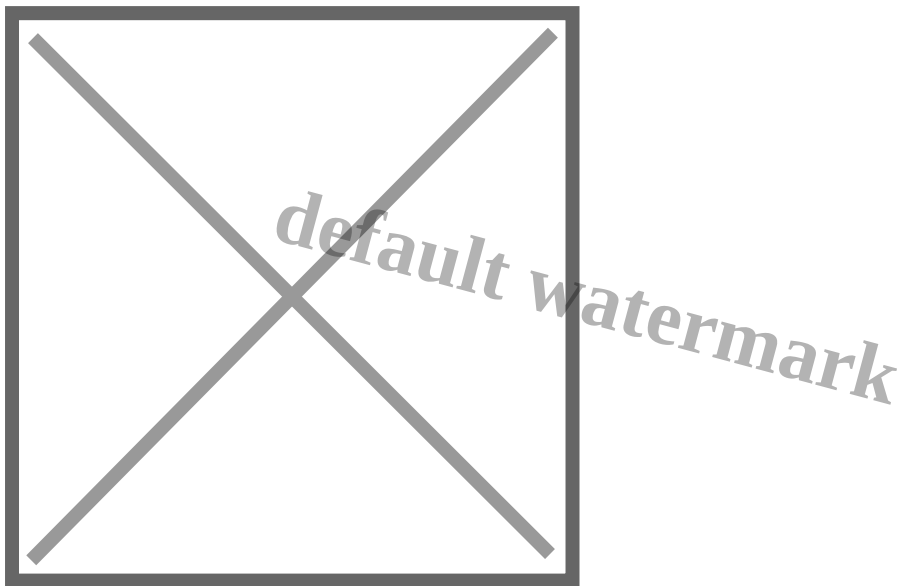
Please no babes-in-arms or children under 5. This production is supported by grants from the Pleasant Grove Arts Commission and PG CareTax.

About the Author: Rachel Wagner

Rachel Wagner is a critic, writer, and podcaster who reviews movies, TV shows, and theater:

- Critic: A member of the Utah Film Critics Association and Rotten Tomatoes-approved movie critic
- Writer: A former head writer for [Rotoscopers.com](#), where she interviewed animators like Nick Park and Tomm Moore
- Podcaster: [Founder of the Hallmarkies Podcast](#), where she reviews Christmas movies and also has weekly interviews and recaps
- Theater critic: A member of the American Theatre Critics Association
- Interests: Loves animation, Hallmark, Barbie, and rom-coms

[Rachel's YouTube channel](#), [RachelsReviews](#), features a family movie night each week, and she also podcasts with friends about various topics.



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