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‘Tis the season to be jolly



The Hindu

Scenes from the play 'Skipping Christmas' by Mellow Circle. Photo: R. Ravindran



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Mellow Circle's Skipping Christmas was a rousing play with plenty of laughs and cheery music

Nothing fosters the spirit of Christmas more than an entire neighbourhood rallying behind its people. Mellow Circle's Christmas play in aid of Prathyasha, its home for children with HIV, embraced this tradition. Staged at the Museum Theatre, it was directed by Hans Kaushik, with a 45-strong choir conducted by Augustine Paul.

Skipping Christmas is a fable written by John Grisham. The drama, well-scripted by Rajiv Rajendra, was a parade of ideas, emotions and people with a message to ponder.

The story

Imagine a year without Christmas. Luther (played by the incredibly-gifted Thomas Philip) and Nora Krank (Sapna Sera Abraham who complimented Philip) decide to skip the madness of the season and head to the Cayman islands for a spot of fun. Their only child Blair (Leisel Grant) is in Peru as a Peace Corps volunteer and the couple struggles to accept the empty-nest syndrome. Luther, having decided that last year's Christmas expenditure was a dreadful waste, plans to rekindle romance with Nora by booking a trip at half that cost. Nora is aghast but then she gives in and calls off the Christmas Eve party and stops fretting about getting Hickory honey ham.

Meanwhile when Luther says they are skipping Christmas he means going the whole hog. He tells the policemen (played by the comic Ratnakumar and Jere Franklin) that he won't be buying their charity calendar, the boy scouts that he won't be needing a blue spruce tree, and the choristers (conducted by Ebenezer Arunkumar) to take their carolling elsewhere. But avoiding Christmas when you live on Hemlock Street which, for years, has won the best decorated neighbourhood, is like skating on a treacherous sheet of ice.

And then there is the self-appointed ideologue Vic Fromaayer (Arul Durairaj) who demands that the snowman be foisted on the roof, the windows be crusted with shiny lights, and the tree be decorated. Nora starts to wilt under the pressure but the dissenting Luther continues to be rude to Walt (Sajan Abraham) and his terminally-ill wife Bev (Sheila Paul), talks down to the kids who've brought their "free Frosty" campaign to his door and gets his face botoxed to appear younger for the cruise. Philip aced this scene.

But a phone call from Blair announcing that she's heading home for Christmas with her Peruvian boyfriend, Enrique (Zubin Vincent) turns the tables. The Kranks not only find themselves out of ham but also out of everything that symbolises Christmas. Luther nearly kills himself putting up Frosty, and has to settle for a miserable tree sold by Randy Scanlon (John Chiramel) and his son (Nihal Jacob).

But Vic and the Beckers (Yohan Chacko and Shireen Lazarus) come to the rescue. Ned Becker lends them his tree, Nora's friend Mary (Mariam Alexander) pitches in for the party and Aubie (John Appasamy) and Spike (an enthusiastic Simon Elias) get the policemen to stall Blair and Enrique till things are ready.

The couple arrives and Enrique hits it off with everyone except Luther who is still mourning the loss of his holiday. Till Marty (Koshi Philip) lands up with the Hickory ham and the message of Christmas (he is Santa in disguise.) Luther walks over to Bev and Walt and hands over the cruise tickets knowing fully well that this could be the couple's last Christmas together. And realises that he has been tricked by the whimsical mischief of fate to celebrate the season of joy and hope.

Apart from the acting, the play also had incredibly beautiful sets (Elias Koshy, Martin Paul, Anna Thomas and team). The music for this ho-ho-togetherness came from the impeccably-timed and heart-warming carols. The background sound by Vinod Simon was cheery and emotional without turning sappy.

The play was about a festival whose twinkling fame has not diminished in whatever way it is celebrated. This is the Grisham that stole Christmas. And our hearts.