

The Press Democrat

SEARCH

Low-tech edition ([About](#))

[Home](#) > [Search](#)

[Print this story](#)

A TALE FIT FOR CHRISTMAS

Published on November 26, 2004

© 2004- The Press Democrat

BYLINE: SHELLEY SHEPHERD KLANER

FOR THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

PAGE: P3

When a 14-year-old French exchange student arrived a few months ago to learn English and American culture, little did he know that he would find himself performing in a holiday play at a local theater.

Charles Cosson of Perigueux, France, still stumbles a bit with the language and struggles to understand some of the jargon, but he's playing the parts of a servant and a cat in the world premiere of the operetta "The Tailor of Gloucester."

Fellow performers include his new friend William Wilson, who will be going to Charles' home in February.

"The Tailor of Gloucester" is based on a children's story by Beatrix Potter and a book by Marcy Telles.

The production by the Cinnabar Young Repertory Theater is directed by Sheri Lee Miller and includes actors ages 8 to 16.

Charles said nothing about living in the United States has really surprised him because so many of his friends and neighbors have come here as exchange students. He said the process is almost a right of passage in his town, which is located in Aquitaine province near the Bay of Biscay.

But with a bit role in a school play as his only theatrical experience, Charles is finding his immersion in the performing arts a challenge, albeit one he has enjoyed.

The idea of the boys' performing together came from William's mother, Janis Wilson, who wrote the music and is the music director for the show.

Her son has performed on stage since he was 6, and recently discovered Cinnabar. Since then, William has performed in its productions of "Iolanthe" and "A Wonderful Life."

Acting with his foreign exchange cohort has made the lead role in "The Tailor of Gloucester" even more exciting for William, who is counting the days until he leaves for France.

The cast of "The Tailor of Gloucester" includes 21 young people who bring the holiday spirit to Cinnabar with the tale of a tailor who needs to sew a coat for the mayor in time for his wedding Christmas Day.

When the tailor becomes ill, he falls asleep and has a nightmare that the garment isn't completed in time. While he snoozes a group of magical mice complete the coat and William, as the tailor, is able to talk to the mice only on Christmas Eve, when the magical spirit of the holiday abounds.

"When I am sick and have the nightmare it is really cool," William said. "I am worried if I will get the coat done in time."

William said it's a fantasy-driven play, and could help kids get ready for Christmas. "It is a good family experience," he said.

Three months have passed in California for Charles, and William is excited to spend his six months in the home of his new friend.

Charles doesn't see any future in acting, although he is enjoying the rehearsals, and William is uncertain what tomorrow will bring for him on the career front.

He would like to find himself on a stage in France, but doesn't think it will happen because Charles isn't involved with a theater in his hometown.

Another young performer in the play is Jonathan Jeffrey, 10, who is certain he will have a future in the performing arts.

A recent transplant from Fresno, he got out the Yellow Pages right away to find a venue for his talents. He is playing the part of Albert the groom mouse in "The Tailor of Gloucester."

"I want to be in the movie business," he said. "I want to direct or something or be on stage or direct a film."

Jeffrey was bit by the acting bug when he played a part in a Disneylike play at school.

"I like that I get to say a lot in this play," he said. "I also like that it is happening at Christmas and that it has got a lot of Christmas spirit."

The young actor confirmed that he doesn't have to kiss the bride mouse Alberta, but he would probably still be in the show, even if he had to.

Jeffrey says the mouse is shy in the play -- and he is too, "but not as shy as the mouse."

You can reach Correspondent Shelley Shepherd **Klaner** at 775-3364 or klanerpr@aol.com.