

# ctInsider

What could a doll want from Santa? Find out in 'Eleanor's Very Merry Christmas Wish — The Musical'



Living in the North Pole with Santa and his elves is certainly full of wonder and magic, but in "Eleanor's Very Merry Christmas Wish — The Musical," a rag doll named Eleanor finds something is missing.

Despite loving her family, including Santa, Mrs. "Cookie" Claus, Clara Claus and the elves, she wishes for a best friend and home of her own. After realizing wishing is not enough, she pens a letter to Saint Nick himself.

The 65-minute production, written by Denise McGowan Tracy and based on her book, tells Eleanor's story, including what happens after writing that letter expressing her dream. (Hint: She embarks on a new journey!)

You and your family can experience her adventures through the streaming video of the 2019 world premiere performance of "Eleanor's Very Merry Christmas Wish - The

Musical.” It’s available through New Haven’s Shubert Theatre and Waterbury’s Palace Theater, anytime Friday, Nov. 27, through Sunday, Dec. 27.

Featuring eight songs from composer/lyricist Kathleen Butler-Duplessis and Tracy, the musical offers heartwarming lessons on friendship and family, among other things. Tracy shared more via email.

**Q:** “Eleanor’s Very Merry Christmas Wish” began as a bedtime story, retold each year at the holidays. Do you recall what inspired it?

**A:** Yes, I remember it very clearly. As the entertainment director for Navy Pier, Chicago’s largest tourist attraction, I handled public programming including Santa visits during the holidays. One day, while checking on the team to see how things were going I heard a young lady telling Santa most insistently what she DID and DID NOT want to receive. It tickled me so much that I turned to the person next to me and said, “Wow, how would you like to be the toy that gets that kid?” It stuck with me for awhile and several years later I remembered it and began writing the story of a toy that wishes for a child. And, Eleanor was born.

**Q:** The show folks will see through The Shubert or Waterbury Palace is a streaming video of the 2019 world premiere of “Eleanor’s Very Merry Christmas Wish - The Musical.” Who put on this show and where/when did it premiere?

**A:** The show was produced last year by my production company, DMT Entertainment, with me serving as executive producer. With the support of many generous family members and friends who answered the call to underwrite the first production we put together a partnership of theater and marketing professionals, rented space at The Greenhouse Theater in Chicago and put together an outstanding creative and production team who pulled the show together in an astonishing short amount of time. The opening night occurred approximately 12 months after the first reading of the show.

**Q:** What was your biggest challenge/greatest joy as producer?

**A:** The biggest challenge is always the financial. Theater is tough. We wanted to present a high-end, polished and professional Equity production. That takes resources. As an independent, for-profit producer with no theater affiliation, it was quite the uphill battle. The greatest joy was watching the faces of the audience as they experienced the final product that was the culmination of so many people working together with one goal - creating something magical for the holidays.

**Q:** What message do you hope kids take away from the experience of seeing “Eleanor’s Very Merry Christmas Wish - The Musical”?

**A:** I hope that everyone who sees it - child or adult, comes away with a sense of hope and wonder. And, this year especially, a reminder of the importance of home and family - whether it is your born-to family or chosen family. Eleanor learns, and teaches us, that wishing is powerful but working toward a goal is just as important. Oh, and kindness. We could use some more kindness. And humor. We all need a laugh this year, don't we?

**Q:** What's next for this musical?

**A:** First, we'd love to tour the show in 2021 (if live theater returns by then) throughout the United States. And a part of me hopes that there will always be a sit-down production in Chicago - where the wish began. And if Dreamworks or Pixar is looking for a holiday animated special with a merchandise line, we wouldn't mind that a bit.

**Q:** Do you have any connection with Connecticut?

**A:** I don't have a connection to Connecticut - except that one of my top three Christmas movies is "Christmas in Connecticut." I watch it every year and can quote much of the dialogue word for word. But, my husband is from Norwich, Vt., so I feel his connection to that part of the country and have loved my visits. I do hope a visit to Connecticut is in my not-too-distant future.

*The Shubert at [shubert.com](http://shubert.com), promo code SHUNEW20. 203-624-1825. The Palace Theater at [palacetheaterct.org](http://palacetheaterct.org), promo code PALWAT20. 203-346-2000. \$20-per household ticket enables a 48-hour time frame between Nov. 27 and Dec. 27. Also two immersive "Eleanor's Very Merry Christmas Party in a Box" options, from \$45 to \$60 plus shipping/handling fees.*