

THE ANTI-CHRISTMAS

SPICING UP THE SUGAR-COATED HOLIDAY

BY TOM LEE

When everyone around you is repetitively crooning carols, talking effusively about baubles and tinsel and arguing over the best way to roast marshmallows on an open fire, do you find yourself repressing the urge to strike the nearest rosy-cheeked child with a candy cane? Here's the cure: a dose of anti-Christmas cheer.

For all you Scrooges seeking a little break from good will to all men, director Ann James has prepared a comedic double bill that'll add a dollop of invigorating vinegar to your soporific mulled wine.

"Christmas for me has always been a double-edged sword – actually from my 20s," confesses James. For five years in a row she worked as an actress in Christmas

shows. With rehearsals starting in October and performances running through to early January, she spent around three months warbling seasonal songs, attired always in a mix of reds and greens. "It was just a nightmare!" she says with a laugh.

"I do enjoy the spirit of Christmas, but I also understand that there is a certain commercialism that is attached... so it's kind of just taking the candy coating off the holiday."

Building on those emotions, she's put together a pair of one-person plays that cheekily poke fun at the excessive sentimentality of the occasion. The first to catch her eye was writer David Sedaris' *The Santaland Diaries*, the piece that first brought the humorous essayist to public attention. Describing the woes of Crumpet, a depart-

ment store elf, it was later adapted for the stage by Joe Mantello and has been a popular staple in regional theater ever since.

Coupled with this is *The 12 Dates of Christmas*, one woman's journey through a dozen rendezvous that range from mildly successful to colossal disaster, spread over the course of a year.

Winter is the time for feasting, and in recognition of this urge to gorge, audience members will be able to munch on bites from a snack buffet during the interval, washed down by a complimentary drink – followed by as many more beverages as you care to purchase. After all, 'tis the season to be jolly!

// Dec 6-9, 7.30pm doors, RMB260 pre-sale from Mansion Hotel reception, RMB300 at door,



group discounts available. Mansion Hotel, 82 Xinle Lu, by Xiangyang Lu 新乐路82号, 近襄阳路 (info@urbanaphrodite.nl)

win!

We have a pair of tickets to give away. Simply answer the following question:

***The Santaland Diaries* is allegedly based on Sedaris' stint working as an elf in which department store?**

Answers to win@urbanatomy.com with the subject 'Bad Santa' by Dec 5.