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## Rejoicing in their temporary roles

For some Washingtonians, the holidays offer a chance to release their inner performer

BY STEVE HENDRIX

At work, Dick Kovar is unobtrusive. And at 85, the veteran intelligence analyst is fine with being the soft-spoken gent in the conservative suit, half a century older than many of his co-workers.

"They hardly ever hear a word from me," Kovar said of the CIA office where he works as a contractor.

But then comes December, and Kovar the Quiet whips off the unassuming mask to reveal the showman within. Each year, he takes the stage with the Christmas Revels, one of several holiday extravaganzas in the area that give hundreds of ordinary Washingtonians a chance to sing and dance — and occasionally stage fight — in front of a mass audience.

"This year, I get thrown to the



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Patent examiner Celia Murphy performs in the Christmas Revels extravaganza. ■ More photos at [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com).

ground in one of the scenes," Kovar said during a rehearsal at Lisner Auditorium, where he was wearing makeup and a rakish eye patch and looking nothing like the eminence grise he plays at his day job. "My wife is not going to like that when she finds out."

In a city where professional performers fill stages all year long, the holidays offer a chance for talented amateurs to take their star turn. Bus drivers, bureaucrats and even the guy who yells "All rise" at D.C. Superior Court, they all shed their salaried selves for a few nights under the fabulous lights of theaters, concert halls and churches around the region.

"It's like I become a different person," said Kovar, a natural baritone, whose last stage work before joining the Revels in 1993 was playing the villain in a school

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