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The spirit of a 1930s Christmas

Screwball comedy at Craigdarroch Castle channels the talents of William Powell and Carole Lombard

What: Radio, Mistletoe and My Man Godfrey Where: Craigdarroch Castle When: Dec. 27 to 30 Tickets: Sold out



CHRISTINA PATTERSON

Christina Patterson and David Radford in character from their production Radio, Mistletoe and My Man Godfrey.

One might wonder how relevant a 1936 screwball comedy might be 80 years later. However, actors in a new theatrical adaptation of the film *My Man Godfrey* say it rings as true today as ever.

Next week, *Radio, Mistletoe and My Man Godfrey* has its première at Craigdarroch Castle, in the upper ballroom. The show is staged by Victoria's Launch Pad Theatre, a small company run by David Radford and

Christina Patterson.

Radio, Mistletoe and My Man Godfrey is a theatrical adaptation of My Man Godfrey, done in the style of a 1930s radio play with a few Christmas references tossed in. Any true movie buff knows the original classic film starring Carole Lombard and William Powell.

Patterson and Radford are longtime fans of Powell's Thin Man series. They watched My Man Godfrey and decided it would be a perfect Christmastime entertainment. Using both the film and a radio-play version as references, Radford (who also directs) has adapted it as a brisk one-hour show starring him, Patterson, Morgan Cranny and Kate Humble.

The original My Man Godfrey is about a once-wealthy man who finds himself living with hobos beside a garbage dump. He's accosted by two high-society sisters who want to enlist him for their scavenger-hunt party as one of their finds. Then, rather improbably, he's hired as their butler.

Humble, who plays Cornelia, one of the sisters, notes My Man Godfrey came out seven years after the Wall Street crash of 1929. Similarly, in 2016 we're still recovering from the global market crash of 2007.

"The disparity [today] between haves and have-nots, it's very parallel," Humble said.

Patterson, playing sister Irene, said both their show and the film are "a comment on the one per cent, the absurdity of these rich people. Everyone takes a journey, and by the end they're redeemed somehow."

There's more than one similarity between Radio, Mistletoe and My Man Godfrey and the original flick. Powell and Lombard were briefly married, although they had divorced by the time the film was shot. And Radford (playing Powell's role) and Patterson (playing Lombard's role) happen to be husband and wife — which she says is handy for running lines together.

As well as wearing period costumes, the cast gather around a faux 1930s microphone, reading from scripts in radio-theatre style. They do their own sound effects, which adds to the fun.

"A lot of it is delightfully jerryrigged," Humble said. "There's everything from a kitchen whisk drawn over bamboo to mimic a shower curtain being opened to beer bottles [blown] to sound like fog horns."

Launch Pad Theatre has staged several productions at Craigdarroch Castle, ranging from pocket Shakespeare adaptations to Dracula shows. It might seem odd for an 1890 national historic site to be a theatre venue. But Humble, who happens be the castle's operations manager, said hosting such entertainments is part of Craigdarroch's mandate.

"We want to be an active part of Victoria's community. You're not just coming here to learn about the Victorian era, you're coming to do modern, relevant things," she said.

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