

## A Christmas Carol played for laughs



By Daniel R. Pearce, Simcoe Reformer  
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Toronto actors Sean Sullivan (left) plays Tiny Tim while Harrison Thomas plays Scrooge in a comic version of A Christmas Carol that plays at Waterford Old Town Hall this weekend. (DANIEL R. PEARCE Simcoe Reformer)

WATERFORD - The version of the Christmas Carol that is playing at Waterford Old Town Hall this weekend is unlike anything you've seen before.

First of all, it's a cast of two. Harrison Thomas, 23, plays Scrooge while Sean Sullivan, at the tender age of 56, plays everyone else including Tiny Tim with a squeaky voice.

The story is repeatedly interrupted as the pair pop in and out of character, interact with the audience, and make fun of Charles Dickens' jokes.

"They ask questions . . . Is it politically correct to say 'cripple?'" director Lynne Griffin said in an interview Thursday afternoon as this group of theatre professionals set up in the upstairs space of the hall.

Don't worry, Dickens fans. The show is not quite sacrilege. It is meant to be fun and in the words of author Katie Leamen "very ridiculous."

"It's short, sweet, and funny, which you can use at Christmas time," noted Griffin, an accomplished actress perhaps best known for her role in the 1980s hit comedy *Strange Brew*.

The production is also another step in the Old Town Hall's journey to bring professional theatre to their space.

Griffin and her husband Sullivan have had long and successful careers on stage, film, and TV.

The pair met when Griffin moved to Los Angeles in the 1980s following her film success. They moved to Toronto in 1996 and settled down after finding plenty of work in north of the border.

Sullivan was in the series *The Associates* (he was also in the original *Wayne's World*) while Griffin was in the CBC series *The Wind at My Back* for five years.

The couple have teamed up with Thomas, Leamen, and stage manager Lindsay Sippel Eitzen for some lightweight experimental style theatre. (They call themselves No Porpoise Productions).

Last summer, the team did a spoofed-up version of *Alice in Wonderland* in the Toronto's Distillery District. Their version of *A Christmas Carol* has had some readings in Toronto, but this is the play's first fully staged production.

"Rather than call it an out of town tryout, we better call it a world premiere," said Griffin, who is as charming and funny in person as she is on screen.

Leamen said she isn't afraid to have fun rewriting classic shows and premiering them in a small town. In Toronto, she said, there's a feeling that "theatre has to be brilliant, daring, and dark."

There is a lighter side to Dickens that she is trying to bring out, Leamen explained. With *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens wanted to "revive" Christmas, which at the time was a "fading" celebration, she noted.

"There is so much joy in what Charles Dickens wrote," she said.

Griffin, by the way, is a repeat visitor to Waterford and said she loves the town (the antique market, she said, turned out to be a great source of props and costumes). She and Sullivan have made friends here and visit often.

"I've fallen in love with Waterford as our out of town getaway," said Griffin.

• *A Christmas Carol Comedy*, adapted by Katie Leamen, directed by Lynne Griffin, runs at the Waterford Old Town Hall, Fri., Dec. 5 and Sat., Dec. 6 at 8 p.m., and on Sun., Dec. 7 at 7 p.m.

Tickets are \$25 for adults, \$15 for youth, and are available at the door.

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