

You ain't never seen a Scrooge like this

A Christmas Carol Comedy comes to Waterford's Old Town Hall this weekend

Norfolk News

By J.P. Antonacci

A Christmas Carol has never been this funny.

Charles Dickens' classic tale of a miser visited by three spirits is hilariously retold in A Christmas Carol Comedy, on this weekend at Waterford's Old Town Hall theatre.

Under the direction of Lynne Griffin, actor Harrison Thomas portrays Ebenezer Scrooge while Sean Sullivan plays everybody else during a show that's billed as part pantomime, part Monty Python and all zany.

"It's definitely outrageous and charming," said playwright Katie Leamen.

"It's using the old-school magic of how much you can make with so little and still have the story be perfectly clear."

Leamen's script makes no secret of the fact that the beloved tale of Scrooge, Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim has provided dramatic fodder for everyone from Alistair Sim to the Muppets.

"Within the first 10 minutes we tell the audience 'this show has been done, and you probably know the story,'" she said.

What makes her adaptation stand out is the interaction between its two stars.

"So much of the humour comes from the relationship between these two actors," Leamen said.

"Because it's just two guys, it's silly and fun, and I think it'll work for the Old Town Hall feel."

Thomas' Scrooge is a leading man in the classic sense, while his counterpart is straight out of vaudeville. Sullivan has the toughest job, changing characters sometimes line by line, distinguishing between them with a new accent or different pair of eyeglasses.

"He plays the entire Cratchit family," Leamen said of the exhausted actor. "It's posed a few headaches for him at rehearsals, trying to get the glasses off without poking him in the eye."

Leamen remembers watching pantomime shows as a three-year-old and coming away smitten with the outlandish, cross-dressing, over the top genre.



"I just loved the interactiveness of it," she said. "That's absolutely where my tendencies as an actor and writer go."

A staple of "panto" is audience participation.

"The audience gets to boo and cheer, and the actors will talk to them and ask them questions," Leamen explained.

"It's fun and interesting and as an audience you definitely feel like you're part of the show, without being put on the spot."

In true pantomime tradition, A Christmas Carol Comedy incorporates modern elements – this Scrooge uses social media – and local references while not losing sight of the story's enduring appeal.

"We try to stay true to the original intent, how to find that spirit within you, while keeping it short and sweet," Leamen said.

The playwright wasn't afraid to mine a giant of the Victorian literary canon for its "quirky" humour.

"So much of what Charles Dickens wrote is so funny," Leamen said. "'Dead as a doornail.' How dead is a doornail? It's kind of a ridiculous adjective."

She also explored some of the lesser-known plot points in the original story, such as Scrooge's nephew, the unfailingly cheerful Fred, trying to butter up his uncle in order to inherit some of his vast fortune.

"There are things in the book that never made it into the Muppet version," Leamen laughed.

No Porpoise Productions presents A Christmas Carol Comedy at the Old Town Hall theatre Dec. 5 and 6 at 8 p.m. and Dec. 7 at 7 p.m.

Tickets are \$25 general admission, \$15 youth. Purchase online at oldtownhall.org or call the box office at 519-443-0113.