



It's a Wonderful Life
comes to the stage

Description

Geordie presents a wonderful stage adaptation of the Capra film

By Byron Toben

Geordie Theatre selected, for its annual gala fundraiser, a rousing stage adaptation of the great Christmas classic film by **Frank Capra**, ***It's a Wonderful Life***.

That 1946 film, now included in several lists of 100 greatest films of all time, is one of a growing list of screen to stage versions reversing the normal stage to screen progression. Indeed, Geordie's mounting of a stage version of ***Around The World in 80 Days*** in 2017 was another such example.



In this version of *It's a Wonderful Life*, scripted by **Philip**

Grecian, directors **Mike Payette** and **Jessica Abdallah** have assembled some 32 actors playing 44 roles. It is difficult to erase images of cinema greats imprinted on audience memories but it works out well here. We become adjusted to a bearded **Nicolas Doyon** playing the key role of George Bailey, created by clean-shaven **Jimmy Stewart**. The greedy banker Mr. Potter enshrined by **Lionel Barrymore** is here a female Henrietta Potter (**Pepita Capriolo**).

George's loyal wife Mary Hatch Bailey, who often saves the day, is seamlessly enacted from the screen's **Donna Reed** to Geordie's **Laura Seaman**.

Geordie's board president, **Brett Hooten**, becomes Clarence, the guardian angel who convinces George that it would not be better if he had never been born (as effectively as the screen's **Henry Travers**).

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A variety of silent auction items were available for bidding as were some free snacks during intermission.

Some of my own takeaways...

Congratulations to Geordie as it enters its 40th year!

Elsa Bolam's founding of it has proved as valuable as her husband's role as initial (and longest lasting) director of the Centaur theatre.

A new appreciation of Frank Capra's many wonderful (and award winning) films. Would make a good subject for **David Novek's** series of Hollywood lectures.

Offhand, some other film classics later turned into hit stage plays... *42nd street*, *Lion King*, *American in Paris*, *Singing in the Rain*, *Top Hat*, *Dirty Dancing*



... Other reminders from viewers welcomed.



Fun fact

This film briefly featured **Jimmy the Crow** (actually a raven), a pet bird of George Bailey's forgetful uncle Billy. Capra used the bird (who lived to 60, double normal raven life spans) in other films.

It's a Wonderful Life was performed at the D.B. Clarke Theatre on December 6 and 7.

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geordie.ca

Images: courtesy of Geordie Theatre

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Byron Toben, a past president of *The Montreal Press Club*, has been *WestmountMag.ca*'s theatre reviewer since July 2015. Previously, he wrote for since terminated web sites *Rover Arts* and *Charlebois Post*, print weekly *The Downtowner* and print monthly *The Senior Times*. He also is an expert consultant on U.S. work permits for Canadians.



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