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REVIEWS

Reviews Drama IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE: A Live Radio
Play Review

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE: A Live Radio Play Review

rama **December 17, 2018**

Tags: [It's A Wonderful Life](#), [Simon Helberg](#)

MEDIA

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE: A
Live Radio Play



INFO

Rating	N/R
Additional	Drama •
Genres	Family
Directed By	Cameron Watson
Written By	Frances Goodrich Frank Capra • Albert Hackett Jo Swerling
Release	December
Date	12 through December 23, 2018
Runtime	80 Minutes, no intermission
Studio	Pasadena Playhouse

Impressive!

I had never done a review of a live radio play before, so the following will be my first time ever. As matter of fact, I have never attended a live radio play prior to December 13th , 2018 which was the opening night of "It's a Wonderful Life" at the Pasadena Playhouse

Many of us are familiar with the 1946 Frank Capra-directed classic film starring the late great James Stewart as the desperately frustrated businessman, George Bailey. An angel sent from Heaven helps Bailey by showing him what life would have been life if he had never existed. The reason why this movie is ingrained in our heads is partly because it has been a tradition for years for television major networks to air the movie every Christmas season. I long for the day for my favorite Christmas movie, "Die Hard" to get the same treatment someday.

Golden Globe nominated actor Simon Helberg of the hugely popular "The Big Bang Theory" series had the fortune of performing as George Bailey at this live play. One thing that I noticed immediately the moment I entered the auditorium is the 1940s stage production design. It had the talent in charge of producing the sounds located right near the actors who would all share four microphone stands. I've been to smaller stage production plays before but never quite like this one where the actors actually held their scripts in their hands and read them as they go. Everything about this was a new experience to me. This must be what it felt like back in the day when a family would literally gather round the one radio set that they had in their living room to listen to Orson Welles freaking the nation out through his "War of the Worlds" play broadcast.

This rendition doesn't deviate too far from the original material, I would even argue that it actually trimmed the runtime down significantly to just 80 minutes with no intermission which I find to be quite refreshing because if I'm not mistaken, the movie was quite lengthy. Cameron Watson directed Helberg and his co-stars, Rebecca Mozo, Rob Nagle, Haneefah Wood, and Ryun Yu. All of them did such excellent job changing their voices as they transitioned from one character to the next while covering many grounds. Not only did they get some of the accents down pat, but their cadences fit whatever given situation was

at hand. The chemistry between the five actors was incredibly spot on. The way they met and connect each other's sentences flowed like a harmonious tune that did not skip a beat. I'm a huge fan of "The Big Bang Theory" so I could still see a bit of Howard Wolowitz in Simon Helberg's George Bailey but that's not necessarily a bad thing, because Helberg infused everything that was likable about him in this already likable character and it shone through

Of course it helps when you have a timeless heartwarming story such as this. What an all around well-orchestrated, well thought out and well-acted live radio play that also had a genuinely funny sense of humor especially with those faux advertisements in between segments. So if you're looking to get entertained this holiday season, I highly recommend you go take your family with you to watch "It's a Wonderful Life" radio play which runs this whole week all the way through December 23rd, 2018 at the Pasadena Playhouse. Tickets start at \$25 which you can purchase at

<https://www.pasadenaplayhouse.org/event/its-a-wonderful-life/>

