FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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SATIRE TORN FROM THE PAGES OF OUR OWN NEWSPAPERS

Nikolay Gogol’s “Government Inspector” gets a West Coast rewrite inspired by local news stories.

Lately, following the daily news can seem like a comedy sketch, but the Phoenix Theatre’s newest production takes this to hilarious farcical heights in a new, West Coast version of Nikolay Gogol’s The Government Inspector. Adapted and directed by Professor Linda Hardy, The Inspector, runs at UVic from March 9 to 18, 2017.

“Every day brought new gifts in the Times Colonist,” says Hardy about the process of writing the play last spring and summer. “I was grateful to the passion of the citizens who wrote letters to the editor.” Over five months, new ideas were woven into Gogol’s tale about a town whose officials hear a government inspector is coming — incognito! Will their little improprieties be exposed? When they mistake a cunning ex-civil servant for the inspector, their schemes are turned against them. Greed, corruption, and hypocrisy escalate this farce spins out of control — proving that Gogol’s 19th-century satire is no less relevant (and possibly even more humorous) when reimagined into our own political backyard.

While leaving the plot of the original 1836 play intact, Hardy places her characters in the “fictional” West Coast town of Paradise. Paradise’ problems will sound terribly familiar — from a debacle over sewage treatment, to concerns of homelessness and a Tent City, and controversies over new bike lanes. Watch for bike cops, real estate developers, yoga instructors, and lots of protestors, including a reference to a Victoria icon in a poop suit!

“Why do comedy?” says Hardy. “One answer is that it provides release in these uncertain times; another, that it has always been the responsibility of the artist to function as a catalyst, a provocateur — and yes, a “shit disturber.”

Gogol understood this in spades and was applauded as a “realist” in the Russia of his day.”

While things “spin” out of control in the play, the stage itself will be spinning too! A revolve stage in the Roger Bishop Theatre space is put to great use to maximize the farcical elements of the play as the cast of 19 theatre students ride bicycles, skateboards, shopping carts and other modes of transportation across it — all carefully choreographed by Linda Hardy.

The set, designed by fourth-year student Delaney Tesch, recalls iconic Victoria landscapes, including streetscapes with flower-basketed lamp posts, ivy-walled buildings, upscale hotels, and bamboo-fenced gardens. Costumes, designed by students Barbara Clerihue and Hana Ruzesky-Basford, will make you feel like you’re standing on Fort and Douglas Streets, or on the corner in your neighbourhood. Hardy also incorporates the use of masks, created especially for the play by Laura Farn, to better represent all 35 different characters. Lighting by MFA design student Eryn Griffith takes you from parks, to hotel rooms and backyard parties, complemented by city soundscapes and original music by fourth-year student Christopher Green. Projections by third-year student Marites Frazer add to the set and lighting designs. Stage management is by fourth-year student Rebecca Marchand.

A long-time professor at the Department of Theatre, Linda Hardy is master teacher of acting and voice who has trained professional actors and singers for stage and film, nationally and internationally. She sees The Inspector as an excellent finale to the department’s 50th season, and a gift to the current students. “For me, the greatest joy is the chance to write roles for my actors, knowing their needs as young artists, and the needs of the play. To “tailor make” something that we all bring together makes for a rare collaboration and is a fitting end to the 50th Anniversary season.”

Everyone is welcome to join us for our free Preshow Lecture, Friday March 10 at 7pm with writer and director Linda Hardy discussing the creation of The Inspector. The Saturday matinee on March 18 will include sign language interpretation by Nigel Howard and Jen Ferris. Performances for The Inspector are as follows:

Public Previews @8pm: Tuesday and Wednesday, March 7 & 8 (limited seating)
Evenings @8pm: (Monday - Saturday) March 9 (opening), 10 (preshow lecture), 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18
Matinee @2pm: Saturday, March 18 with Sign language interpretation
Preshow Lecture @7pm: Friday, March 10 with Director Linda Hardy
Single Tickets: Weekdays & Matinee: $15 - $25, Weekend evenings: All seats $26 (Preview: $8.00 after 5pm)
Phoenix Box Office Opens: February 28 for sales in person, or over the phone at (250) 721-8000.
Open Monday through Saturday from 12:00 pm to 8:30 pm.