

Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Dramatic Publishing

My Man Godfrey

Comedy by Eric K. Hatch

"The difference
between a man and
a bum is a job."

—Godfrey

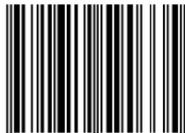
My Man Godfrey

Comedy by Eric K. Hatch

Dressed in yesterday's clothes, *My Man Godfrey* provides an evening of laughter at today's world.

Cast: 8 to 12m., 7 to 12w. In the depths of the Depression, Godfrey, a "forgotten man," is rescued from his packing-crate home by ditzy socialite Irene Bullock during the course of a scavenger hunt. Offered a job as butler to the banking family of Bullocks, Godfrey tolerates their eccentricities, alcoholism and general nuttiness. He brings order to the household and chaos to Irene's heart. Falsely accused by jealous sister Cornelia of stealing the famous Bullock Pearls ("de bullock boils" according to the detective on the case), Godfrey uses the opportunity to recover his personal finances—and, when the Bullocks finally crash, he rescues them by getting them all (gasp!) jobs in The Dump, a new nightclub Godfrey has built to provide work for his friends and for the Bullocks, too. Finally, Godfrey weds Irene, and it all works out in the end. First published as a serial in *Liberty* magazine, the story was later issued as a hugely successful novel, *My Man Godfrey*. Author Eric S. Hatch was summoned to Hollywood to write the screenplay for the famous 1936 screwball comedy, with help from Morrie Ryskind. The screenplay was nominated for an Academy Award. *Unit set, flexible staging. Approximate running time: 1 hour, 40 minutes. Code: MQ1.*

ISBN: 978-1-61959-033-5



9 781619 590335 >

www.dramaticpublishing.com



Dramatic Publishing

Your Source for Plays and Musicals Since 1885

311 Washington Street
Woodstock, IL 60098
800-448-7469

© The Dramatic Publishing Company

My Man Godfrey

Adapted for the stage by
ERIC K. HATCH

From the novel *My Man Godfrey* by Eric S. Hatch
and the screenplay by Eric S. Hatch and Morrie Ryskind.



Dramatic Publishing Company
Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: www.dramaticpublishing.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MMXV by
ERIC K. HATCH

A stage adaptation based upon the novel *My Man Godfrey*
written by Eric S. Hatch and on the screenplay *My Man Godfrey*
written by Eric S. Hatch and Morrie Ryskind.

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(MY MAN GODFREY)

ISBN: 978-1-61959-033-5

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”

My Man Godfrey

CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance.)

- *GODFREY PARKE: Of the Boston Parkes. A not-so-young man of normal build, smaller than Irene. He is Harvard educated but not a snob. He is decisive, quiet and intelligent, and throughout the play, a quiet sense of irony keeps him sane. Irene brings him out of his shell.
- *CORNELIA BULLOCK: Around 25 years old. Blond, slender, Park Avenue brat. Mean-spirited and spiteful.
- *FAITHFUL GEORGE: More cocker spaniel than husky. Faithful to a fault. In love with Cornelia.
- *IRENE BULLOCK: Around 22 years old. Cornelia's younger sister. Large, athletic and officially "the dumbest girl ever to come out at the Ritz." But she has a level of emotional intelligence that makes her more than just ditzy.
- *ALEXANDER BULLOCK: Around 50 years old. Growly and beset by financial and family worries. Owns the Hanoverian Bank, which is going under. Out of his depth at home and at the bank.
- MASTER OF CEREMONIES (MC): Trying to please his patrons and keep order in total chaos.
- *ANGELICA BULLOCK (MRS. BULLOCK): Mother of the Bullock herd. She is out of her depth and faking it as a society matron. Sees pixies in the morning. Is the "sponsor" of Carlo.

*CARLO: Angelica's "protégé," a European piano player faking it as an artistic, bankrupt member of the nobility. Just a guy on the make, an all-you-can-eat kind of man.

*MOLLY: Perky, chipper, sexy Irish maid. Instantly smitten with Godfrey.

HANSOME CABBIE: Irene has stolen his horse, and he's come to get it back.

PROCESS SERVER: A frequent visitor to the Bullocks' and not a social call.

*TOMMY GRAY: Friend of Godfrey from his former life. Famous polo player and stockbroker. Fell off his horse a time or two too often. Good guy.

VAN RUMPOLE: A none-too-pleasant SOCIALITE. Doesn't know he's been engaged to Irene. But it doesn't last.

DETECTIVE: Brooklyn bred. Comes in to investigate the theft of the famous "Bullock Boils" (pearls).

MAYOR LAGUARDIA: Marries Godfrey and Irene.

SOCIALITES and FORGOTTEN MEN: Minimum 3m, 3w. Men double as SOCIALITES and FORGOTTEN MEN and can double for the MC, PROCESS SERVER, DETECTIVE and MAYOR LAGUARDIA. Six to eight of each gender preferred.

* indicates lead role.

SETTING

Time: 1935-1936 (roughly a 15-month period)

SET DESCRIPTIONS

The following descriptions are recommendations only. A staircase is essential, but otherwise producers should feel free to adapt the sets to reflect the realities of stage size and budget.

1. 34th street dump, New York City. Night. Exterior.

Features: Brooklyn bridge in background, shanties (one in foreground), junk and a bush. This can be done with a drop or scrim or downstage before the curtain.

2. Waldorf-Ritz ballroom.

Features: A bar R, a desk or platform L where the MC and secretary take in “found objects” from the socialites.

3. Bullock’s home, 1011 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

Features: Huge, opulent living room, pantry R, street door L. Pantry has a half-wall separating it from the living room and has a rear door. The living room itself has traditional decor. The key feature is an L-shaped staircase with a landing. This leads to a second floor, which we do not have to see. The staircase and landing are critical. Furnishings include coffee table, sofa, chairs, side bar (for Godfrey to use to keep busy during certain scenes), coat/hat rack and a door to the street. A piano for Carlo to play (and to hold food for him to snatch) is a plus. If no piano is available, substitute with a guitar.

4. (Optional) Two bedrooms for Mrs. Bullock and Irene.

Features: As written, these are offstage, with the action heard but not seen. If preferred, they can be represented using isolations by a bed with quick-change linens and pillows, with blackouts between Godfrey's tray-carrying forays to meet the Bullock women.

5. Dump. Exterior. Day.

Features: Same dump as Scene 1, only daytime.

6. Dump, updated. Exterior. Night.

Features: The bridge is there, but a modern façade with a door and a lighted sign proclaim "The Dump" restaurant and nightclub. The junk is gone.

7. "The Dump," interior. A restaurant/nightclub.

Features: Hat-check R, dining area with piano C, office L. Piano, tables, chairs, jazz-age and classy.

PRODUCTION NOTES

This stage adaptation is written for fully realized sets. However, the play actually succeeds with no sets at all, provided some narration is inserted to keep track of time and place. Shortened versions of the work were produced as a radio drama in 1938 and again as a reader's theatre in 2014.

Accordingly, producers should feel free to modify sets. Representational sets, isolations, projections, scrims—all are welcome. What's important is to keep the look and feel of two things: upscale, frivolous New York and impoverished, unemployed New York in 1936. There are one or two points in the script where alternative stagings are suggested for theatres with limited resources, but again, these are suggestions, not requirements.

Carlo's gorilla act (Act II, Scene 1) is a show-stopper. Allow it at least two minutes, during which Carlo swarms all over the set, tries to swing from curtains (if there are any), hangs from the staircase, does everything but throw feces. Apes gone wild! See how Mischa Auer did it in the original movie. Even in the staged reading, this brought down the house.

Cast size is another area wherein flexibility is designed. There are nine leads: 5 men and 4 women, plus a number of minor players. The minimum cast is 15, and you might even be able to squeak by with 13, given enough doubling. The maximum is what your stage will hold.

High-school producers may get more mileage out of the play by linking it to a history or American studies curriculum segment on the Great Depression. A website full of photos, narrative, news clips and the experiences of parents and

grandparents lets students become involved on many levels and increases appreciation of the serious issues underpinning the screwball comedy.

In the end, *My Man Godfrey* is a hilarious comedy about real issues: self-worth, economic survival, purpose in life and the vital role jobs can play in each of these. Godfrey Parke is, finally, a job creator. As he says, “A job is the difference between a gentleman and a bum.”

Scene 5

(Living room, near the pantry. GODFREY enters from the staircase leaving BULLOCK's bedroom. MOLLY is holding another tray.)

MOLLY. I put your hat and bag at the foot of the stairs, so you can go right out the front. It's quickest that way.

GODFREY. I think I won the first round!

MOLLY. So you're still working here?

GODFREY. I haven't heard anything to the contrary.

MOLLY. Well, you just got by the cub. Try the lioness

GODFREY. Oh? Which one is she?

MOLLY. Her name's Cornelia. She's a sweet-tempered little number.

GODFREY. I met her last night.

MOLLY. You've got a treat coming. You never met her in the morning. First door on the right.

(GODFREY enters CORNELIA's bedroom, carrying the tray. The door closes behind him. Suddenly there's a terrific racket of things being thrown.)

CORNELIA(*offstage*). Get out! You won't ever come in here again if you know what's good for you! Out! Out! Go!

(GODFREY reappears without the tray.)

GODFREY. I'm afraid I lost the second round.

IRENE (*off*). Hoy, Molly! Cut out all the noise and bring me some breakfast, OK?

MOLLY. Opportunity never stops knocking. Ready for round three?

GODFREY. And how is she in the mornings?

MOLLY. Not as violent, but she's more insidious.

GODFREY. OK. I'll have a go.

MOLLY (*handing him a third tray*). Second on the right. I'll leave your things right where they are so you won't forget them.