

PERUSAL SCRIPT



A **C**hristmas
Carol
a play
adapted by **R. Rex S**tephenson

From Dicken's classic



Newport, Maine

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A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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CAST

In order of appearance
6m 8f 4children

Worker 1 — Bob Cratchit, London Citizen
Mr. Hodgson — Worker, Dick, Spirit 3
Mayor — Nephew, Marley, Merchant Man
Wife — Housekeeper
Mrs. Jackson — Spirit 2, London Criminal
Charles Dickens — Ebenezer Scrooge
Mrs. Adams — Niece
Mrs. Theodorou — Spirit 1, London Citizen
Miss Carpenter — Donation Lady, Belle, Martha Cratchit
Mrs. Wickam — Margaret Lowenfeld, London Citizen
Young Man — Young Scrooge (Can be played by Worker 1, if needed)
Caldwell Cook — Mr. Fezziwig, London Citizen, Debtor Husband
Mrs. Cook — Mrs. Fezziwig, Debtor Wife
Mrs. Tyler — London Criminal
Cratchit Children
 Alison — Patricia — also plays Fan
 Sarah — Belinda
 Juliet — Ruthie
 Boy — Tiny Tim — also plays Boy Scrooge

**additional carolers, dancers, Christmas party guests, and miners possible*

Time: Mid-Nineteenth Century

Place: Rochester, England

ABOUT THE PLAY

A Christmas Carol may be performed by junior and senior high school students or by all adults, or by a blend of adult actors and young people. Anywhere from 18 to 44 people populate the play, depending on the director's desires or the size of the stage. If there is a shortage of men available, you can do the play with as few as 6 male characters; however, if more men are available, you could use up to 14 males.

Incorporated in the play is much factual material about Charles Dickens and this period in England. Tina Hanlon, Associate Professor of English at Ferrum College, visited Rochester and did much research to assist me in the creation of this play.

The key to making *A Christmas Carol* successful is the style in which it is presented. We need to see the enthusiasm and sincerity in the women of Rochester to create a meaningful Christmas play.

The play runs about an hour and thirty minutes.

The Set

The set is a rather simple one: tables, chairs, and a fireplace. These are simply set pieces that can be struck when needed and reset by the actors in the company. The fireplace can be utilized in a very theatrical way. By using a remote-control gas fireplace, the amount of flame can be controlled to reinforce the warmth or coldness of a particular scene. However, if this seems impractical, any other stage fireplace can be used. The only other piece of scenery is the large drop that is described in the opening of the play. Props are simple and there are not very many of them.

Characters

The characters are dressed in early Victorian costumes, and when they portray another character, an apron, shawl, or cloak is added. Since we always want to know, for example, that the Mayor is portraying the Nephew or that Mrs. Stevens is portraying Mrs. Cratchit, a complete costume change would seem to defeat the purpose of the piece.

Properties

Bob Cratchit – table & chair

Cratchit family – large table, four chairs, coat rack, cider & glasses

Laundress – pipe

Marley -- chair, chains, padlocks & keys

Merchant – chalk & candle

Mrs. Cratchit – ribbons

Mrs. Jackson – cloak

Scrooge – table, chair, coat rack; candles & broom

Spirit 2 – cane

Wife – script

Other Props

Banner

Rope

Lanterns

Holly

Box for smoking device
Hand bells
Christmas tree
Table of food
Blindfold
Tombstone
Bag of coins

A Christmas Carol adapted by R. Rex Stephenson 6m 8f 4children. Unit Setting. Elizabethan Costumes. (For Community, College/University, High School and Junior High School, Youth Groups, Community and Church groups.) About 90 minutes. Undoubtedly Dickens' most famous story, and most often adapted for the stage and screen with hundreds of adaptations available, both play and musical versions, this lively adaptation is quickly becoming a favorite due, in part, to the unique casting available of 8 women and only 6 men. The familiar story is there, but told in a way that allows for a female-heavy cast. The play takes place in a theatre in Rochester, England. Dickens has been called upon by the citizens of the community to write an adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* for the stage. To the surprise of everyone in town, Dickens not only intends to write the adaptation, but to star in it and direct it. On the other hand, Dickens is in for a surprise himself, because most of the men in the town are too busy with Christmas arrangements to participate in the play. It seems as though the play will have to be cancelled when a group of the ladies persuades Dickens to allow them to fill the roles that their husbands were to play. **ORDER #3329**

R. Rex Stephenson earned his Bachelor's degree in middle and secondary education at Ball State University. Upon graduation, Stephenson taught at Bayshore Middle School in Florida and Redkey High School in Indiana. He received his M.A. from Indiana State University in theatre and later accepted a position as drama professor at Ferrum College in Virginia. In 1984, he received his Ph.D. in educational theatre at New York University. Stephenson has had 13 plays for children and adults published: *The Jack Tales*, *The Liberated Cinderella*, *Treasure Island*, *Galileo: Man of Science*, *The Jungle Book*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Connecticut Yankee*, and *Glorious Son of York*. Stephenson has been a winner in two major playwriting contests: The American Alliance for Theatre and Education 1995 for *Too Free For Me* (Published by Encore), and he was awarded the IUPUI National Youth Theatre Playwriting Competition "Excellence in Playwriting" for *Jack's Adventures with the King's Girl*. In 1996, he received an Appalachian College Association, "Faculty Research Fellowship," to research and write *The World is My Parish*, a drama about the life of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. Stephenson lives in Ferrum, Virginia and he has three daughters, Janice, Jessica, and Juliet.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

[The LIGHTS come up on TWO WORKMEN trying to raise a banner. We only see half the banner, which says, in large letters, “Charles Dickens’ ‘A Christmas Carol’.” They are struggling with this and chatting back and forth.]

WORKER 1: Your side is too high.

HODGSON: I know. But it’s too much for to do alone. Where are the other people that are supposed to help us?

WORKER1: They promised to be here. I talked to Sam just an hour ago.

HODGSON: I don’t have much faith in Sam.

WORKER 1: Unless some others come, we’ll never get this up.

[When the lights are up full, the MAYOR enters from the back of the house.]

MAYOR: That should have already been up. We are way behind schedule, and Mr. Dickens will be here any moment.

WORKER 1: Mr. Mayor, with all due respect, we are the only two that are here working.

HODGSON: Yes, I understood that Sam and George and Robert were all supposed to help us.

MAYOR: They were.

[He crosses to them.]

Now what about the tables, the chairs, and costumes that we promised Mr. Dickens?

HODGSON: That wasn’t our job.

MAYOR: You mean they are not here.

[He exits right.]

WORKER 1: Mr. Mayor, will you please help us with this drop?

MAYOR: *[calling from off stage]* I think most of the furniture is here, but I don’t see the device to make smoke.

WIFE: *[enters from back of house.]* The drop is not straight.

HODGSON: Yes Ma’am, we know.

WIFE: And where is my husband, the mayor?

[She comes down to the stage.]

He left a quarter of an hour before I did.

HODGSON: He went off looking for the smoking device.

WIFE: Well, it’s not straight, and it is much too low.

[MAYOR enters.]

MAYOR: I couldn’t find it anywhere.

[He notices his wife.]

Oh wife, I am glad you finally arrived. A thousand things need to be attended to before Mr. Dickens arrives, and there is no one here to help.

WIFE: *[crosses to him]* Are you aware, Mr. Mayor, that the drop isn’t straight and is much too low?

MAYOR: Yes, Sarah, we are all aware.

WORKERS: Quite.

WIFE: All I am saying is that it had better be in place before Mr. Dickens arrives. I mean, what other city in England could have our country's most famous author lend his story for a dramatization?

MAYOR: I know. We should be quite thankful that we came up with the idea.

WIFE: That who came up with the idea, Mr. Mayor?

MAYOR: That you, Sarah, came up with the idea to put on this dramatization so that we could improve our community spirit and restore an old-fashioned Christmas to our small city of Rochester.

WIFE: To put our city on the map of England: London, Liverpool, and now Rochester.

MAYOR: Yes, dear.

HODGSON: I just hope you know what you have bargained for.

MAYOR: Whatever do you mean, Mr. Hodgson?

HODGSON: Help us with the drop and you will see what we mean.

[From the back of the house MRS. JACKSON enters; she brushes snow off her coat.]

JACKSON: Brrr. It is cold outside. Good after noon to you, Mr. and Mrs. Mayor.

[She walks down the aisle.]

You know that drop isn't straight nor nearly high enough.

WIFE: I have been telling them that myself.

MAYOR: Well, maybe if we all lend a hand we can get it adjusted properly.

WORKER 1: Yes, that would be a wonderful idea.

MAYOR: Then lets us all be to it. Mrs. Jackson, why don't you be our guide?

[MAYOR and WIFE cross over to get hold of the rope.]

What did you mean about having Mr. Dickens help us with our play? What was it that you said, "More than we bargained for?"

HODGSON: You'll see, soon enough.

[As they raise the drop the rest of it is revealed "Adapted by Charles Dickens, Directed by Charles Dickens, and Starring Charles Dickens as Ebenezer Scrooge." (And in smaller letters) "With the townfolke of Rochester portraying all the other characters."]

JACKSON: *[After BANNER is finally raised.]* Yes, I see how there could be a problem.

MAYOR: Yes, there could be a problem.

WIFE: Don't look at me. I mean, who could have imagined that the man would have wanted to ...

[From the back of the house, DICKENS enters.]

DICKENS: It's wonderful! It's just as I imagined.

[He comes down the aisle.]

Don't you agree, Mr. Mayor?

MAYOR: Yes, Mr. Dickens, it is even better than we imagined.

DICKENS: Well, be about your arrangements. I just want to stand here and admire this wonderful drop. Mrs. Mayor, would you mind telling the rest of the cast and workers that they can assemble on the stage, so I can have a bit of pre-rehearsal chat.

WIFE: The truth is, Mr. Dickens . . . Mr. Mayor, maybe you should explain to Mr. Dickens.

MAYOR: Well, Mr. Dickens . . .

[MRS. ADAMS enters from stage left.]

ADAMS: Herbert sent the smoking device. I will need a couple of hands to fetch it in.

DICKENS: Oh, good, good. And where is Mr. Adams? He is my Marley, you know.

ADAMS: Um. Mr. Dickens, Mr. Adams . . .

[MRS. STEVENS enters stage right.]

STEVENS: I've got the chains, the lanterns, and scads of holly.

DICKENS: Good. Mrs. Stevens, tell Mr. Stevens to bring it right on. Things are coming together so nicely.

STEVENS: Lord Mayor, maybe I should talk to you about something.

ADAMS: And I think I should, too.

WORKER 1: I predict there is trouble brewing. Let's get the smoke device.

HODGSON: Yes, and then I need to be off to work far away from this opera house.

[They exit stage left.]

MAYOR: Ladies, there is too much to do to talk now. Are your husbands backstage?

DICKENS: Yes, bring on my Marley; bring on my Bob Cratchit. I love that drop. Don't you love it, Mrs. Stevens?

ADAMS: Well, Mr. Dickens . . .

STEVENS: The truth is . . .

ADAMS: I didn't mean to interrupt. You go first.

STEVENS: I would rather not.

WIFE: Ladies, do tell us, where are you husbands?

ADAMS & STEVENS: They are not coming.

[STAGEHANDS enter with the smoking device in a box.]

DICKENS: *[jumps up on the stage]* What do you mean they are not coming? You mean they are delayed? I mean they can be delayed, but they can't be not coming.

MAYOR: Yes, what do you mean they are not coming?

WORKER 1: I know what they mean when they say they are not coming, and that is why I say we best be going.

[They start to exit.]

MAYOR: *[crosses to workers]* Stay exactly where you are, both of you.

ADAMS: My husband doesn't have time to leave his shop. It is so busy at Christmas.

STEVENS: I am sure Mrs. Adams will join me in saying that we have heard from a number of wives. I mean, we do have to admit that Christmas is a very busy time of the year.

STEVENS: Mine, too. And I am afraid, I mean, some of the other wives have said . . .

DICKENS: Oh, this can't get down our spirit. We still have Mr. Wilson, Mr. Arnold and Stanley Thornes.

WIFE: What were you about to say, Mrs. Stevens?

STEVENS: I am sure Mrs. Adams will join me in saying that we have heard from a number of wives. I mean, we do have to admit that Christmas is a very busy time of the year.

DICKENS: *[moves to Mrs. Stevens.]* Madam, what are you babbling about?

MAYOR: Yes, madam, don't hold us in suspense. If you know something . . .

[MISS CARPENTER and MRS. THEODOROU enters from the back of the house.]

THEODOROU: *[announcing]* We have arrived, script in hand. Miss Carpenter is shepherding some children, who will, we hope, join us quickly.

CARPENTER: *[Yelling form off stage]* Stop that, all of you. Yes. Ha ha ha.
[She enters.]

They seem to have fallen into a snowball fight in the village square.

[The LADIES move down the aisle.]

THEODOROU: Mr. Dickens, I have the part all learned. I can't wait to say my first line

[Lowering her voice dramatically]

I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

[They have arrived on stage. OTHER LADIES applaud. She turns to them.]

Thank you, thank you. What did you think, Mr. Dickens?

DICKENS: Madam, uh, I may need to humbly beg your pardon. It was your husband that was to play the Ghost of Christmas Past.

THEODOROU: Change of plans.

CARPENTER & JACKSON: Yes, change of plans.

MAYOR: *[looks to WIFE]* What does she mean change of plans?

WIFE: How should I know?

THEODOROU: *[ignores others & crosses to Dickens]* I will do it for you again. "I am the Ghost of Christmas Past."

WORKER 1: We really need to be going.

[The WORKERS again start to leave, but come straight upon DICKENS, who stares them down. They stop dead in their tracks. DICKENS points to a bench. They sit, after a couple of beats of silence.]

JACKSON: Mr. Dickens, would you like Mrs. Theodorou to say more of the lines?

[DICKENS doesn't respond.]

Yes, well, probably not.

[DICKENS crosses the stage; when he gets all the way across, he turns.]

DICKENS: So, if I understand this situation correctly, none of your husbands will be in the play, that you have been sent, as it were, to fill in.

THEODOROU: Isn't it exciting?

DICKENS: No, it is not exciting. Back on Guy Fawkes Day, you, my Lord Mayor, and most of your leading citizens, who now seem to be absent, asked me if I would write an adaptation of my book, *A Christmas Carol*, and direct it. Which, with some reservation, I agreed to do. The reservations had nothing to do with my ability. In my early days, I used to write for the stage. I was an actor of some repute, if I do say so myself. An actor who, among his notable engagements, twice performed at the request of Queen Victoria herself.

[The LADIES are impressed.]

MAYOR: Mr. Dickens, if I might interject?

STEVENS: No, you may not. I have given myself to do this performance and all the gentlemen that were so eager to help me have now vanished because of business. Is that not correct? Profit has again displaced the Christmas spirit.

STEVENS: Yes, Mr. Dickens, that is correct. But we have learned all of our husbands' parts. Haven't we, ladies?

[All LADIES improv "Yes." "Certainly." "Word for word."]

DICKENS: *[crosses and sits on front of stage, his back to them]* Bah. Humbug!

MAYOR: I think Mr. Dickens is correct that without the gentlemen of our city, the play certainly cannot go on. So, I thank you all for coming and I will have bills printed tomorrow, announcing the demise of *A Christmas Carol*. But let's all give Mr. Dickens a rousing cheer for all the work he has done.

WIFE: Mayor, why can't it go on?

MAYOR: *[patronizing]* Dear, the script calls for an abundance of men. I mean, we couldn't have a Mrs. Ebenezer Scrooge, now could we?

WIFE: Harold, we already have an Ebenezer Scrooge. That is Mr. Dickens. What does it matter if the Ghost of Christmas Past is male or female?

[WOMEN all agree, improv lines, "Why can't women play these roles?" and "I can do it better than my husband," etc.]

MAYOR: *[interrupting]* Because Mr. Dickens wrote them for men.

[He crosses to Dickens.]

Isn't that true, Mr. Dickens? Who would be afraid of female ghosts? Ha Ha Ha!

[No one laughs with him.]

WIFE: I think, Harold, you have said quite enough on this matter.

MAYOR: Dear?

WIFE: Dear!

DICKENS: *[to himself]* Why would the ghosts have to be males?

[To the MAYOR.]

Yes, Mr. Mayor, why would the ghosts . . .

MAYOR: Mr. Dickens, you are not considering?

DICKENS: Don't tell me what I am not considering.

THEODOROU: *[moves towards him]* Then are you considering letting the play go on, Mr. Dickens?

DICKENS: It *will* go on.

MAYOR: We don't have any males. Who is going to be Bob Cratchit, and Marley and Mr. Fezziwig?

STEVENS: Fezziwig is not a problem. Caldwell Cook will play that part. He and his wife are coming.

MAYOR: But we would have to have at least three males.

[Everyone looks at the Mayor and the two WORKERS.]

WORKER 1: Oh, no. I volunteered to be a stagehand.

HODGSON: I have pressing business.

MAYOR: And you can't expect a man of my position . . .

DICKENS: *[to MAYOR'S WIFE]* A perfect Nephew Fred, don't you think?

WIFE: Yes, I think he is up to the challenge.

DICKENS: Then it is a go. Yes, it is a go!

JACKSON: And there are more coming, Mr. Dickens. Although I am afraid they are mostly female.

DICKENS: We will persevere. I, who rose from the ranks of poverty to be the foremost literary figure in the English-speaking world, will direct this version of *A Christmas Carol* that will cause all your husbands to be ashamed that they lack the Christmas spirit. So, let us begin. Set up Scrooge's office.

[Pointing to WORKER 1. Narrative]

Marley was dead, to begin with.

[LIGHTS dim slightly.]

There is no doubt whatever about that. Yes, old Marley was a dead as a doornail. Did Scrooge know he was dead? Of course, he did. How could it be otherwise? This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of this story I am going to relate. You see, Marley and Scrooge were business partners. Actually, Scrooge was his sole friend and his sole mourner at the funeral.

[By now the FURNITURE has all been set up; a table and a chair Stage right for Cratchit and Stage Left a table, chair and coat rack for Scrooge. SCROOGE crosses back to his table. MAYOR'S WIFE crosses to table.]

WIFE: *[from behind Scrooge in narrative]* This is Ebenezer Scrooge, a squeezing, grasping, scraping, hard as flint skinflint. A man that no warmth could warm, nor wintry weather chill.

THEODOROU: *[enters and begins narrative]* It was the 24th of December.

[SFX: Three CHIMES ring.]

At three o'clock.

[MAYOR enters and becomes the nephew; WORKER 1 becomes CRATCHIT; he sits at table.]

NEPHEW: A Merry Christmas, Bob.

CRATCHIT: *[rises and shakes Nephew's hand]* A Merry Christmas to you, sir.

NEPHEW: Is my uncle in?

CRATCHIT: Aye, sir. Where else would he be?

NEPHEW: It is freezing in here, man. Let me add some more coals to the fire.

[He starts toward fireplace.]

CRATCHIT: I don't think Mr. Scrooge would approve, sir.

NEPHEW: Oh, surely he can spare a few shillings for coals. Especially on a Christmas Eve.

[As he crosses to the coal bin, Scrooge pops out.]

SCROOGE: Who is here? What is that racket?

NEPHEW: God save you, Uncle. A Merry Christmas.

SCROOGE: Bah. Humbug!! And get away from that coal, Fred.

NEPHEW: Christmas a Humbug, Uncle? You don't mean that, I am sure.

SCROOGE: I do, and stay away from that coal bin, Fred.

NEPHEW: But it is freezing in here, Uncle.

SCROOGE: I'm not cold.

[He moves toward him.]

Are you cold, Bob Cratchit?

CRATCHIT: Well, to be quite honest, sir . . .

SCROOGE: You see, Nephew, he is not cold.

[He moves back to his office; NEPHEW follows.]

So why have you bothered me?

NEPHEW: To wish you a Merry Christmas, and to invite you to come dine with us on Christmas day.

SCROOGE: Every idiot that goes about with Merry Christmas on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart.

NEPHEW: Surely Uncle, you don't mean it.

SCROOGE: Nephew, keep Christmas in your own way, and let ME keep it in mine.

NEPHEW: But you don't keep it. It is, my dear Uncle the one time of the year when we seem to think of each other. It is a time for charity and forgiving, when we open our hearts freely to those that have the misfortune of poverty, and I say God bless it.

CRATCHIT: Amen, I say it. Amen to that.

[SCROOGE crosses to his desk.]

SCROOGE: Let me hear another sound from you, Bob Cratchit, and you will keep Christmas by losing your situation. And as for you, my young nephew, I should think, with a silver tongue such as you have, you would go into Parliament.

NEPHEW: Don't be angry. Come dine with us tomorrow.

SCROOGE: Bah. Humbug! I will not make merry with you or your giddy wife tomorrow or any day.

[He goes back to working.]

NEPHEW: Why can't we be friends?

SCROOGE: Good afternoon.

NEPHEW: Please share Christmas with us.

SCROOGE: Good afternoon.

[After a brief pause the NEPHEW crosses to CRATCHIT's desk.]

NEPHEW: So, I assume, Mr. Cratchit, that my uncle won't be celebrating Christmas with me.

CRATCHIT: That, I think, is quite correct.

SCROOGE: *[from the other room]* Don't be bothering Cratchit. He has work to do. You have taken up the time of two hard working Englishmen. Now be off with you and spread your Christmas cheer elsewhere.

NEPHEW: Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, Uncle.

[Bob Cratchit gets up and pantomimes letting him out the door.]

CRATCHIT: *[whispering]* A Merry Christmas to you, sir.

NEPHEW: And to you too, sir. How you can bear . . .

SCROOGE: Cratchit! To work with you.

[DICKENS drops out of character.]

Oh, wait! Now we have a problem.

MAYOR: *[enters]* I think that went rather nicely, don't you? Now I have some city business to attend to.

[He starts to exit.]

Break a leg, all of you. Isn't that what they say in the theatre business?

WIFE: *[enters]* I think, my dear husband, your services are needed backstage. Now.

[MAYOR goes backstage.]

And there is no problem, Mr. Dickens. I have everything under control.

THEODOROU: *[enters, begins narrative]* In letting Scrooge's nephew out, Bob Cratchit had let two ladies in.
[MRS. STEVENS and MRS. CARPENTER enter.]

DICKENS: Oh, very good.

[He becomes Scrooge again.]

WIFE: Thank you, Mr. Dickens.

[She exits.]

THEODOROU: They were lovely middle age women, pleasant to behold. They stood with books and papers in their hand.

CARPENTER: Scrooge and Marley, I believe.

[Talking to Cratchit and Scrooge]

Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE: Mr. Marley has been dead the seven years. He died seven years ago this very night.

[He returns to his table.]

STEVENS: *[both ladies follow]* Sorry to hear that.

CARPENTER: At this festive season there are many thousands in want of the common necessities.

STEVENS: Yes, hundreds of thousands.

SCROOGE: Are there no prisons?

CARPENTER: Yes, plenty of prisons.

STEVENS: Too many, I fear.

SCROOGE: And are not the poor laws still in effect? Are not the workhouses open?

CARPENTER: Both very busy.

STEVENS: Yes, too busy, I am afraid.

SCROOGE: I am very glad to hear it.

CARPENTER: We were hoping, sir, that in your generosity, you might donate some money to help these poor unfortunate souls.

STEVENS: *[crosses behind desk]* What shall we put you down for?

SCROOGE: Nothing.

STEVENS: You wish to remain anonymous?

SCROOGE: I wish to be left alone. I don't make merry at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry. Besides, there are prisons and workhouses, as you just admitted yourselves.

CARPENTER: But many can't go there. And many would rather die.

STEVENS: Yes, they would rather die.

SCROOGE: Well, they had better do it and decrease the surplus population. Good afternoon, ladies.

WIFE: *[narrative]* The ladies, seeing that it would be useless to pursue the point, withdrew.

[LADIES exit;

SFX: BELL rings five times.]

The hour of shutting up the counting house had finally arrived.

[SCROOGE crosses to CRATCHIT.]

SCROOGE: You'll be wanting Christmas off, I suppose.

CRATCHIT: If it is convenient, sir?

SCROOGE: It's not convenient, and it is not fair. You expect me to pay you a full day's wages for no work.

CRATCHIT: It comes only once a year, sir.

SCROOGE: Some excuse for picking a man's pocket. But if you must have the whole day, be here very early on the 26th.

CRATCHIT: That I will, sir, and a Merry...

[SCROOGE looks at him so scornfully that CRATCHIT thinks better of it.]

...uh, afternoon

[SCROOGE puts on cloak and hat; CRATCHIT exits.]

WIFE: *[narrative]* The cold became intense.

[When this starts all the furniture is struck. SINGERS move forward with torches and lanterns; LIGHTS dim.]

A piercing, biting cold.

THEODOROU: *[enters during narrative]* And foggy. A fog that thickened, so that while it was still light, one could not see without torches.

WIFE: *[narrative]* Scrooge made his way home. The brightness of the shops and glorious pageant that was Christmas only gave rise to a single phrase from the miser.

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug!

[CAROLERS sing "God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen." During song, SCROOGE'S HOUSE is set up behind them: two chairs and a table with a candle on it.]

THEODOROU: *[narrative]* The dark of the night did not bother Scrooge. Darkness is cheap and Scrooge like it. He lit but one candle to guide him through the house. A house that had once belonged to Marley.

[SCROOGE drops out of character.]

DICKENS: I think we must stop here and regroup.

WIFE: No, I have it all under control. There is a man ideal for having chains wrapped around his neck.

[CARPENTER enters.]

DICKENS: But we have no . . .

CARPENTER: *[interrupting]* Sarah has it all taken care of. There is one man in this town that must do her bidding. I'll get the children.

DICKENS: Yes, good. Capital! Now, where are we? I have lost my place.

HODGSON: *[enters with hand bells]* The bells.

ADAMS: *[enters with hand bells; narrative]* A lone bell began to ring. So softly it scarcely made a sound.

[DICKENS becomes Scrooge again.]

SCROOGE: A bell at this hour?

ADAMS: *[narrative]* But soon the lone bell was joined by every bell, both inside and outside the house.

[SFX: Great BELL ringing.]

CARPENTER: *[narrative]* The bells ceased. And there was a moment of silence, penetrating silence. The kind one feels when the worst is expected.

[From offstage there comes a clanking noise.]

ADAMS: And now the sound of chains, heavy chains...

[SFX: CHAINS]

...coming up the staircase, ever closer to Scrooge's bedroom.

SCROOGE: If I was an impetuous young man, with wild emotions, I might think this some ghost in a haunted house. Humbug! I won't believe it.

[There comes a great BLAST OF FOG.]

[SFX: BELLS ring, and as it dies away we see MARLEY, portrayed by the Mayor, covered with chains and padlocks and keys. There is a pause.]

What . . . what, I say, do you want with me?

MARLEY: *[moves very slowly towards center]* Much.

SCROOGE: Who are you?

MARLEY: Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE: Who were you, then?

MARLEY: In life I was Jacob Marley.

[SCROOGE looks at him curiously, backs away a couple steps]

MARLEY: You don't believe me.

SCROOGE: I don't. It's Humbug, I tell you. Humbug!

MARLEY: Come. Come, and touch my hand.

[SCROOGE does so]

SCROOGE: It's cold. *[He backs away]* It's ice. Dreadful apparition, trouble me not.

MARLEY: Then you believe in me.

SCROOGE: I do. But why do you come to me? I did you no harm in life.

MARLEY: It is required of every man...

[As he talks he moves slowly about the stage.]

...that if his spirit does not go forth and give friendship and happiness and improve the lot of all mankind, if he does none of these things, then he is condemned after death to wander the world.

SCROOGE: But why the chains, the locks?

MARLEY: I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link.

SCROOGE: Jacob. Poor Jacob. You have wandered seven years, bearing this iron cable?

[SFX: CHAINS rattle again as MARLEY walks.]

Speak, Jacob.

MARLEY: I cannot rest. I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our place of business. No rest. No peace. Incessant remorse.

SCROOGE: But you were always a good man of business, Jacob.

MARLEY: Business? Mankind should have been my business. Charity, mercy, benevolence. Those should have been my business.

SCROOGE: But Jacob . . .

MARLEY: *[interrupting]* At this time of year, I suffer most. Why did I walk past carolers and never gave a thought of listening to their inspirational songs? Made my eye blind to those whose suffering was so great?

[SCROOGE starts to walk away.]

Hear me! My time is nearly gone.

SCROOGE: I will. But tell me, why have you appeared to me on this eve?

MARLEY: I am not allowed to say, but I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day. And sat sleepless in this chair...

[Points to chair in Scrooge's bedroom]

...during many nights these last seven years.

STEVENS: *[enters, begins narrative]* This was not an agreeable idea to Scrooge.

[SCROOGE moves away from the chair.]

And his mind said . . .

SCROOGE: Be gone and trouble me no more, Marley.

STEVENS: But his heart—his heart yearned to know the reason for the unexpected visit.

[She exits.]

MARLEY: I am here to warn you. You have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate.

SCROOGE: You were always a good friend. Tell me. Tell me quickly. Then you can leave. Yes?

MARLEY: Three Spirits will haunt you.

SCROOGE: I think I'd rather not.

MARLEY: Without their visits you cannot hope to escape my fate. Expect the first spirit when the bell tolls one.

SCROOGE: Couldn't they all "appear" at once and have it over, Jacob?

[MARLEY moves towards his entrance area.]

MARLEY: Expect the second spirit the following night at the same strike of the bell.

[SCROOGE raises his head as if to stop him, but Marley goes on.]

And on the third evening of the last stroke of twelve.

THEODOROU: *[enters, begins narrative]* The pervasive fog that had so consumed the night appeared again...

[BLAST OF FOG]

...and Jacob Marley disappeared into it. Scrooge followed but the incoherent sounds...

[Offstage NOISE]

...of lamentation and regret, of sorrow filled the room.

[When Marley is gone the SOUNDS stop.]

WIFE: *[enters in narrative]* And Scrooge, unable to comprehend all that had happened, fell asleep in the chair that Marley had so often inhabited.

DICKENS: *[SCROOGE drops out of character.]* We've done it. Excellent representation, Mr. Mayor.

MAYOR: Really?

[OTHERS are helping him out of his costume.]

Was I scary enough? Not too much of the old chain rattling, eh?

DICKENS: Yes, quite. Wouldn't you agree, ladies

[LADIES improv "Very well done," "Excellent," "John Phillip Kemble couldn't have done better," etc.]

DICKENS: Now on to Part Two. Someone needs to get the children and are Caldwell Cook and his wife here yet?

WICKAM: *[enters and comes down the aisle]* I'm here. I bring news from the schoolmaster, Mr. Cook.

DICKENS: Be out with it. He promised to portray Fezziwig. We are almost to his part now.

WICKAM: Yes. Quite right. He and his wife were delayed. He had to discipline an unruly boy.

WIFE: Mot to worry. Let's get on with this part and I'll get them into their costumes and cue them on their words, and push them on the stage at the proper time, if need be.

ADAMS: Then are we ready to begin again?

DICKENS: But Mr. Theodorou isn't here. He was supposed to enact the first Spirit.

THEODOROU: *[from off stage]* I'm almost ready.

DICKENS: *[starts to protest]* But . . .

WIFE: Yes, I've arranged everything. Let us begin, Mr. Mayor.

[LADIES exit; MAYOR in narrative; DICKENS becomes Scrooge again and sits in chair.]

MAYOR: When Scrooge awoke it was dark. His meager fire was extinguished, and he had no sense of time. The bell rang.

[SFX: BELLS-12 times]

SCROOGE: This cannot be. It was past two when Marley departed. Could I have slept one entire day and night away?

MAYOR: Marley's ghost bothered him exceedingly. He had slept, but now sleep would not come. "Was it a dream or not?" That question, like the nagging pain of an infected tooth, would not leave his thoughts.

[SFX: BELL sounds once and there is a pause.]

SCROOGE: The hour itself and nothing.

[He leaps from the chair and searches the room.]

Nothing. No Marley, no Spirit.

[Triumphantly]

It was a dream!

[The FIRE in the fireplace comes full, revealing Mrs. Theodorou as a spirit.]

Are you the Spirit whose coming was foretold to me?

SPIRIT 1: *[softly]* I am.

SCROOGE: Who and what are you?

SPIRIT 1: I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE: Long past?

SPIRIT 1: No, your past.

SCROOGE: And may I be so bold—and please be assured that I mean no harm—what business brings you here?

SPIRIT 1: Your welfare! Rise and come with me.

SCROOGE: But I am mortal. Let me dress warmly, for by thermometer it must be well below freezing.

SPIRIT 1: Touch my hand now, for our time is short.

JACKSON: *[enters, begins narrative]* And as these words were spoken, the room grew black and a great wind engulfed them, and...

[The STAGE becomes dark except for a LIGHT on Jackson;

SFX: GREAT WIND.]

...conveyed Scrooge and the Spirit to a ramshackle warehouse where blacking pots were labeled.

[LIGHTS, up slowly, revealing a dirty boy on a bench, far left stage.]

WIFE: *[enters and stands beside the boy; in narrative]* The boy had been placed there when his father was sent to debtor's prison. Long 14-hour days had brought an abrupt end to a happy childhood and this mere boy, for 6 shillings a week, became nothing more than a little laboring hind. Alone in a world that cared little for the misfortunes of others.

SCROOGE: That is me.

[He crosses to the boy.]

Oh, my poor forgotten self! A boy forced to live in a blacking factory.

[He sits by the boy.]

Alone. So alone.

SPIRIT 1: The factory is deserted.

[She follows.]

It is Christmas day.

SCROOGE: I had no place to go. So alone. But when . . . yes, I'm sure of it.

SPIRIT 1: *[interrupting]* Silence.

FAN: *[enters and crosses to boy]* Brother, dear brother. I have come to bring you home.

BOY SCR: Home? We have no home.

FAN: Yes. Yes, we do. And I am to take you to our new home.

BOY SCR: Fan, this is my home now.

FAN: No. No. Father is out of debtor's prison and has secured a place to live. A home, Ebenezer. A home!

BOY SCR: I get to come home for Christmas day?

FAN: For Christmas day. For all days. We are a family again.

BOY SCR: Fan, this will be the merriest Christmas of all time.

[They exit.]

SPIRIT 1: Fan was a delicate creature, with an abundant heart.

SCROOGE: So she had. You are right, Spirit.

SPIRIT 1: She died a woman and had, as I think, children.

SCROOGE: One child.

SPIRIT 1: True. Your nephew, Fred.

SCROOGE: Yes.

SPIRIT 1: Come. We cannot tarry.

SCROOGE: Where?

[SFX: WIND is heard, and LIGHTS fade, to reveal Caldwell Cook portraying FEZZIWIG.]

SPIRIT 1: Here!

SCROOGE: It is Christmas still? There. There is ol' Fezziwig, bless heart. It's Fezziwig alive again.

FEZZIWIG: Ebenezer! Belle! Dick! No more work tonight. It's Christmas Eve!

[YOUNG SCROOGE enters looking several years older than his last appearance.]

YNG SCR: Yes, sir?

DICK: What, sir?

FEZZIWIG: Clear all away. We need lots of room for our Christmas party.

[CAST enters, clears all away, sets up Christmas tree and FIRE burns brightly.]

BELLE: Ebenezer, lend a hand.

FEZZIWIG: Where are the musicians? It's time for the Christmas dance. Where is my wife? Belle, where is Mrs. Fezziwig?

BELLE: I'll fetch her.

DICK: Let the music begin.

[MRS. COOK enters portraying Mrs. Fezziwig.]

MRS. FEZZ: Wait on me, Mr. Fezziwig.

JACKSON: Yes, wait on Mrs. Fezziwig.

[There is now an English country dance.]

FEZZIWIG: Well done, all!

JACKSON: *[comes forward, begins narrative]* There were more dances and more dances, and there was cake and there was negus and a great roast and a great piece of cold-boiled, and there was mine-pie and plenty to drink.

MRS. FEZZ: Now before we dance again, an announcement.

FEZZIWIG: Yes, Belle and Ebenezer have a wonderful event to announce tonight. 'Tis the best Christmas present Mrs. Fezziwig and I could have ever received.

DICK: Don't be so shy.

BELLE: Oh, all right.

[She moves forward.]

I'll do it.

YNG SCR: *[follows her]* No, we'll do it together.

STEVENS: Well, let's hear it.

[Others: "yes." "Tell us, Belle." "Tell us, Ebenezer."]

BELLE: Ebenezer and I plan to wed.

[Great cheering. Improve "Congratulations." "I knew it all along," etc.]

DICK: All that is left is to set the date.

BELLE: Soon, very soon.

YNG SCR: As soon as I am financially secure and can support the loveliest woman in all England!

FEZZIWIG: I'll drink to that.

MRS. FEZZ: My dear husband, tonight you would drink to anything!

DICK: Another dance: a four corners. Let it feature our benefactors, Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig, and our couple soon to be wed: Ebenezer and Belle.

[MUSIC: a short dance, with the two couples, before all join in; clock strikes eleven. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig prepare to shake hands with guests as all prepare to leave.]

SCROOGE: *[to Spirit 1]* They will shake everyone's hands and wish them Merry Christmas. Oh, I do love them. I did love them.

[The FEZZIWIGS are still greeting folks.]

LOWENFELD: Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig, this was a wonderful party. I have never had such a fine time. God bless you both.

SCROOGE: Margaret Lowenfeld. She gave me a pair of knitted socks.

[Pause]

I had forgotten how warm they were. And . . .

SPIRIT 1: A small matter to make these silly folks so full of gratitude.

SCROOGE: A small matter?

SPIRIT 1: Yes, he spent a few pounds. Does he deserve all this...

[Pointing to the folks still in line]

...praise?

SCROOGE: Yes, he does! The happiness he gave to us at the party was as great as if it cost a fortune. He always treated . . .

[He trails off.]

SPIRIT 1: Something you want to say?

SCROOGE: Nothing. Nothing in particular.

SPIRIT 1: Something, I think.

SCROOGE: I was thinking of Bob Cratchit. I should like to . . .

SPIRIT 1: My time grows short. Quick!

[Again, WIND is heard and LIGHTS dim for a moment, then lights up on young Scrooge and Belle seated on a bench.]

MAYOR: *[enters, begins narrative]* The Spirit's warning was not addressed to Scrooge, nor did it seem to anyone, but it did produce an immediate effect. A couple on a bench, two years since Fezziwig's Christmas party and the formal announcement of the blessed event.

BELLE: An idea has displaced me, and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have, then I have no course to grieve.

YNG SCR: What idea has displaced you?

BELLE: A golden one.

YNG SCR: The pursuit of wealth prevents poverty.

BELLE: I have watched all of your noble aspirations fall one by one...

[She walks away.]

...until you care for nothing now, but money.

YNG SCR: I am much wiser today than I was then...

[He rises.]

...but I have not changed towards you.

BELLE: You are changed, a different man. Our vows of marriage is an old one and as of now, I release you from it.

SCROOGE: Spirit, show me no more!

SPIRIT 1: Silence.

YNG SCR: *[crosses to her]* Have I ever sought release?

BELLE: In words? No, never. You have never actually said our engagement was broken.

YNG SCR: In what, then?

BELLE: I am a dowerless girl, one whose only wealth is the love she bears for you. My joy would have been the children that you fathered. This was to be a happiness that gold could never purchase.

[She walks away.]

Tell me, would you still seek me out and try to win my hand in marriage, now?

[There is a pause.]

SCROOGE: No more! Why do you delight to torture me?

SPIRIT 1: There is more.

SCROOGE: I don't wish to see. Show me now more!

BELLE: Soon you will dismiss any recollection of our courtship. You will remember it as an unprofitable dream, from which you fortunately awoke.

[She is near tears.]

May you find happiness in the life you have chosen.

[She exits right; he starts to follow but then exits left.]

SCROOGE: Spirit...

[He is broken.]

...remove me from this place.

SPIRIT 1: I told you these were shadows of the things that have been; they are what they are. Do not blame me!

SCROOGE: I can bear no more. Take me back. Haunt me no longer!

[LIGHTS go black and again the WIND is heard, and SPIRIT 1 disappears.]

MAYOR: *[enters in narrative with a LIGHT only on him]* Scrooge was conscious of being exhausted, and overcome by irresistible drowsiness, and of being in his own bedroom.

[LIGHTS up softly.]

He fell into the chair, not making it into the bed, and sank into a heavy sleep.

WIFE: *[enters in narrative]* He awoke with a chill, one that transfixes throughout the length of the human body.

SCROOGE: I'll not be taken by surprise again. I'll be prepared for this next apparition.

WIFE: Scrooge lit the fire and heaped coals upon it until it burned with a fierceness unknown in this house for seven years.

SCROOGE: Candles, too. Where did I put them? I'll challenge this Spirit. I'll not be taken where I no longer wish to go.

[He lights candles and bustles about, finds a broom, and stands with broom in hand on the chair like a sentry.]

MAYOR: *[narrative]* The man stood ready. He was ready for a broad range of strange appearances and nothing between a baby and a rhinoceros could have astonished him.

WIFE: *[narrative]* Now, being prepared for anything, he was not by any means prepared for nothing

[SFX: BELL strikes one. And a BEAM OF LIGHT strikes Scrooge, faint at first. He is afraid.]

SCROOGE: Spirit, are you here?

[Pause]

Are you unlike the other apparitions I have seen these past two nights?

[The LIGHT grows brighter and FIREPLACE goes dim.]

WIFE: *[narrative]* As he stood on the chair, his predicament consumed him. This light was more alarming than a dozen ghosts.

SCROOGE: Show yourself, Spirit, and quell this light. It has blinded me.

[MRS. JACKSON become Spirit 2.]

SPIRIT 2: *[off stage]* Light does not blind.

[All LIGHTS fade]

Darkness does.

[During the darkness a TABLE OF FOOD is brought on, as is a Christmas tree and other decorations; the SPIRIT is seated on the table.]

SCROOGE: Please do me no harm.

[SCROOGE is off the chair cowering.]

I wasn't really going to strike you with my broom. I never in my life struck at any living thing, or a dead one, for that matter.

SPIRIT 2: Come. Come and know me better, man.

SCROOGE: I would if I could see you.

SPIRIT 2: Light come forth

[LIGHTS up]

I bid you to come, man. I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. You have never seen the likes of me before?

SCROOGE: Never.

SPIRIT 2: Have you never walked forth with the younger members of my family?

SCROOGE: I don't think I have. Not recently, anyway. Have you many brother and sisters?

SPIRIT 2: More than 1800.

SCROOGE: A tremendous family to provide for.

SPIRIT 2: Yes. I've never considered it in that manner.

SCROOGE: Spirit, conduct me where you will. Last night I learned a lesson, which is working on me now.

Tonight, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.

SPIRIT 2: Touch my robe.

[STAGE goes black; table, Christmas tree, etc. are struck]

WIFE: *[enters with LIGHTS only on her; begins narrative]* The church bells rang...

[SFX: BELLS heard in the distance]

...calling good people all to church and chapel, and flocking into the streets in their best clothes and with their cheeriest faces ...

[LIGHTS up; PEOPLE fill the stage on their way to church.]

...and if there were angry words between some families...

[COUPLE improves small argument about being late.]

...a bit of dust soon put all in good humor.

[SPIRIT 2 sprinkles couple.]

SPIRIT 2: It is a shame to quarrel upon a Christmas Day.

SCROOGE: Is there a particular flavor in what you sprinkle from your bag?

SPIRIT 2: Yes, my own. Now to a place that you should know well but do not.

THEODOROU: *[entering out of character]* We must set up Bob Cratchit's house. Are all the children ready? Quickly now.

[The house is set with a large table, four chairs and a coat rack; many actors fill the stage.]

WORKER 1: *[enters carrying a script]* Cratchit has a lot of words in this scene.

DICKENS: You will do fine, I'm sure.

WORKER 1: I think I know the gist of 'em. I don't have to say them exact, the way you wrote them, do I?

[DICKENS stares at Worker 1; soon ALL stop dead in their tracks]

DICKENS: W-h-a-t?

WORKER 1: I mean to say, I'll have them letter perfect.

DICKENS: Excellent!

[ALL go back to work]

HODGSON: I am afraid I must leave. An undertaker must be prepared.

WIFE: Has there been a death in our village?

STEVENS: Mr. Hodgson always likes to have an extra coffin or two around the holidays. Don't you, sir?

HODGSON: Yes, it has been my experience that there is always a "passing" during this festive season.

DICKENS: What a cheery thought.

MAYOR: But weren't you to portray the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come?

HODGSON: Yes. Nonetheless, I do have coffins to ready.

DICKENS: You can ready them later. Someone get him the black robe.

[The CHILDREN enter with Mrs. Stevens and Miss Carpenter.]

WIFE: *[announcing]* The house is set. Mrs. Cratchit.

[Points to Mrs. Stevens]

Alison, you be Patricia, and Sara, you are Belinda; Miss Carpenter, you will portray Martha, and Juliet, you will enact Ruthie. We may proceed.

[All exit but MAYOR, MRS. CRATCHIT, PATRICIA, RUTH and BELINDA who gather around the table and fireplace. SCROOGE and SPIRIT 2 are to the left of the fireplace. LIGHTS dim slightly.]

MAYOR: *[narrative]* Mrs. Cratchit was dressed in her best, but it was a poor gown—nevertheless, brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a good show.

[He exits.]

MRS. CRA: Help me, Belinda, with the tablecloth. Mistress Patricia, place the flatware.

BELINDA: I wonder where Father is?

PATRICIA: And my little brother, Tiny Tim? And where is Martha?

MRS. CRA: Her shop is no doubt still open. The rich have little care for the needs of the poor.

BELINDA: Here's Martha!

MARTHA: *[enters right]* Finally, I am with my family. Ruthie, give me a big Christmas hug.

PATRICIA: You should see the Christmas goose. It is gigantic. It is bigger than gigantic.

[Heads toward fireplace]

MARTHA: Let me see, Mother.

MRS. CRA: It is not that big. It is actually smaller than last year's.

PATRICIA: *[looking off to the right]* Here comes Father and Tiny Tim. Hide Martha! Hide.

MARTHA: Hide? Where?

BELINDA: Under the table. Hide under the table!

RUTHIE: Yes. Hide under the table.

MRS. CRA: Indeed. I'll not have any daughter of mine crawling under a table like a ruffian too filled with drink.

BELINDA: Then by the fireplace.

MARTHA: No, I would get all sooty.

PATRICIA: Then hide behind us.

BELINDA: Yes. We shall stand together and Martha hides behind.

[MARTHA hides behind RUTHIE who stands on a chair, while BELINDA and PATRICIA assist in hiding MARTHA. CRATCHIT enters with TIM.]

CRATCHIT: All going nicely?

BELINDA: Yes, except Martha isn't here.

CRATCHIT: Where's our Martha?

MRS. CRA: Not coming, I'm afraid.

TIM: Not coming on Christmas Day? No.

[He is almost ready to cry.]

RUTHIE: Don't cry, Tiny Tim.

MARTHA: Tiny Tim, I'm here.

TIM: *[goes to her]* Oh, Martha. I do miss you so.

MRS. CRA: And how did our little Tim behave at church?

CRATCHIT: As good as gold, but he thinks of the strangest things.

MRS. CRA: What this time?

[They drift away from the children.]

CRATCHIT: He told me he hoped the people saw him in church, for it would remind them who made the lame walk and the blind see.

[MAYOR enters, and LIGHTS dim]

MAYOR: *[narrative]* At last the dishes were set on the table and grace was said and the good brought forth, accompanied by potatoes and applesauce. There never was such a goose, for its tenderness and flavor-- and its cheapness.

[MARTHA leaves and gets cider and glasses. THEODORU enters.]

THEODOROU: *[narrative]* Finally the dinner was all done and apples and oranges were distributed and piping hot cider served into their glasses.

[FATHER, MOTHER and MARTHA get glasses; CHILDREN get mugs.]

CRATCHIT: A Merry Christmas to us all, my dear. God bless us!

TIM: God bless us, every one!

MRS. CRA: Yes, God bless us, every one. But especially you, Tiny Tim.

MARTHA: If you are through, Father, I'll pour Tim some cider in a glass.

TIM: I do love to drink from a real glass, Father.

CRATCHIT: Come, Tim, sit upon my lap and enjoy the cider. Be careful now; it's hot.

[He pours cider in a glass; they pantomime action as Scrooge and Spirit 2 talk.]

SCROOGE: Spirit, will Tiny Tim live?

SPIRIT 2: I see a vacant seat and a crutch without an owner.

SCROOGE: No. No. Kind Spirit, say he will be spared.

SPIRIT 2: If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die.

SCROOGE: But he is so young. So innocent.

SPIRIT 2: Why the grief? If he is to die, he had better do it, and "decrease the surplus population." Man of money, are you to decide what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be that in the sight of Heaven, you are less fit to live than a million like poor Tiny Tim.

CRATCHIT: It is time for a toast.

[He rises.]

A toast to the founder of the feast, my employer, Mr. Scrooge.

MRS. CRA: The founder of the feast indeed! I wish he were here, I do. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon. And I hope he'd have a good appetite for it.

CRATCHIT: It is Christmas Day, dear. We should give thanks to our benefactor.

MRS. CRA: Only on a Christmas Day could one drink to the health of such an odious, stingy, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. And he is, Robert! Nobody should know that better than you.

CRATCHIT: My dear, it is Christmas Day.

MRS. CRA: For you, dear, only for you, I'll drink to a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year for Mr. Scrooge.

ALL: To Mr. Scrooge's health.

TIM: And God bless him. We should say that.

ALL: God bless Mr. Scrooge.

[They pantomime action and take no notice of Scrooge.]

SCROOGE: How happy they are. How contented with their meager surrounding.

[SCROOGE crosses to Tiny Tim.]

SPIRIT 2: The clock moves toward midnight. We have much to see before then.

SCROOGE: Poor, poor Tim. Such a sweet boy. Surely . . .

SPIRIT 2: *[interrupting]* The clock, man.

[Blackout.]

[SFX: WIND, ALL exit but Scrooge and Spirit 2. THEODORU enters.]

THEODOROU: *[narrative]* It was growing dark and snowing quite heavily. Without a word of warning from the Ghost, they stood upon a bleak and deserted moor.

SCROOGE: What place is this?

[LIGHTS come up half]

SPIRIT 2: You know it not?

SCROOGE: I've never seen such squalor. Do people inhabit such a place as this?

SPIRIT 2: Miners, man. This is the place where coal miners live. The labor in the bowels of the earth, yet they too know me.

[We become aware of a family that truly lives in squalor; Spirit 2 sprinkles her dust. The FAMILY sings a carol, "What Child is This." At the end of the song it grows black and we again hear the SFX: WIND.]

THEODOROU: The Spirit did not tarry there, but bade Scrooge hold his robe and, passing on above the moor, sped to sea. Above the black heaving sea, moving through the lonely darkness over and unknown abyss—until Scrooge heard, to his great surprise, his nephew, Fred.

[LIGHTS up on Fred's house, stage left]

NEPHEW: It is true. Uncle Scrooge said Christmas was a humbug! He believes it, too!

NIECE: More shame for him, Fred. What a mean man your Uncle is.

NEPHEW: No. He's more comical, really. I grant you he's not so pleasant as I wish he were. But dear wife, think kindly of him this Christmas season.

WICKAM: He must be just miserable.

NEPHEW: His offenses carry their own punishment. I have nothing to say against him.

CARPENTER: I'm sure he is very rich.

NEPHEW: What of it, my dear? He makes no use of his wealth. He doesn't make himself comfortable with it.

NIECE: I have no patience with him.

WICKAM: Nor I. Nor any of us.

[General agreement among the women]

NEPHEW: I have. I'm sorry for him. He takes it into his head to dislike us and he won't come and dine with us.

SCROOGE: I don't really dislike the boy or his wife.

SPIRIT 2: "I will not make merry with you or your giddy wife tomorrow or any other day." Can you recollect that statement?

SCROOGE: Yes, but . . .

SPIRIT 2: Listen.

NEPHEW: Nevertheless, I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not.

[They all laugh.]

WIFE: *[enters, in narrative]* But the whole evening was mostly devoid of lamentations for the missing uncle. After a while they played games, for it is good to be children sometimes. And never better than at Christmas, when its Founder was a child himself.

NEPHEW: Blind man's bluff.

ALL: Yes.

[Improv "Who will be it?" "Not me!" etc.]

NIECE: Fred should be it, for the game was his idea.

NEPHEW: Capital. Who will tie the blindfold?

[His WIFE ties the blindfold.]

SCROOGE: I haven't played that game since I was a mere lad. But I was good at it.

SPIRIT 2: We should go.

[FRED stumbles around and bumps into a chair.]

SCROOGE: Please, Spirit, let us watch the game. Mind that chair, Nephew. [Improv by game players: “Look, here.” “No, here.”] Your wife is behind you. Look...

[Scrooge has moved into the game area.]

...behind you!

NEPHEW: *[grabs one of the women]* Sally? Is it Sally?

SPIRIT 2: You know, they have no knowledge of your presence.

SCROOGE: Yes. Yes. I know.

NEPHEW: Is someone behind me?

SCROOGE: Your wife. Turn around, Fred.

[At that moment FRED turns around.]

NIECE: *[taking off FRED's mask]* You had better hope it was your wife after that kiss you gave me.

STEVENS: Now, let's play “Yes and No.”

SCROOGE: Can we stay for the entire party?

SPIRIT 2: This cannot be done.

SCROOGE: One half hour, Spirit. It's a new game. I was excellent at this one as well.

NEPHEW: Then, wife, you conjure up in your mind an animal, a place or a thing.

NIECE: I'm up for a challenge. Wait. Now I have it. Begin.

WICKAM: Is it a place?

NIECE: No.

CARPENTER: An animal?

NIECE: No.

THEODOROU: A live animal?

NIECE: *[hesitates]* Yes.

NEPHEW: A disagreeable animal?

NIECE: *[firmly]* Yes.

SCROOGE: A talking animal?

WICKAM: A savage animal?

NIECE: No. Not really.

SCROOGE: A talking animal? A human?

THEODOROU: A horse?

NIECE: No.

CARPENTER: A bear?

NIECE: No.

NEPHEW: A pig?

STEVENS: A dog?

NIECE: No. No.

SCROOGE: A talking animal!

SPIRIT 2: Silence. Enjoy the game.

NEPHEW: A talking animal?

SCROOGE: finally.

NIECE: Yes.

SCROOGE: You see.

NEPHEW: A man?

NIECE: Yes.

STEVENS: An old man?

SPIRIT 2: A stingy man?

SCROOGE: Hush.

NEPHEW: A stingy man?

NIECE: Yes. Yes.

SPIRIT 2: I told you.

CARPENTER: Your Uncle Scrooge!

NIECE: Yes.

NEPHEW: Uncle Scrooge has given us plenty of merriment on this eve. Let us all drink to his health. To Uncle Scrooge!

ALL: To Uncle Scrooge!

NIECE: A Merry Christmas to you uncle, wherever he be—but hopefully with friends.

SCROOGE: Here. Here.

[LIGHTS go black

SFX: WIND.]

WIFE: *[enters; a LIGHT on her; begins narrative]* Scrooge and the Spirit were again upon their travels.

Much they saw and far they went and many homes they visited, but always with a happy ending. Always celebrating the joy of Christmas. The Spirit stood beside sick beds and they were cheerful, in almshouses, hospitals and jails. They saw more misery in one blink of the eye than Scrooge had experienced in his lifetime.

MAYOR: *[enters; a light on him; in narrative]* But to all the Spirit provided a joy and a sense that this night was the most special night of their entire lives and that tomorrow, tomorrow would be a better day.

[In the blackout, SPIRIT 2 has grown older and now needs a cane. We see them in a small pool of light down center.]

SCROOGE: You have grown older.

SPIRIT 2: Yes.

SCROOGE: Are Spirit lives so short?

SPIRIT 2: My life in this world is very brief.

SCROOGE: How brief?

SPIRIT 2: It ends tonight, at midnight. The clock has struck on the quarter three times. My life is drawing near end.

[We see behind him in a green light, five or six children and adults that are plain, wretched and miserable.]

SCROOGE: I cannot help but notice strange folks behind you. Do these wretched creatures belong to you?

SPIRIT 2: These frightful creatures?

SCROOGE: *[tentatively]* Spirit, are they yours?

SPIRIT 2: They are Man's.

[She crosses to them]

They are angels and devils, half monsters that were once innocent babes. They cling to me. Ignorance has covered them and doom is their future. Beware of them, Scrooge.

SCROOGE: Have they no refuge? No resources? Surely in a great country such as our . . .

SPIRIT 2: *[interrupting]* “Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouse?”

[SFX: CLOCK strikes twelve; Blackout]

STEVENS: *[enters, a SPOTLIGHT on her, begins narrative]* The Spirit disappeared and Scrooge saw a solemn phantom coming like a mist along the ground towards him.

[SPIRIT 3 has appeared in the darkness and silently moves across the stage.]

SCROOGE: Is this the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come that Jacob Marley predicted?

[There is a pause; finally the MAYOR and his WIFE enter.]

MAYOR: What happens next?

[Numerous ACTORS enter, adding to the Mayor's question: “Yes, what does happen next?” and “Well, Mr. Dickens?” etc.]

WIFE: Intermission. Correct, Mr. Dickens?

[They all troop off stage. As soon as they are all gone, MRS. TYLER enters from the back of the house.]

MRS. TYLER: I am here. I know I am late. It was the turkey's fault. Well really the butcher's. He was late in delivering the turkey. Oh, Mr. Dickens! Ho, I am here.

[By this time, she is all the way up on stage. She looks around.]

I hope I haven't missed it. I've learned all my words.

[LIGHTS fade and HOUSE LIGHTS come up on an empty stage.]

13 more pages make up Act Two