Charles Dickens's

A Christmas Carol

Adapted by
Kevin P. Kern

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DEDICATION

For Natalie, Sander and Aidan,
the three greatest gifts I was ever given.

SYNOPSIS

Ebenezer Scrooge is a cold-hearted miser, choosing to spend Christmas Eve alone instead of with his cheerful nephew, Fred. That night, he is visited by his old colleague, Jacob Marley, who explains that three ghosts will come. After seeing his Christmas Past, Present, and Future, Scrooge awakens with renewed faith. In his redemption, he embraces family and friends and gives generously, forever changed. Following the story of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, this unique version incorporates singing narrators, traditional carols, and continuous action on the stage. A flexible case size and ease of doubling can accommodate between 14-36 actors. Full evening.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

The Golden Performing Arts Center at the Madrid Theatre,
Canoga Park, CA

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(11 m, 10 w, 3 boys, 12 flexible.
With doubling 4 m, 3 w, 1 boy, 6 flexible.)

CAROLERS 1-4: Singing narrators.
A BOY: A school-age boy who follows Scrooge's directions.
ADULTS 1-3: Townspeople who attempt to cheer Scrooge.
SCROOGE: A cold-hearted miser who finds redemption.
FRED: Scrooge's cheerful nephew.
CHARITY 1 & 2: Two townspeople who seek a donation.
BOB CRATCHIT: Scrooge's faithful employee.
JACOB MARLEY: Scrooge's late partner; wears tattered clothing and chains.
CHRISTMAS PAST: Wears white, is childlike in appearance.
FAN: Scrooge's sister.
YOUNG SCROOGE: Ebenezer as a schoolboy.
FEZZIWIG: Scrooge's first employer.
MRS. FEZZIWIG: Mr. Fezziwig's happy wife.
SCROOGE at 20: A happier, younger Scrooge.
BELLE: Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig's daughter, loves Scrooge.
CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Wears a great robe.
MRS. CRATCHIT: Mr. Cratchit's wife.
BELINDA: Mr. and Mrs. Cratchit's daughter.
MARTHA: Mr. and Mrs. Cratchit's daughter.
PETER: Mr. and Mrs. Cratchit's son.
TIM: Mr. and Mrs. Cratchit's sickly son.
JANE: Fred's wife.
TOPPER: Friend to Fred and Jane.
ALICE: Friend to Fred and Jane.
CHRISTMAS FUTURE: Nonspeaking.
MR. PENNYROYAL: A man selling Scrooge's silver.
MRS. DILBER: A woman selling Scrooge's bed curtains.
JOE: Shopkeeper who accepts these wares.
THOMAS: Indebted to Scrooge.
CAROLINE: Thomas's wife.
EXTRAS as townspeople and children.

PRODUCTION NOTE

This adaptation was intended to allow for a wide variety of scenic elements, from the lavish to the sparse. In the original production, the Carolers were able to shift most of the scenery while singing. While this is certainly a fun and engaging option, it's not crucial. If the set pieces are too big and unwieldy, the Carolers can musically cover the shift with a wide selection of carols. There should be no modern carols, but beyond that, great flexibility is given to the Director and Music Director to determine what music is incorporated into the show. Action is continuous.

SUGGESTED MUSIC

God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen
Adam Lay Y-bounden
Coventry Carol
Lo! How a Rose e'er Blooming
Deck the Halls
Noel Nouvelet!
Good King Wenceslas
Gloucestershire Wassail
Tomorrow Shall be my Dancing Day
O Come, All Ye Faithful
I Saw Three Ships
Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
We Wish you a Merry Christmas

ACT I

Prologue

(IN THE DARKNESS: Four CAROLERS sing "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen." The LIGHTS rise on a Dickensian street scene. Children play, shoppers carry packages, shopkeepers tend to their shops as the CAROLERS move through the space, singing to the actors. The LIGHTS shift as the ACTORS in stage freeze in a tableau. The CAROLERS move downstage and address the audience.)

CAROLER ONE: Tonight we will endeavor, in this ghostly little story…
CAROLER TWO: …to give rise to the ghost of an idea.
CAROLER THREE: Let nothing you see tonight frighten you…
CAROLER FOUR: …or alarm you…
CAROLER ONE: …or upset you.
CAROLER TWO: But rather, let it make you ponder this question:
CAROLER THREE: What would it take to make you understand the true meaning of Christmas?

Scene 1

(The tableau is broken. The street scene again comes to life as the CAROLERS continue singing. SCROOGE appears upstage and interrupts a children's game. CAROLERS fade singing.)

A BOY: Sorry, sir. Merry Christmas!
SCROOGE: Humbug!
ADULT ONE: A humbug! But it's Christmas, sir…
SCROOGE: Is that any reason to be assaulted by a common criminal?
ADULT TWO: But (s)he's only a child, sir…

SCROOGE: That, my good woman, is her fault, your problem, and none of my concern. Good day.
ADULT THREE: What a terrible man! Who was he?
FRED: I'm afraid that terrible man was, for better or worse, my dear uncle, Ebenezer Scrooge.
ADULT THREE: Oh, I'm terribly sorry…
FRED: For him or for me?
ADULT THREE: No, I meant…
FRED: No harm done. My uncle has given me hours of merriment, though he seems to take none for himself. Merry Christmas!
ADULT THREE: Merry Christmas to you, sir.

(FRED runs after SCROOGE.)

FRED: Uncle Scrooge! Uncle Scrooge!

(SCROOGE sees Fred and flees. Street scene ACTORS exit, leaving only the carolers.)

CAROLER ONE: And with that, you have made the acquaintance of Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge and his nephew, Fred.
CAROLER TWO: One of them is tight-fisted, wrenching, grasping, solitary, covetous old sinner…
CAROLER ONE: And the other is his nephew, Fred.
CAROLER TWO: Scrooge, having just concluded business at The King's Bench, was returning to the office of Marley and Scrooge.

(The CAROLERS underscore the scene shift with "God Rest You Merry Gentlemen." The stage is set for Scrooge's office. A large desk sits near the stove, and a smaller one contains hard-working BOB CRATCHIT. CHARITY ONE and CHARITY TWO intercept SCROOGE on his way into the office.)

End of Freeview

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