

A Christmas Carol



Doug Goheen

Adapted from the classic story by Charles Dickens
Cover illustration and woodprints
by John Leech from *A Christmas Carol* (1843)

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*For the wonderful theater students
of Topeka West High School...*

Past...

Present...

Yet to come.

A Christmas Carol

CHRISTMAS DRAMA WITH SONG. This adaptation of the classic tale by Charles Dickens (1843) includes all the most memorable scenes while offering an easy-to-produce streamlined version suitable for novice or experienced actors. On Christmas Eve, lonely miser Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by the ghost of his dead business partner, Jacob Marley, who warns Scrooge that he will be visited that night by three more apparitions: the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. One by one, the ghosts escort Scrooge into the night to revisit his past and present and to offer him a grim look at what is to come. Scrooge awakens Christmas morning ready to cast aside his greedy, self-serving ways and to embrace acts of kindness and charity toward others who are less fortunate. A rendition of “God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen” is included and other carols may be incorporated at the director’s discretion.

Performance Time: Approximately 60 minutes.

About the Story

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) wrote *A Christmas Carol* in just six weeks, and it has remained his most popular work. After suffering from hardship and poverty as a boy, Dickens sympathized with the plight of the poor and felt strongly that social reform was needed to eradicate social inequity. The Cratchit children are thought to correspond to Dickens’ own children and Tiny Tim is believed to be modeled after Dickens’ son, Tiny Fred.

Characters

(Flexible cast. 13 m, 15f, 7flexible, 3 boys, extras)
(With doubling: 10 m, 9 f, 1 boy)

NARRATOR: Flexible.

EBENEZER SCROOGE: Lonely, unhappy miser who is consumed with making money above all else.

BOB CRATCHIT: Scrooge's clerk, who is a kind and loving family man.

FRED: Scrooge's cheerful nephew and sole living family member.

GHOST OF JACOB MARLEY: Scrooge's former business partner who has returned in the form of a ghost to warn Scrooge to change his ways; dressed in a waistcoat, tights, and boots; a long chain made of various keys, padlocks, cashboxes, and ledgers is clasped about his middle.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: She wears a long, white tunic and carries a branch of holly; her voice is soft and gentle.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: She is clothed in a deep green robe trimmed with white fur. On her head she wears a holly wreath set here and there with shining icicles.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME: Draped and hooded figure dressed entirely in black; non-speaking; flexible.

SOLICITOR 1: Solicits funds for the poor; wears a coat and hat; flexible.

SOLICITOR 2: Solicits funds for the poor; wears a coat and hat; female.

CAROLERS 1, 2, 3: Sing "God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen"; flexible.

YOUNG SCROOGE: Scrooge as a schoolboy.

FAN: Scrooge's sister, who he loved dearly.

MR. FEZZIWIG: Scrooge's kind, generous former employer.

MRS. FEZZIWIG: Mr. Fezziwig's wife; non-speaking.

DAUGHTER 1, 2, 3: The Fezziwigs' daughters; non-speaking.

FIDDLER: Plays the fiddle; non-speaking; flexible.

TEEN SCROOGE: Scrooge as a young man; worked as Mr. Fezziwig's apprentice.

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DICK WILKINS: A young apprentice who worked with Scrooge when he was a young man.

BELLE: Scrooge's former fiancée.

HUSBAND: Belle's husband.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Kindly, humble wife of Bob Cratchit.

BELINDA CRATCHIT: Cratchits' daughter.

PETER CRATCHIT: Cratchits' eldest son.

MARTHA CRATCHIT: Cratchits' eldest daughter, who has moved away.

TINY TIM: Youngest of the Cratchits; carries a small wooden crutch; boy.

WIFE: Fred's wife.

BUSINESSMAN 1, 2, 3

WOMAN 1, 2

YOUNG WIFE: Poor, with sick child; indebted to Scrooge.

YOUNG HUSBAND: Indebted to Scrooge.

BOY

EXTRAS: As townspeople and Christmas party guests.

Doubling options for male roles:

Marley/Businessman 1

Fezziwig/Young Husband

Solicitor 1/Belle's Husband/Businessman 2

Teen Scrooge/Businessman 3

Young Scrooge/Boy

Caroler 3/Fiddler

Dick/Peter Cratchit

Doubling options for female roles:

Narrator/Woman 1/Fan

Solicitor 2/Martha Cratchit

Ghost of Christmas Past/Woman 2

Caroler 1/Ghost of Christmas Present

Caroler 2/Fezziwig Daughter 1/Belinda Cratchit

Fezziwig Daughter 2/Fred's Wife

Mrs. Fezziwig/Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

Fezziwig Daughter 3/Mrs. Cratchit

Belle/Young Wife

Setting

Mid-19th century, London.

Set

There is an abstract, fragmentary set consisting of four general playing areas.

Scrooge's Office: Far upstage, to one side, is Scrooge's office at the counting-house, which is elevated. It has steps leading down to the fourth general playing area downstage.

Scrooge's Bedchamber: On the other side of the stage, also elevated, is Scrooge's bedroom, which has an operational window, a bed, and a fireplace. It too has steps leading down to the fourth general playing area downstage.

Walkway: Scrooge's office and bedchamber are connected to each other by a walkway, on which Scrooge and each of the three spirits make their respective journeys.

Downstage on the Floor: This is the largest of the four areas, and will accommodate all remaining scenes, including those that will take place in the street. There should also be adequate room in this downstage area to facilitate a wagon, if such a unit is desirable (for example, to represent the Cratchits' home).

NOTE: Scenes presented to Scrooge by the ghosts are represented by a few minimal set pieces, which should be easily transportable.

Synopsis of Scenes

Scene 1: “Marley’s Ghost” –3 p.m., Christmas Eve, London; Scrooge’s counting-house and bedchamber.

Scene 2: “The First of the Three Spirits” –Midnight and 1 a.m., Scrooge’s bedchamber.

Scene 3: “The Second of the Three Spirits” –1 a.m., Scrooge’s bedchamber.

Scene 4: “The Last of the Spirits” –1 a.m., Scrooge’s bedchamber.

Scene 5: “The End of It” –Morning, Christmas Day.

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Props

Coat and hat, for Scrooge	Bench
Books	Baby doll
Papers	Small stool
Pieces of coal	Kitchen table
Coal box	6 Kitchen chairs
Coins	Dinnerware
Doorknocker	Small wooden crutch
Candle	2 Wineglasses
Dressing gown, for Scrooge	Sewing/quilting materials
Nightcap, for Scrooge	Coat and muffler, for Bob
Slippers, for Scrooge	Cratchit
6 Porridge bowls	Scrooge's tombstone

Special Effects

Eerie tune—cold, shrill, and melancholy

Heavy clanking noise

Mournful dirge

Bell toll

Church chimes

Schoolyard sounds

Mist/fog

Note: Christmas carols may be incorporated between scenes or at intermission at the discretion of the director.

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*"I have always thought of Christmastime,
when it has come round,
as a good time;
a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time;
the only time I know of,
in the long calendar of the year,
when men and women seem by one consent
to open their shut-up hearts freely,
and to think of people below them
as if they really were
fellow passengers to the grave,
and not another race of creatures
bound on other journeys."*

—Fred

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Scene 1
Marley's Ghost

(Christmas Eve, London, 3 p.m. From the darkness comes an eerie tune suggestive of winter: cold, shrill, high-pitched, and melancholy. Lights fade in to reveal a number of Townspeople busily making their way up and down the street, some shopping, while others stop to chatter. Ebenezer Scrooge makes his way from the street to his counting office, keeping his head down and avoiding any contact with the townspeople, some of whom seem just as eager to avoid him.)

NARRATOR: Marley was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it. And Scrooge's name was good for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a doornail. Scrooge, of course, knew he was dead, since they had been partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole friend, and his sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event, but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnized it with an undoubted bargain. Scrooge had never painted out old Marley's name. There it stood, seven years afterward, above the warehouse door: "Scrooge and Marley." The firm was known as "Scrooge and Marley." Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge "Scrooge" and sometimes "Marley," but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him. *(By this time, Scrooge stands outside the door to his office, momentarily looking up at the sign to which the Narrator refers. A clock strikes three. He then continues into the office, hanging up his hat and coat, and taking his place at his desk. Nearby sits Bob Cratchit, his clerk.)* Once—of all the good days in the

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year, on Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. He kept his eye upon his clerk, who was copying letters across the way. It was cold, bleak, biting weather, and the clerk had been having a difficult time of it trying to warm himself.

(During this last speech, Scrooge's nephew, Fred, has climbed the stairs to his uncle's office. Fred enters.)

FRED: A Merry Christmas, Uncle! God save you!

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug!

FRED: Christmas a humbug, Uncle! You don't mean that, I am sure?

SCROOGE: I do. Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

FRED: Come, then. What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough.

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug!

FRED: Don't be cross, Uncle!

SCROOGE: What else can I be when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon Merry Christmas! What's Christmastime to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, and not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books, and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you? If I could work my will, every idiot who 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. He should!

FRED: Uncle!

SCROOGE: Nephew! Keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine.

FRED: Keep it! But you don't keep it.

SCROOGE: Let me leave it alone, then. Much good it has ever done you!

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FRED: There are many things from which I might have derived good by which I have not profited, I dare say, Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmastime, when it has come round, as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, Uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!

(Cratchit involuntarily applauds. Scrooge reels on him.)

SCROOGE: *(To Cratchit.)* Let me hear another sound from you, and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation!
(Turning now to Fred.) You're quite a powerful speaker, sir. I wonder why you don't go into Parliament.

FRED: Don't be angry, Uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow.

SCROOGE: Dine with you tomorrow? Bah!

FRED: But why? Why?

SCROOGE: Why did you get married?

FRED: Because I fell in love.

SCROOGE: Because you fell in love! Good afternoon!

FRED: Nay, Uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?

SCROOGE: Good afternoon.

FRED: I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?

SCROOGE: Good afternoon!

FRED: I am sorry with all my heart to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel to which I have been a party. But I have made the trial in homage to Christmas,

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and I'll keep my Christmas humor to the last. So a Merry Christmas, Uncle!

SCROOGE: Good afternoon.

FRED: And a happy New Year!

SCROOGE: Good afternoon!

FRED: *(To Cratchit.)* Merry Christmas, Mr. Cratchit.

CRATCHIT: And a Merry Christmas to you, too, sir.

SCROOGE: There's another fellow, my clerk—with 15 shillings a week, and a wife and family—talking about a merry Christmas. I'll retire to bedlam.

(As Fred leaves, Solicitors 1, 2 enter, with books and papers in hand. They remove their hats.)

SOLICITOR 1: Scrooge and Marley's, I believe. Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

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

SOLICITOR 1: We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner.

SOLICITOR 2: At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.

SCROOGE: Are there no prisons?

SOLICITOR 2: Plenty of prisons.

SCROOGE: And the Union workhouses? Are they still in operation?

SOLICITOR 2: They are. Still, I wish they were not.

SCROOGE: The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigor, then?

SOLICITOR 2: Both very busy, sir.

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SCROOGE: Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course. I'm very glad to hear it.

SOLICITOR 1: Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude, a few of us are endeavoring to raise a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?

SCROOGE: Nothing!

SOLICITOR 2: You wish to be anonymous?

SCROOGE: I wish to be left alone. Since you ask me what I wish, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned—they cost enough—and those who are badly off must go there.

SOLICITOR 1: Many can't go there, and many would rather die.

SCROOGE: If they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides, excuse me, I don't know that.

SOLICITOR 2: But you might know it.

SCROOGE: It's not my business. It's enough for a man to understand his own business and not to interfere with other peoples'. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon.

(As Scrooge escorts Solicitors 1, 2 to the door, Carolers 1, 2, 3 from the street below sing "God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen.")

SOLICITOR 1: But, sir...

SCROOGE: I said, good afternoon!

(Scrooge literally shoves them out the door. As he hears the Carolers, he hastens back inside, retrieves a couple of pieces of coal from the coal box, and returns back outside to throw the coal at the Carolers,

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who disperse. Scrooge then returns inside. Cratchit, terrified, stares at his employer.)

SCROOGE: Well, what are you staring at? Go back to work!

(Cratchit goes back to work. Scrooge sits at his desk and begins to tally coins.)

CRATCHIT: *(Timidly.)* Sir? *(No answer.)* Sir?

SCROOGE: *(Without turning to him.)* What is it? *(Not getting an answer, Scrooge turns to Cratchit.)* Speak, man! What do you want?

CRATCHIT: Well, sir, I—

SCROOGE: I should have thought as much. You'll want all day tomorrow I suppose?

CRATCHIT: If quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE: It's not convenient, and it's not fair. If I were to stop half a crown for it, you'd think yourself ill-used, I'll be bound? And yet, you don't think me ill-used when I pay a day's wages for no work.

CRATCHIT: But, sir, Christmas does come only once in a year.

SCROOGE: A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every 25th of December! But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier the next morning.

CRATCHIT: That I will, sir. I promise you that.

(Scrooge growls, and both resume their business.)

NARRATOR: At length, the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived. The office was closed in a twinkling. The clerk ran home to Camden Town while Scrooge, after taking his usual melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern, went home to the chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner.

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(Lights have dimmed on the counting-house as Scrooge crosses the walkway to reach his home. He stops outside the door, struck by the sight of the doorknocker. He starts.)

SCROOGE: Marley, is that you? *(He opens the door, looking cautiously behind it. He then looks again at the knocker, which now impresses him as normal.)* Pooh! Pooh! *(He enters his room and begins to prepare for the evening. He lights a candle from the fireplace, prepares a bowl of gruel, and begins to change into a dressing gown, slippers, and nightcap, mumbling all the while.)* "A Merry Christmas to you, sir." Bah! "We should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time." Humbug! "God rest ye, merry gentlemen." Bah! Humbug! *(He returns to his seat by the fire and resumes his dinner. After a few moments, he is startled by a heavy clanking noise.)* Humbug! I won't believe it. *(As the clanking noise grows louder and nearer, Scrooge becomes increasingly unnerved until finally the front door is thrown open and Jacob Marley's Ghost enters.)* How now! What do you want with me?

MARLEY: Much!

SCROOGE: Who are you?

MARLEY: Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE: Who were you, then?

MARLEY: In life, I was your partner, Jacob Marley. *(Pause.)*
You don't believe in me.

SCROOGE: I don't.

MARLEY: What evidence would you have of my reality beyond that of your own senses?

SCROOGE: I don't know.

MARLEY: Why do you doubt your senses?

SCROOGE: Because a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are! Humbug, I tell

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you. Humbug! (*Marley wails and shakes his chains. Scrooge falls upon his knees.*) Mercy! Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?

MARLEY: Man of the worldly mind! Do you believe in me or not?

SCROOGE: I do. I must. But why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me?

MARLEY: It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow men, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!

SCROOGE: You are shackled. Tell me why?

MARLEY: I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you? Or would you know the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have labored on it, since. It is a ponderous chain!

(Scrooge glances about on the floor, as if expecting to find a chain.)

SCROOGE: Jacob! Old Jacob Marley, tell me more! Speak comfort to me, Jacob!

MARLEY: I have none to give. It comes from other regions, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is conveyed by other ministers, to other kinds of men. Nor can I tell you what I would. A very little more is all permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house—mark me!—in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!

SCROOGE: You must have been very slow about it, Jacob.

MARLEY: Slow!

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SCROOGE: Seven years dead. And traveling all the time?

MARLEY: The whole time. No rest, no peace. Incessant torture of remorse.

SCROOGE: You travel fast?

MARLEY: On the wings of the wind.

SCROOGE: You might have got over a great quantity of ground in seven years.

MARLEY: (*Again wailing and clanking his chains.*) Oh! Captive bound and double-ironed, not to know that ages of incessant labor, by immortal creatures, for this earth, must pass into eternity before the good of which it is susceptible is all developed! Not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness! Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunities misused! Yet such was I!

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

MARLEY: Business! Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business! At this time of the rolling year, I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode? Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted me? Hear me! My time is nearly gone.

SCROOGE: I will. But don't be hard upon me! Jacob! Pray!

MARLEY: How it is that I appear before you in a shape that you can see, I may not tell. I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day. That is no light part of my penance. I am here tonight to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE: You were always a good friend to me. Thankee!

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MARLEY: You will be haunted by three spirits.

SCROOGE: Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?

MARLEY: It is.

SCROOGE: I-I think I'd rather not.

MARLEY: Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first tomorrow, when the bell tolls one.

SCROOGE: Couldn't I take 'em all at once and have it over, Jacob?

MARLEY: Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!

(Marley approaches the window, which opens fully. A mournful dirge sounds as Marley exits through the window, seeming to float away. Scrooge remains transfixed momentarily and then approaches the window, shutting and locking it. He then goes to the door and inspects the knocker once again. Closing the door, he tries to say "Humbug," but he stops at the first syllable. He gets into his bed, pulls up the covers, and nervously attempts to prepare for the sleep. Lights fade to blackout.)

Scene 2
The First of the Three Spirits

(Midnight, Scrooge's bedchamber. During this opening speech, lights slowly fade in on Scrooge.)

NARRATOR: When Scrooge awoke, it was so dark, that, looking out of bed, he could scarcely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque walls of his chamber. He was endeavoring to pierce the darkness with his ferret eyes... *(Chimes begin to sound.)* ...when the chimes of a neighboring church struck the four quarters. So he listened for the hour. To his great astonishment, the heavy bell went on from six to seven to eight, and regularly up to twelve; then stopped.

SCROOGE: Why, it isn't possible that I can have slept through a whole day and far into another night. It isn't possible that anything has happened to the sun, and this is twelve at noon!

NARRATOR: The idea being an alarming one, he scrambled out of bed, and groped his way to the window. All he could make out was that it was still very foggy and extremely cold, and that there was no noise of people running to and fro, and making a great stir, as there unquestionably would have been if night had beaten off bright day. Scrooge went to bed again, and thought, and thought, and thought it over and over, and could make nothing of it. Marley's Ghost bothered him exceedingly. The more he thought, the more perplexed he was; and the more he endeavored not to think, the more he thought. Scrooge lay in this state until the chime had gone three quarters more, when he remembered, all of a sudden, that the Ghost had warned him of a visitation when the bell tolled one. He resolved to lie awake until the hour was passed.

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(The chimes strike the four quarters followed by a deeper tone to indicate the hour of one itself.)

SCROOGE: The hour itself and nothing else! *(The Ghost of Christmas Past appears.)* Are you the spirit whose coming was foretold to me?

GHOST 1: I am!

SCROOGE: Who, and what are you?

GHOST 1: I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE: Long Past?

GHOST 1: No. Your past.

SCROOGE: If I may be so bold, what business brings you here?

GHOST 1: Your welfare!

SCROOGE: Surely, a night of unbroken rest would be more conducive to that end.

GHOST 1: Your reclamation, then. Take heed! *(She extends her hand and clasps Scrooge gently by the arm.)* Rise, and walk with me!

(She leads Scrooge to the window.)

SCROOGE: I am a mortal and liable to fall.

(Ghost 1 lays her hand upon his heart.)

GHOST 1: Bear but a touch of my hand there, and you shall be upheld in more than this!

(The two begin their journey into the past. In the downstage area, a Young Scrooge sits on a bench reading a book. Schoolyard sounds drift in.)

SCROOGE: Good heaven! I was bred in this place. I was a boy here!

GHOST 1: Your lip is trembling. You recollect the way?

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SCROOGE: Remember it! I could walk it blindfold.

GHOST 1: Strange to have forgotten it for so many years. These are but shadows of the things that have been. They have no consciousness of us. The school is not quite deserted. A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.

SCROOGE: Poor boy. I wish...but it's too late now.

GHOST 1: What is the matter?

SCROOGE: Nothing, nothing. There were some children singing a Christmas carol at my door last night. I should like to have given them something, that's all.

GHOST 1: Let us see another Christmas!

(Fan, a young woman, darts in and throws her arms about Young Scrooge's neck.)

FAN: Ebenezer, dear, dear brother. I have come to bring you home, dear boy. To bring you home, home, home!

YOUNG SCROOGE: Home, little Fan?

FAN: Yes! Home, for good and all. Home, for ever and ever. Father's so much kinder than he used to be that home's like heaven! He spoke so gently to me one dear night when I was going to bed that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home; and he said yes, you should; and sent me in a coach to bring you. And you're to be a man! And you are never to come back here. But first, we're to be together all the Christmas long and have the merriest time in all the world.

YOUNG SCROOGE: You are quite a woman, little Fan!

(The lights begin to fade downstage on Fan and Young Scrooge.)

GHOST 1: Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered. She died a woman and had, as I think, children.

SCROOGE: One child.

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GHOST 1: True. Your nephew.

SCROOGE: Yes.

GHOST 1: Come. It is time to move on. *(They do, as the lights fade in on another area downstage.)* Do you know this warehouse?

SCROOGE: Know it? Was I not apprenticed here? *(Mr. Fezziwig approaches two young men, Dick and Teen Scrooge.)* Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it's Fezziwig alive again!

FEZZIWIG: Yo, ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!

SCROOGE: Dick Wilkins, to be sure! Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear!

FEZZIWIG: Yo, ho, my boys! No more work tonight. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer. Let's close up before a man can say, Jack Robinson! Hilli-ho! Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here! Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!

(As Dick and Teen Scrooge "clear away," Christmas Party Guests enter. Mrs. Fezziwig, her three daughters, and a Fiddler enter. The Fiddler begins to play. A dance ensues. Scrooge and Ghost 1 watch from above for two or three minutes.)

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

SCROOGE: Small!

GHOST 1: Why! Is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four, perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves any praise?

SCROOGE: It isn't that. It isn't that, spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy, to make our service light or burdensome, a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks, in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count 'em up; what then? The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.

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GHOST 1: What is the matter?

SCROOGE: Nothing particular.

GHOST 1: Something, I think?

SCROOGE: No, no. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now. That's all.

GHOST 1: My time grows short. Quick!

(Scrooge and Ghost 1 continue their "journey" on the walkway until yet a third area is lit downstage. On a small bench sit Belle and Teen Scrooge.)

BELLE: It matters little. To you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve.

TEEN SCROOGE: What idol has displaced you?

BELLE: A golden one.

TEEN SCROOGE: This is the even-handed dealing of the world! There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!

BELLE: You fear the world too much. All your other hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond the chance of its sordid reproach. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master passion, Gain, engrosses you. Have I not?

TEEN SCROOGE: What then? Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed toward you. Am I?

BELLE: Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor, and content to be so, until, in good season, we could improve our worldly fortune by our patient industry. You are changed. When it was made, you were another man.

TEEN SCROOGE: I was a boy.

BELLE: Your own feeling tells you that you were not what you are. I am. That which promised happiness when we

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were one in heart is fraught with misery now that we are two. How often and how keenly I have thought of this, I will not say. It is enough that I have thought of it, and can release you.

TEEN SCROOGE: Have I ever sought release?

BELLE: In words? No. Never.

TEEN SCROOGE: In what, then?

BELLE: In a changed nature, in an altered spirit, in another atmosphere of life, another hope as its great end. In everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight. If this had never been between us, tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now? Ah, no!

TEEN SCROOGE: You think not?

BELLE: I would gladly think otherwise if I could. Heaven knows! When I have learned a truth like this, I know how strong and irresistible it must be. But if you were free today, tomorrow, yesterday, can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl—you who, in your very confidence with her, weigh everything by Gain; or, choosing her, if for a moment you were false enough to your own guiding principle to do so, do I not know that your repentance and regret would surely follow? I do, and I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were. You may—the memory of what is past half makes me hope you will—have pain in this. A very, very brief time, and you will dismiss the recollection of it, gladly, as an unprofitable dream, from which it happened well that you awoke. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!

(Belle departs quietly, leaving Teen Scrooge in the diminishing light.)

SCROOGE: Spirit! Show me no more! Conduct me home.
Why do you delight to torture me?

GHOST 1: One shadow more!

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SCROOGE: No more! No more. I don't wish to see it. Show me no more!

(Ghost 1 escorts Scrooge further on the walkway.)

GHOST 1: *(Points down.)* There.

(Lights reveal the same young woman, Belle, sitting on a small stool holding a young baby. Belle's Husband enters.)

HUSBAND: Belle, I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon.

BELLE: Who was it?

HUSBAND: Guess!

BELLE: How can I? Oh, don't I know? Mr. Scrooge.

HUSBAND: Mr. Scrooge it was. I passed his office window; and as it was not shut up, and he had a candle inside, I could scarcely help seeing him. His partner lies upon the point of death, I hear, and there he sat alone.

SCROOGE: Spirit! Remove me from this place.

GHOST 1: I told you these were shadows of the things that have been. That they are what they are, do not blame me.

SCROOGE: Remove me! I cannot bear it! *(Scrooge begins backing away from the spirit toward his bedchamber.)* Leave me! Take me back! Haunt me no longer!

(The lights fade on Scrooge and Ghost 1, allowing Scrooge time to get back into his own bed.)

HUSBAND: Quite alone in the world, I do believe, dear Belle.

BELLE: 'Tis, a pity. Poor old man.

(Lights cross fade from Belle and her Husband to Scrooge lying in bed.)

NARRATOR: And thus it was that Ebenezer Scrooge, exhausted and overcome by an irresistible drowsiness,

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barely had time to reel to bed before he sank into a heavy sleep.

(Lights fade to blackout.)

Scene 3
The Second of the Three Spirits

(Once again, the chimes strike the four quarters followed by a deeper tone to indicate the hour of one as the lights fade in.)

NARRATOR: Awaking in the middle of a prodigiously tough snore, and sitting up in bed to get his thoughts together, Scrooge had no occasion to be told that the bell was again upon the stroke of one. He felt that he was restored to consciousness in the right nick of time, for the especial purpose of holding a conference with the second messenger dispatched to him through Jacob Marley's intervention.

(The Ghost of Christmas Present now stands before Scrooge.)

GHOST 2: I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. Look upon me! You have never seen the like of me before!

SCROOGE: Never.

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

SCROOGE: I don't think I have. I am afraid I have not. Have you had many brothers, spirit?

GHOST 2: More than eighteen hundred.

SCROOGE: A tremendous family to provide for. Spirit, conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learned a lesson which is working now. Tonight, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.

GHOST 2: There are some upon this earth of yours who claim to know us, and who do their deeds of passion, pride, ill-will, hatred, envy, bigotry, and selfishness in our name, who are as strange to us, and all our kith and kin, as if they had never lived. Remember that, and charge their doings on themselves, not us.

SCROOGE: That I promise thee, spirit.

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GHOST 2: Look you now upon this dwelling place.

(Lights fade in on the Cratchit home downstage. Mrs. Cratchit is preparing dinner. Peter Cratchit sets the table.)

MRS. CRATCHIT: What has ever got your precious father, then? And your brother, Tiny Tim? And Martha warn't as late last Christmas Day by half an hour!

(Belinda and Martha enter.)

BELINDA: Here's Martha, Mother!

PETER: Here's Martha, Mother! Hurrah! There's such a goose, Martha!

MRS. CRATCHIT: *(To Martha.)* Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!

MARTHA: We'd a deal of work to finish up last night and had to clear away this morning, Mother.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Well, never mind so long as you are home. Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye!

BELINDA: No, no! There's Father coming! Hide, Martha, hide!

(Martha hides, as Bob Cratchit enters with Tiny Tim upon his shoulders. Tiny Tim carries a small, wooden crutch.)

SCROOGE: Bob Cratchit. He pleaded to have Christmas Day off. And that boy of his, that crippled boy –

GHOST 2: Quiet, man!

CRATCHIT: Why, where's our Martha?

MRS. CRATCHIT: Not coming.

CRATCHIT: Not coming! *(Sets Tiny Tim down.)* Not coming upon Christmas Day!

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(Martha can no longer bear to see her father so disappointed. She emerges from her hiding place and runs to her father. Tiny Tim joins Peter in setting the table. Tiny Tim is out of earshot of his parents.)

MRS. CRATCHIT: And how did little Tim behave?

CRATCHIT: As good as gold and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember, upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk and blind men see.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Tell me no more, now, Bob, or you'll have me weeping and spoiling our day. *(Yells to children.)* Come now, children. Dinner is ready.

(All take their seats at the table.)

PETER: I mashed the potatoes, Father.

BELINDA: And I made the applesauce.

CRATCHIT: Did you, now?

PETER: I set the table as well, Father.

BELINDA: And Martha brought us our goose.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Never have I seen such a goose!

CRATCHIT: All with a hand in our feast! I can wait no longer. Let us now give thanks. Timothy!

(Tiny Tim begins to lead the Cratchits in a prayer of thanksgiving. The scene fades slightly to Scrooge and Ghost 2, as the Cratchits begin their meal.)

SCROOGE: Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live.

GHOST 2: I see a vacant seat in the poor chimney corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die.

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SCROOGE: No, no! Oh, no, kind spirit! Say he will be spared.

GHOST 2: If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, none other of my race will find him here. What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the population.

SCROOGE: *(Recognizing his own words.)* "Decrease the population..."

GHOST 2: Man, if man you be in heart, not adamant, forbear that wicked cant until you have discovered what the surplus is, and where it is. Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be that in the sight of heaven you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child. O God! To hear the insect on the leaf pronouncing the too much life among his hungry brothers in the dust!

(The Cratchits have by this time nearly finished their meal.)

CRATCHIT: Never, Mrs. Cratchit, was there a better meal cooked.

MARTHA: It was wonderful, Mother.

PETER: Even the applesauce!

MRS. CRATCHIT: Hush, all of you. You'll make me proud. Besides, you haven't eaten it all at last. Timothy? *(Tiny Tim leaves the table to get bowls of pudding, which he then serves as his mother continues speaking.)* Yesterday, when you were all away, Timothy and I decided Christmas could not come and go without raisin bread pudding. We worked all afternoon, though I had my doubts about the quantity of flour.

CRATCHIT: Your raisin bread pudding, Mother, I regard as your greatest success achieved since we were married! *(Raising his glass.)* To Mr. Scrooge! I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, the founder of the feast!

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

CRATCHIT: My dear! The children! Christmas Day!

MRS. CRATCHIT: It should be Christmas Day, I am sure, on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow!

CRATCHIT: My dear, Christmas Day.

MRS. CRATCHIT: I'll drink his health for your sake and the day's, not for his. Long life to him! A merry Christmas and a happy new year! He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt!

CRATCHIT: Mother! A merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us.

TINY TIM: God bless us, every one!

(The lights fade on the Cratchits.)

SCROOGE: "God bless us, every one!" Poor, crippled boy!
(Laughter is heard from another area downstage. Startled.)
What's that? That laughter I recognize!

(Ghost 2 points below as the lights fade in on Fred and Fred's Wife.)

GHOST 2: Your nephew and his wife.

FRED: Ha, ha, ha, ha! He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live! He believed it, too!

FRED'S WIFE: More shame for him, Fred!

FRED: He's a comical old fellow, that's the truth; and not so pleasant as he might be. However, his offenses carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him.

FRED'S WIFE: I'm sure he is very rich, Fred. At least, you always tell me so.

FRED: What of that, my dear? His wealth is of no use to him. He doesn't do any good with it. He doesn't make himself

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comfortable with it. He hasn't the satisfaction of thinking that he is ever going to benefit us with it.

FRED'S WIFE: I have no patience with him.

FRED: Oh, I have! I am sorry for him. I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence?

FRED'S WIFE: The consequence, dear Frederick, is that year after year you persist in entreating Mr. Scrooge to come and dine with us. And year after year, he shames you in denial of that request.

FRED: The consequence, my dear, of his taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us, is, as I think, that he loses some pleasant moments, which could do him no harm. I am sure he loses pleasanter companions than he can find in his own thoughts, either in his moldy old office or his dusty chambers. I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him. He may rail at Christmas till he dies, but he can't help thinking better of it—I defy him—if he finds me going there, in good temper, year after year, and saying, "Uncle Scrooge, how are you?" If it only puts him in the vein to leave his poor clerk Cratchit 50 pounds, that's something, and I think I shook him, yesterday. He has given us plenty of merriment, I am sure, and it would be ungrateful not to drink his health. Here is a glass of mulled wine ready to our hand at the moment, and I say, "Uncle Scrooge! A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year" to the old man, wherever he is! He wouldn't take it from me, but may he have it, nevertheless. Uncle Scrooge!
(Raises his wine glass.)

FRED'S WIFE: Dear, stubborn Fred. Very well, then. *(Raises her wine glass.)* To Uncle Scrooge!

(The clock begins to toll twelve. Lights fade on Fred and his Wife. The Ghost of Christmas Present departs as Jacob Marley's voice is heard.)

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MARLEY: (*Voice-over.*) "Expect the third spirit on the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ceased to vibrate."

(Scrooge trembles and becomes aware of a draped and hooded figure appearing out of the mist. This is the Ghost Of Christmas Yet To Come. Ghost 3 is dressed entirely in black and beckons eerily to Scrooge, who falls upon his knees. Blackout.)

[End of Freeview]