

A CHRISTMAS

CAROL

By CHARLES DICKENS

Adapted for the stage by PETER DENYER

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A NOTE FROM THE ADAPTOR

"A CHRISTMAS CAROL" was first published in 1834 and ever since has remained one of Dickens' most popular titles - the characters of Ebenezer Scrooge, Bob Cratchit and Marley's Ghost are known to everyone. This is not a "Pantomime" version...I intended it to be a dramatised adaptation of the book - and it gives the actors involved a wonderful opportunity to play some of the greatest characters ever created. It is particularly well-suited to Societies who want to do something "different" and have more actors than singers, as although music is used throughout the show, there are no "solos" to be sung!

Good Luck!

PETER DENYER

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ALADDIN AND HIS WONDERFUL LAMP

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SINBAD THE SAILOR

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS

THE SNOW QUEEN

PETER PAN

PREVIOUS PRODUCTIONS

This script was originally produced in 1976 with a professional cast. Over the next four years there were four national tours and two Christmas productions at the Piccadilly and Victoria Palace Theatres in the West End. In 1999 the script underwent a major revision, adding stage directions and technical tips, thereby making it more accessible for amateur production. This is the version you have here.

ABOUT THE ADAPTOR

PETER DENYER has been writing for the theatre for more than twenty-five years, he has also directed hundreds of plays, musicals, and pantomimes, and since 1986 has been Artistic Director of Kevin Wood Pantomimes. Peter's pantomimes have been hailed as the best in the field, and his scripts cover the full canon of titles. Each Christmas there are countless presentations, making Peter one of the "most produced writers" in the country. But in spite of his success as a writer, it is as an actor that Peter is best known to the general public, with over two hundred television appearances to his credit. He is probably best remembered as the delightfully dopey Dennis in *Please Sir!* and *The Fenn Street Gang*, Michael in *Agony*, Malcolm in *Thicker Than Water* and Ralph in *Dear John*. What is not so well known, is that Peter's love for, and life long connection with, the stage began as an amateur with the Erith Playhouse back in the mid-sixties. In producing these scripts for your use, he feels he has gone some way to completing the circle.

CAST LIST**Principal Roles**

Charles Dickens -
Ebenezer Scrooge -
Bob Cratchit - Scrooge's clerk -
Fred - Scrooge's nephew -
Marley's Ghost -
The Ghost of Christmas Past -
Mr Fezziwig -
Mrs Fezziwig -
Young Scrooge -
Belle - Scrooge's fiancée -
The Ghost of Christmas Present -
Mrs Cratchit -
Peter Cratchit -
Martha Cratchit -
Belinda Cratchit -
Tiny Tim -
Fred's Wife -
Fred's Sister-in-law -
Topper -
The Ghost of Christmas Future -
Mrs Dilber (a Laundress) -
Mrs Snitchey (a Charwoman) -
Joe - a Pawnbroker -

Supporting Roles

- Theatre Manager -
- 2 Charity Collectors -
- Boy Carol-Singer -
- Boy Scrooge -
- Little Fran - Scrooge's sister -
- Dick Wilkins -
- A Fiddler -
- "Ignorance" and "Want" (Children) -
- 3 "City Gents" -
- An urchin -
- Fred's Maid -
- Guests at The Fezziwigs' Party -
- Customers at The Bakers -

Although there seem to be a lot of parts to fill, only SCROOGE and DICKENS need play the same role throughout. The original cast consisted of eight adults and two children. The ways of "doubling" are many and various but this is one way of working it.

Theatre Manager/Mr Fezziwig/Xmas Present/Joe
 Bob Cratchit/A Fiddler/City Gent
 Fred/Young Scrooge/City Gent
 Marley's Ghost/Dick Wilkins/Topper/Xmas Future
 Xmas Past/Peter Cratchit/City Gent
 Charity Collector/Mrs Fezziwig/A Plump Sister/Mrs Snitchey
 Belle/Fred's Wife/Martha Cratchit/Mrs Dilber
 Little Fran/Belinda Cratchit/Want/Fred's Maid
 Carol-singer/Boy Scrooge/Tiny Tim/Ignorance/Urchin

LIST OF SCENES**ACT ONE**

- PROLOGUE: The Theatre Royal
- SCENE 1: Scrooge's Counting House
- SCENE 2: Scrooge's Door
- SCENE 3: Scrooge's Rooms
- SCENE 4: The Schoolroom
- SCENE 5: Fezziwig's Warehouse
- SCENE 6: Young Scrooge's Rooms

ACT TWO

- SCENE 7: Scrooge's Rooms
- SCENE 8: Bob Cratchit's House
- SCENE 9: Fred's Sitting Room
- SCENE 10: Scrooge's Rooms
- SCENE 11: Bob Cratchit's House
- SCENE 12: Scrooge's Rooms
- SCENE 13: Scrooge's Door
- SCENE 14: Fred's Door
- SCENE 15: Scrooge's Counting House
- SCENE 16: Bob Cratchit's House

ACT ONE - PROLOGUE

THE THEATRE ROYAL

MUSIC CUE 1

As The House Lights dim a large, faintly perspiring, Victorian THEATRE MANAGER steps through the curtains: he nervously clears his throat.

MANAGER: Ladies and Gentlemen, and Boys and Girls, of course...it is with much pride and pleasure that the proprietors of The Theatre Royal announce the appearance, for the first time, of that celebrated man of letters - Mr Charles Dickens!

He leads the applause.

Mr Dickens will be reading to us tonight from a book that has been a universal, family favourite for some twenty years now - "A Christmas Carol"! Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you - Mr Charles Dickens!

The THEATRE MANAGER Exits: Tabs out. DICKENS Enters and acknowledges the applause, he moves to the lectern - which is set in a downstage corner - opens the book and begins to read...

DICKENS: A Christmas Carol: Stave One - Marley's Ghost. 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. Old Marley was as dead as a door nail! Scrooge knew that he was dead? Of course he did! How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for...I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole administrator, his sole executor, his sole friend... and sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up about the sad event, but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnised it with an undoubted bargain! Oh, but he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Secret and self-contained - and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features: he carried his own low temperature always about with him. He iced his office in the dog-days - and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

FX: The sounds of a London Street. Lights up revealing...

SCENE ONE

SCROOGE'S COUNTING-HOUSE

SCROOGE and BOB CRATCHIT are seated at their desks.

DICKENS: Once upon a time - of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve - old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather; and he could hear people in the court outside, go wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement-stones to warm them.

As DICKENS describes the scene SCROOGE and BOB CRATCHIT enact it.

DICKENS: The door of Scrooge's room was open so that he could keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room; and as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary to part, Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle...not being a man of strong imagination, he failed

The lights fade on the lectern: as DICKENS Exits FRED, SCROOGE's nephew, strides, cheerfully, into the counting-house. He gives BOB CRATCHIT a friendly pat on the back before addressing SCROOGE.

FRED: A Merry Christmas, Uncle!

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug!

FRED: Christmas a humbug, Uncle? You don't mean that, I'm 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 as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon Merry Christmas! What's Christmas time 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 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!! **[FRED laughs]** And buried with a stake of holly through his heart! **[FRED laughs]** He should!!

FRED: **[Placatingly]** Unc-le...

SCROOGE: **[Mimics FRED]** Neph-ew! 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 may it do you! Much good has it ever done you!

FRED: There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited - Christmas among the rest. But I have always thought of Christmas time as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable time; the only time of the year when men and women open their shut-up minds freely, and 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 it has done me good, will do me good...and I say, God bless it!

BOB CRATCHIT involuntarily applauds FRED's speech.

SCROOGE: **[To BOB]** Let me hear another sound from you - and you'll be keeping Christmas by losing your situation! **[To FRED]** You're quite a powerful speaker, sir - I wonder you don't go into Parliament!

FRED: Don't be angry, Uncle! Come - dine with us tomorrow!

SCROOGE: I'll see you in Hell, first!

FRED: But why?...Why?!

SCROOGE: Why did you get married?

FRED: ...Because I fell in love...

SCROOGE: **[Scornfully]**...Because you fell in love...!? Good afternoon!

SCROOGE resumes his work - in a mounting fury.

FRED: Uncle...you never came to see me before I got married! 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 made the effort in

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

SCROOGE: Good afternoon!

FRED starts to Exit then turns back.

FRED: And a Happy New Year!

SCROOGE: Good afternoon!!

FRED stops at BOB CRATCHIT's desk.

FRED: A Merry Christmas to you, Bob!

BOB: And a Merry Christmas to you, Master Fred!

FRED Exits.

SCROOGE: **[Muttering to himself]** There's another fellow, my clerk with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about "Merry Christmas"! I'll retire to Bedlam!!

Two CHARITY COLLECTORS Enter: one carries a collecting-box, the other is consulting a list, he/she addresses BOB CRATCHIT.

1st COLLECTOR: Scrooge and Marley's, I believe...?

BOB indicates SCROOGE's desk. The COLLECTORS advance.

1st COLLECTOR: 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.

2nd COLLECTOR; We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner...?

As The 2nd COLLECTOR says this he offers SCROOGE the collecting-box. SCROOGE reacts with horror at the ominous word "liberality" and pushes the collecting-box aside.

1st COLLECTOR: At this festive season of the year, Mr Scrooge, it is more than usually desirable that we should make some 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: **[Mildly]** Are there no prisons?

1st COLLECTOR: Plenty of prisons.

SCROOGE: And The Union Workhouses? Are they still in operation?

2nd COLLECTOR: They are still...I wish I could say they were not!

SCROOGE: The treadmill and The Poor Law are in full vigour then?

COLLECTORS: Both very busy, sir!

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.

SCROOGE resumes his work. The COLLECTORS are somewhat nonplussed: The 2nd COLLECTOR steps forward.

2nd COLLECTOR: You see, sir...a few of us are endeavouring to raise a fund to buy The Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth...**[Refers to his book]**...what shall I put you down for?

SCROOGE: **[Calmly]** Nothing.

2nd COLLECTOR: **[At first mystified, then thinking he knows the reason]** Ah...you wish to remain anonymous!

SCROOGE leaps to his feet and shouts. The COLLECTORS are terrified.

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

SCROOGE sits and resumes his work.

1st COLLECTOR: 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!

Shocked by this statement, the 1st COLLECTOR puts his hand on SCROOGE's shoulder.

SCROOGE: Besides...**[Removes the offending hand]**...Excuse me...I don't know that.

1st COLLECTOR: But you might know it!

SCROOGE rises and shouts.

SCROOGE: It's not my business! It's enough for a man to understand his own business - and not to interfere with other people's! Mine occupies me constantly! Good Afternoon!!

1st COLLECTOR: Good afternoon, sir.

The 1st COLLECTOR Exits in high dudgeon. The 2nd COLLECTOR is about to continue the argument but is quelled by SCROOGE's basilisk stare.

2nd COLLECTOR: **[Placatingly]** Good afternoon...

The 2nd COLLECTOR Exits, hurriedly...SCROOGE sits and resumes his work. DICKENS Enters: LX: Light comes up on the lectern.

DICKENS: Scrooge resumed his labours with an improved opinion of himself...and in a more facetious temper than was usual with him...

SCROOGE giggles. FX: The sound of London streets - street cries, carriages, etc.

DICKENS: Meanwhile the fog and darkness thickened! Piercing, biting, searching cold! One young urchin, gnawed by the hungry cold as bones are gnawed by dogs, stooped at Scrooge's keyhole, to regale him with a Christmas Carol...

LX: Lights fade on the lectern as a tuneless boy's voice is heard singing "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen": with a roar of anger SCROOGE hurls his umbrella at the door, the BOY yelps with fear and runs away. FX: A Church clock strikes seven. BOB CRATCHIT closes his ledger, he is about to rise when he catches SCROOGE's eye. SCROOGE checks his pocket-watch and waits a further seven seconds before reluctantly blowing out his own candle.

SCROOGE: Time to lock up, Cratchit.

BOB: Yes, sir.

BOB blows his candle out and puts on his hat and scarf.

SCROOGE: You'll want all day off tomorrow, I suppose?

BOB: If quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE: It's not convenient, and it's not fair! If I was 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 - just because it's... **[With distaste]...**"Christmas Day!"

BOB: It is only once a year, sir.

SCROOGE: **[Buttoning his coat]** A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December! But I suppose you must have the whole day. **[Puts his hat on]** Be here all the earlier next morning!

BOB: Yes, sir. I promise I will, sir!

SCROOGE: Bah!

BOB Exits with glee: SCROOGE Exits miserably. LX: Lights fade on the Counting House and come up on the lectern.

DICKENS: The office was closed in a twinkling, and Bob went down a slide on Cornhill, at the end of a lane of boys, twenty times in honour of it being Christmas Eve - and then ran home to Camden Town, as hard as he could pelt, to play at blindman's-bluff. Scrooge took his usual melancholy dinner, in his usual melancholy tavern; and having read all the newspapers, and beguiled the rest of the evening with his bankbook, went home to bed...

LX: Lights up onstage revealing...

SCENE TWO

THE DOOR

The Exterior of SCROOGE's house...the front door is revealed.

DICKENS: Scrooge lived in rooms which had once belonged to his deceased partner, Marley. They stood in a narrow road, which led into a dark yard. The house was old and dreary for nobody lived there now, except Scrooge, the other rooms being let out as offices...

SCROOGE Enters and moves slowly towards the door.

DICKENS: The yard was so dark that even Scrooge, who knew its every stone, had to grope with his hands...now, it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. Let it also be borne in mind that Scrooge had not bestowed one thought on Marley, since his last mention of his seven-years' dead partner that afternoon...And then let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge, having put his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker...not a knocker - but Marley's face!

MARLEY's face appears in the door. [See SCENERY NOTES]

DICKENS: Marley's face...!! It had a dismal light about it...like a bad lobster in a dark cellar. As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon...it was a knocker again.

MARLEY's face disappears.

DICKENS: To say that he was not startled, or that his blood did not run colder than usual, would be untrue; but he put his hand upon the key he had relinquished, turned it sturdily, and walked in...

SCROOGE opens the door...and examines the back of it.

DICKENS: He did pause before he shut the door...and he did look cautiously behind it first - as if he half-expected to be terrified by the sight of Marley's pigtail sticking out into the hall...but there was nothing on the back of the door, except the screws and nuts that held the knocker on.

SCROOGE: Pooh, pooh!

LX: Lights fade: SCROOGE goes in and shuts the door behind him.

DICKENS: Up Scrooge went, up the unlit stairs, not caring a button for that: darkness is cheap...and Scrooge liked it! But, before he shut his inner door, he walked through his rooms to see that all was right. Finally... he reached the bed-room...

LX: Lights up revealing...

SCENE THREE

SCROOGE'S ROOMS

Enter SCROOGE. As DICKENS speaks he checks the room.

DICKENS: ...Nobody behind the armchair...a small fire in the grate, with a little saucepan of gruel...Scrooge had a cold in his head...**[SCROOGE sneezes]**...Nobody under the bed...nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall...**[SCROOGE tentatively approaches his dressing-gown, and shakes it]**...Quite satisfied, he closed his door and locked himself in...double-locked himself in...**[SCROOGE locks, and then bolts, the door]**...Which was not his custom...

As DICKENS speaks, SCROOGE gets ready for bed – [See COSTUME NOTES].

DICKENS: í Thus secured against surprise, he took off his hat...his scarf...his coatí his shoesí and trousers...then put on his dressing-gown...and slippers...and his night-cap; and sat down before the fire to take his gruel...

SCROOGE takes a spoonful of gruel. FX: The distant rattling of chains. SCROOGE leaps to his feet.

SCROOGE: Humbug!

The sound stops: SCROOGE paces the room several times before returning to his chair and sitting.

DICKENS: As Scrooge threw his head back in the chair, his glance happened to rest upon a bell, a disused bell, that hung in the room, and communicated for

some reason now forgotten with a chamber in the highest storey of the building. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplicable dread, that as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing...

The bell starts to ring softly as light fades on the lectern and DICKENS Exits. FX: Every bell in the house starts to ring in an awful cacophony. The sound of chains rattling, then the cellar door crashing open and footsteps and chains coming up the stairs.

SCROOGE: It's humbug still! I won't believe it!

The door flies open: Enter MARLEY's ghost.

SCROOGE: 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? You're very particular - for a ghost.

MARLEY: In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.

SCROOGE: **[Recognising him]** Ah!...Can you...can you sit down?

MARLEY: I can.

SCROOGE: Do it then.

MARLEY sits. SCROOGE sits and attempts a carefree whistle to demonstrate his unconcern...it tails away.

MARLEY: You don't believe in me?

SCROOGE: I don't.

MARLEY: What evidence would you have of my reality, beyond that of your 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 cheat. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato! There's more of "gravy" than of "grave" about you...whatever you are!

With a great roar MARLEY rises and rattles his chains. SCROOGE falls to his knees in terror.

SCROOGE: 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!

Again MARLEY wails and rattles his chains.

SCROOGE: You are chained...tell me why?

MARLEY: I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it, link by link, and yard by yard. Is its pattern strange to you? Do you not know the weight and length of the strong chain you bear yourself?

SCROOGE, puzzled, looks at his ankles.

MARLEY: It was just as heavy and as long as this seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it since...it is a ponderous chain!

SCROOGE: **[Bewildered]** Jacob, old Jacob Marley...tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob.

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

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

MARLEY: Business?! Mankind was my business! The common welfare was my business! Charity, mercy, forbearance and benevolence, were all my business!!

MARLEY holds his chains at arms' length and flings them to the ground.

MARLEY: Hear me, Ebenezer! My time is nearly gone!

SCROOGE: I will! But don't be hard on me...and please don't be so "flowery", Jacob.

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.

SCROOGE shivers at the thought and wipes sweat from his brow.

MARLEY: That is no light part of my penance, either! I am here tonight to warn you that you still have a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope, that I have obtained for you.

SCROOGE: You always were a good friend to me - thankyou!

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 get it over with, Jacob?

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

During this speech MARLEY backs away from SCROOGE towards the window which opens behind him. FX: Ghostly wails and moans. MARLEY wails and Exits through the window as the lights come up on the lectern and DICKENS Enters. SCROOGE goes to the window and looks out.

DICKENS: The air filled with phantoms...wandering hither and thither in restless haste, and moaning, as they looked down on the poverty below them. Every one of them wore chains like Marley's Ghost. A few - they might be guilty governments? - were linked together: none were free! The misery with them all was clear - they wanted to interfere, for good, in human matters...but had lost the power for ever.

The sound of wailing fades away. SCROOGE shuts the window and draws the curtains.

DICKENS: Whether these creatures faded into mist, or mist enshrouded them, he could not tell; but they and their spirit voices faded away, until the night became as it had been before the surprising arrival of Jacob Marley's ghost...Scrooge tried to say "Humbug!"...

SCROOGE: Hum...

DICKENS: ...But stopped at the first syllable. And being, from the emotion he had undergone, or the conversation with the ghost, or the lateness of the

hour...went straight to bed without undressing, and fell asleep upon the instant...

LX: The lights fade on SCROOGE's ROOMS.

DICKENS: When Scrooge awoke it was so dark that even he, with his ferret eyes, could not pierce it. Then the chimes of a neighbouring church struck the four quarters. So, he listened for the hour...

LX: Lights fade on the lectern as DICKENS Exits: Lights up SCROOGE's ROOMS. FX: A church clock strikes twelve,

SCROOGE: ...Ten, eleven, twelve? What? It isn't possible that I have slept through a whole day and far into another night. Unless something has happened to the sun, and this is twelve at noon...?

SCROOGE gets out of bed, drawing the bed-curtains behind him and goes to the window and looks out into the dark.

SCROOGE: Twelve o'clock...? Was it a dream, or not? Old Jacob warned me that the visitation would occur at one o'clock; I shall stay awake until that hour...

SCROOGE sits in his armchair. FX: The church clock strikes the quarter.

SCROOGE: A quarter past...

FX: The clock strikes the half.

SCROOGE: Half past...

FX: The clock strikes the third quarter.

SCROOGE: A quarter to...

FX: The clock strikes one.

SCROOGE: The hour itself - and nothing else!

The bed-curtains are drawn aside: THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST is revealed, sitting on the bed.

SCROOGE: [Rises] Are you The Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?

XMAS PAST: I am!

SCROOGE: Who, and what, are you?

XMAS PAST: I am The Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE: Long past?

XMAS PAST: No...your past.

SCROOGE: May I enquire what brings you here?

XMAS PAST: Your welfare!

SCROOGE: **[Kneels before XMAS PAST]** I am much obliged, but I cannot help thinking that a good, night's sleep would help me more.

XMAS PAST: Your reclamation, then. Take heed! Rise...and walk with me!

As XMAS PAST leads SCROOGE away the lights fade on the bedroom and come up on the lectern. Enter DICKENS.

DICKENS: As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and stood upon an open country road, with fields on either side. The city had entirely vanished. The darkness and the mist had vanished with it, for it was a clear, cold, winter day with snow upon the ground.

As DICKENS speaks the lights come up on stage and XMAS PAST leads SCROOGE on.

SCROOGE: Good Heaven! I was brought up in this place - I was a boy here!

XMAS PAST: Your lip is trembling, and what is that upon your cheek?

SCROOGE: **[Brushing the tear aside]** It is a pimple...I pray you, lead me where you will.

XMAS PAST: You recollect this way?

SCROOGE: Remember it? I could walk it blindfold!

XMAS PAST: Strange to have forgotten it for so many years...let us go on. The school is not quite deserted, a solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left alone there still.

SCROOGE: I know it...

SCROOGE wipes his eyes as the lights come up revealing...

SCENE FOUR

THE SCHOOLROOM

MUSIC CUE 2

The BOY SCROOGE sitting, reading, on a bench.

DICKENS: The Ghost disclosed a long, bare, melancholy, room, made barer still by lines of plain, deal, forms. On one of these a lonely boy was reading

near a feeble fire; and Scrooge wept to his poor, forgotten, self he had used to be.

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

XMAS PAST: What is the matter?

SCROOGE: Nothing, nothing...there was a boy singing a Christmas carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something, that's all.

XMAS PAST: Let us see another Christmas...

XMAS PAST gestures: a girl, LITTLE FRAN, runs on and embraces The BOY SCROOGE affectionately.

LITTLE FRAN: Dear, dear brother! I have come to bring you home, dear Ebenezer! To bring you home, home, home!!

BOY SCROOGE: Home, Little Fran?

LITTLE FRAN: Yes! Home, for good and all. Home for ever and ever! Father is so much kinder than he used to be, and spoke so gently to me the other night, when I was going to bed, that I was not afraid to ask him, once more, if you might come home...

BOY SCROOGE: What did he say?

LITTLE FRAN: í He said "yes" - you could, and sent me in a coach to fetch you! And you'll never have to come back to this awful place again. But first we shall spend Christmas together, and have the merriest time in all the world!

BOY SCROOGE: Thankyou, Little Fran, thankyou!

Laughing and chattering the children run off. The lights fade on The Schoolroom.

XMAS PAST: Your sister was always a delicate creature...but she had a large heart.

SCROOGE: Indeed she did, Spirit - Fran was the kindest sister a man could have had!

XMAS PAST: And although she died a young woman, she did, I think, have children...?

SCROOGE: Just one child.

XMAS PAST: True...your nephew...Fred.

SCROOGE: **[Remembering his last meeting with FRED]... Yes...**

FX: The sounds of London streets. XMAS PAST leads SCROOGE away.

DICKENS: Although they had but that moment left the school behind them, they were now in the busy thoroughfares of a city. One could see here, by the dressing of the shops, that here too, it was Christmas time. The Spirit led Scrooge towards a large warehouse...

Lights come up revealing...

SCENE FIVE

FEZZIWIG'S WAREHOUSE

MR FEZZIWIG is dozing at his high desk.

XMAS PAST: Do you know this place?

SCROOGE: Know it? Of course I know it! I was apprenticed here!

MR FEZZIWIG suddenly sneezes and wakes himself up.

SCROOGE: Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart, it's old Fezziwig - alive again!

MR FEZZIWIG looks at his watch, laughs, then claps his hands and calls...

FEZZIWIG: Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!

SCROOGE, now a young man, and DICK WILKINS, his fellow-apprentice, run into the warehouse.

SCROOGE: Dick Wilkins, to be sure! Bless me, yes. There he is! **[A proud aside to XMAS PAST]** He was very much attached to me, was Dick! **[Remembering that DICK is now dead]**...Poor Dick! Dear, dear...

As the preparations for the party begin MR FEZZIWIG becomes increasingly excited and runs, giggling with happiness, around the stage.

FEZZIWIG: Hilli-ho! Clear away my lads, and lets have lots of room here! Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!

DICKENS: Clear away?! There was nothing they wouldn't have cleared away, or nothing they couldn't have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking on. It was done in a minute: the floor was swept and watered, the lamps were trimmed, fuel heaped upon the fire; and the warehouse was as snug, and warm, and dry, and bright a ball-room as you would desire to see upon a winter's night.

A FIDDLER Enters, goes to the desk, and begins tuning-up.

DICKENS: In came a fiddler with a music-book, and went up to Fezziwig's desk, made an orchestra of it - and tuned like fifty stomachaches! In came Mrs Fezziwig...one vast, substantial smile!

Enter MRS FEZZIWIG, with a sprig of mistletoe.

MRS FEZZIWIG: A Merry Christmas, my little sugar-plum! **[Holds the mistletoe over her face]**

FEZZIWIG: And a Merry Christmas to you, my little jujube!

MR and MRS FEZZIWIG attempt to kiss...though their combined girth does not make this easy.

DICKENS: In they all came...anyhow and everyhow!

YOUNG SCROOGE and BELLE, DICK WILKINS and his FIANCEE Enter with the other GUESTS, they greet MR and MRS FEZZIWIG.

SCROOGE: That's Belle...she was my fiancée...how beautiful she was...

FEZZIWIG: Fiddler - Sir Roger de Coverley!

MUSIC CUE 3

The GUESTS, with much laughter and energy, dance. As it progresses SCROOGE becomes so excited that XMAS PAST has to prevent him from joining in: at the end of the dance...

MRS FEZZIWIG: Come along everyone - supper is served!

THE GUESTS: Hurrah!/ How wonderful!/I'm starving!/Thankyou, Mrs Fezziwig!/Etc. **As MR and MRS FEZZIWIG lead the GUESTS off SCROOGE starts to follow them, calling "Goodbye!". The lights fade on the warehouse.**

XMAS PAST: A small matter to make these silly folks so full of gratitude.

SCROOGE: Small?

XMAS PAST: 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 this praise?

SCROOGE: It isn't that, it isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to make us happy or unhappy; to make his workers happy or unhappy. The price of such pleasure is immaterial. The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it costs a fortune...**[SCROOGE turns away]**

XMAS PAST: What is the matter?

SCROOGE: Nothing particular.

XMAS PAST: 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.

XMAS PAST: My time grows short...look!

Lights up revealing...

SCENE SIX

YOUNG SCROOGE'S ROOMS

YOUNG SCROOGE and BELLE are revealed.

BELLE: I matter little to you, Ebenezer, very little: another idol has displaced me, and if it can cheer and comfort you in times to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no reason for regret.

SCROOGE: What idol has displaced you?

BELLE: A golden one.

SCROOGE: This is the hypocrisy of the world! There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and yet there is nothing that it condemns as much as the pursuit of wealth.

BELLE: You fear "the world" too much! I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off, one by one, until the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you.

SCROOGE: What then? Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you...**[BELLE shakes her head]**...am I?

BELLE: Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor - and content to be so. You are changed...when it was made, you were another man.

SCROOGE: I was a boy!

BELLE: Your own feelings tell you that you were not what you are. I am. 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 from your promise to marry me.

SCROOGE: **[Warily - at the thought of "Breach of Promise"]** Have I ever sought release?

BELLE: In words...? No, never.

- SCROOGE: In what then?
- BELLE: In a changed nature, in an altered spirit; in anything that my love of any worth or value in your sight. If we were not engaged, tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now?...Ah, no.
- SCROOGE: You think not?
- BELLE: I do...and I release you, with a full heart, for the love of him you once were.
- BELLE takes off her engagement ring and gives it to YOUNG SCROOGE.**
- BELLE: You may - the memory of what is past half makes me hope you will - have pain in this. But for only a very, very brief time - and then you will dismiss the recollection of it gladly, as an unprofitable dream, which you will be glad to forget!...May you be happy in the life you have chosen!
- BELLE Exits: at first YOUNG SCROOGE thinks of stopping her, then stops, and looks at the ring in his hand...he tosses it in the air, catches it, puts it in his pocket, and Exits. SCROOGE sobs.**
- SCROOGE: Spirit, remove me from this place...
- XMAS PAST: I told you...these were the shadows of things that have been...that they are what they are...do not blame me.
- SCROOGE: Leave me! Take me back! Haunt me no longer!!
- As SCROOGE turns away in anguish XMAS PAST goes to the bed and stands/sits on it.**
- XMAS PAST: Of all you have seen...you were the sole architect! The life you have lived is the the life you chose
- The bed-curtains close.**
- SCROOGE: Why do you delight in torturing me? Show me no more! Take me home!!
- SCROOGE pulls the bed-curtains open: XMAS PAST has gone. Lights up on the lectern. MUSIC CUE 4**
- DICKENS: The Spirit disappeared from view as swiftly and silently as it had appeared. Scrooge was conscious of being exhausted, and being overcome by an irresistible drowsiness. He had barely time to reel to bed...before he sank into a heavy sleep.
- Lights fade on SCROOGE's ROOMS as he climbs into his bed, and on the lectern as DICKENS closes the book. Tabs in.**

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**SCENE SEVEN****SCROOGE'S ROOMS****MUSIC CUE 5**

Lights up revealing DICKENS at the lectern. A dim light in the bedroom shows SCROOGE asleep, and snoring, in bed.

DICKENS: Awaking in the middle of a prodigiously tough snore, and sitting up in bed to get his thoughts together, Scrooge somehow knew that the bell was once again upon the stroke of one; the time for his conference with the second of the Three Spirits. He established a sharp look-out all around the bed, for he wished to challenge the Spirit on the moment of his appearance, and did not wish to be taken by surprise and made nervous. Now being prepared for almost anything between a baby and a rhinoceros, he was not by any means prepared for nothing; and, consequently when the clock struck one...

FX: The church clock strikes one. From behind a screen in the corner a red glow illuminates the room.

DICKENS: ...and no shape appeared, he was taken with a violent fit of trembling. Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour went by, yet nothing came. All this time he lay upon his bed, the centre of a blaze of ruddy light, which streamed upon it when the clock proclaimed the hour; and which being only light, was more alarming than a dozen ghosts. At last, however, he began to think that the source of this ghostly light lay behind a screen that stood in the corner of his rooms; so he got up, put on his slippers, and shuffled slowly towards it...

As SCROOGE approaches the screen it flies out/slides off revealing THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT, holding a torch, seated on a throne.

XMAS PRESENT: Come closer! Come closer...and know me better, man! I am The Ghost of Christmas Present. Look upon me! You have never seen the likes of me before?

SCROOGE: Never...

XMAS PRESENT: Have you never met any of my brothers?

SCROOGE: I don't think so...have you many brothers, Spirit?

XMAS PRESENT: More than eighteen hundred!

SCROOGE: What a tremendous family to provide for!

XMAS PRESENT roars with laughter and stands up.

SCROOGE: Spirit, lead me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion and I learnt a lesson which is working now. Tonight, if you have anything to teach me, let me profit by it.

XMAS PRESENT: Touch my robe...

SCROOGE grasps the hem of XMAS PRESENT's robe. Lights fade on the room as XMAS PRESENT leads SCROOGE away.

DICKENS: The room vanished instantly and they stood in the city streets on Christmas morning, where - for the weather was severe - the people made a rough not unpleasant kind of music, by scraping the snow from the pavements in front of their houses.

Lights up revealing XMAS PRESENT and SCROOGE standing by a Baker's shop-sign. Various CUSTOMERS, including PETER CRATCHIT with his goose Enter carrying covered dishes.

DICKENS: At the same time there emerged from scores of side streets, lanes and nameless turnings, innumerable people, carrying their dinners to the bakers' shops.

As the CUSTOMERS queue to Enter the shop XMAS PRESENT, who is invisible to them, raises the lids of the dishes and sprinkles them with his torch.

DICKENS: The sight of these poor revellers appeared to interest The Spirit very much, for he stood with Scrooge beside him in a baker's doorway, and taking off the covers as their bearers passed, sprinkled incense on their dinners from his torch.

SCROOGE: Is there a peculiar flavour in what you sprinkle from your torch?

XMAS PRESENT: There is...my own.

SCROOGE: Would it apply to any kind of dinner on this day?

XMAS PRESENT: To any kindly given: to a poor one most.

SCROOGE: Why to a poor one most?

XMAS PRESENT: Because it needs it most.

DICKENS: They went on, invisible as they had been before, and because of the sympathy he had with all poor men The Ghost now led Scrooge to the house of his clerk. At the doorway The Spirit smiled, and stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling with the sprinkling of his torch. Think of that! Bob earned just fifteen "bob" a week himself; he pocketed on Saturdays but fifteen copies of his Christian name...and yet The Ghost of Christmas Present blessed his four roomed house.

Lights fade on the lectern, DICKENS Exits as lights come up revealing...

SCENE EIGHT

BOB CRATCHIT'S HOUSE

MRS CRATCHIT is laying the table. PETER is at the stove. BELINDA runs in.

BELINDA: Oh, mother! I have been to the baker's...and I smelt our Goose!

PETER: And how did you know it was our goose?

BELINDA: Because it was the best goose there, that's how! What are you doing, Peter?

PETER: I'm watching the potatoes, for mother.

BELINDA: Oh, let me help!

BELINDA crosses to the stove.

MRS CRATCHIT: Wherever can your precious father be then, and your brother, Tiny Tim? And our Martha wasn't as late last Christmas Day by half an hour!

Enter MARTHA.

MARTHA: Here's Martha, mother!

PETER:]Hurray!

BELINDA:]There's such a goose, Martha!

MRS CRATCHIT kisses MARTHA and helps her take off her bonnet and shawl. PETER goes to shut the door.

MRS CRATCHIT: Why, bless your heart alive, my dear - how late you are.

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

MRS CRATCHIT: Well, never mind, as long as you are here. Sit down by the fire, my dear, and have a warm...

PETER: No, no! Here's father coming. Hide, Martha, hide!

MARTHA hides as BOB Enters, carrying TINY TIM. MRS CRATCHIT, PETER and BELINDA assume positions and expressions of mock sadness.

BOB: Merry Christmas, everybody...why, where's our Martha?

MRS CRATCHIT: Not coming...

BOB: Not coming?

PETER:]Not coming!
BELINDA]

BOB: Not coming on Christmas Day?!

MRS CRATCHIT, PETER and BELINDA shake their heads, barely suppressing their giggles: MARTHA runs out of hiding and hugs BOB.

MARTHA: Father!

BOB: What...you little fibbers!

PETER carries TINY TIM over to the stove as MRS CRATCHIT leads BOB to his chair. MARTHA and BELINDA finish laying the table.

MRS CRATCHIT: And how did little Tim behave in church?

BOB: 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 good for them to remember, on Christmas Day, he who made lame beggars walk and blind men see.

DICKENS Enters as light comes up on the lectern. The CRATCHITS prepare the dinner.

DICKENS: Bob turned up his cuffs and mixed some hot water in a jug with gin and lemons, and stirred it round and round while Master Peter went off to fetch the goose.

PETER Exits.

DICKENS: Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds - a feathered phenomenon! And, in truth, it was something very like it in that house. Mrs Cratchit made the gravy hissing hot, Martha mashed the potatoes with incredible vigour and Belinda sweetened up the apple sauce. Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner of the table.

PETER Enters with the roast goose, covered with a cloth.

DICKENS: At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs Cratchit prepared to plunge the carving knife into the breast, but when she did - and the long expected gush of stuffing issued forth, a murmur of delight arose, all around the table.

The food is served and the gin punch poured.

DICKENS: There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. It's tenderness and flavour, size and cheapness, were admired by all. Eked out with the apple sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family.

Lights fade on the lectern as BOB stands and raises his glass in a toast.

BOB: A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!

The CRATCHITS stand and raise their glasses/cups.

THE CRATCHITS: A Merry Christmas to us all!

TINY TIM: God bless us, everyone!

Lights fade a little on the table as The CRATCHITS sit and resume their meal.

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

XMAS PRESENT: I see a vacant seat in the chimney corner; and a crutch, without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future...the child will die.

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

XMAS PRESENT: If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, no others of my race will find him here. What then? If he is likely to die, he had better do it...and "decrease the surplus population"!

SCROOGE hangs his head, remembering his former words.

XMAS PRESENT: Hear me, Ebenezer - in your heart...if you have one...ask yourself why you should decide which men should live, which men should die? It may, be in the sight of Heaven, that you are more worthless and less fit to live, than millions like this poor man's child.

The lights come up on the CRATCHITS: BOB stands and raises his glass.

BOB: Mr Scrooge! I give you, Mr Scrooge - the Founder of the Feast...

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!

BOB: **[Placatingly]** My dear...the children...Christmas Day!

MRS CRATCHIT: It could only be Christmas Day 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!

BOB: **[Trying to calm her down]** My dear...Christmas day...!

MRS CRATCHIT: Well...I'll drink his health for your sake, and the day's...but not for his! **[Stands and raises her glass...reluctantly]** A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year...he'll be very merry, and very happy, I've no doubt!...Mr Scrooge!

The CRATCHITS stand and, grudgingly, raise their glasses.

THE CRATCHITS: Mr Scrooge...a Merry Christmas to him...

DICKENS: It was the first of their proceedings which had no heartiness in it. Tiny Tim drank it last of all, but he didn't care tuppence for it: Scrooge was the ogre of the family. The mention of his name cast a dark shadow on the party...

BOB, determined to cheer the mood, stands and balances his glass on his head...The CRATCHITS applaud.

DICKENS: Which was not dispelled for a full five minutes! After it had passed away, they were ten times merrier than before - from the mere relief of Scrooge the Baleful being done with!

Lights slowly fade on The CRATCHIT's house as the family clear the table.

DICKENS: They were not a handsome family, they were not well-dressed; and Peter might have known...and very likely did...the inside of a pawn-brokers!...But they were happy, grateful, pleased with each other, and contented with the time. Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially, Tiny Tim, until the last...

DICKENS: It was a great surprise to Scrooge, while he was thus engaged, to hear a hearty laugh.

FRED is heard laughing.

DICKENS: It was a much greater surprise to Scrooge to recognise it as his own nephew's...

Lights up revealing...

SCENE NINE

FRED'S SITTING ROOM

DICKENS: ...and to behold a bright, dry, gleaming, room, with The Spirit standing smiling by his side, and looking at that same nephew with approving affability.

FRED is pouring port for his WIFE, TOPPER and THE PLUMP SISTER.

DICKENS: If you should happen, by any unlikely chance, to know a man more blessed in a laugh than Scrooge's nephew, all I can say is, I should like to know him too. Introduce him to me, and I'll cultivate his acquaintance!

Light fades on the lectern: DICKENS Exits.

FRED: Haha! Haha! He said that Christmas was a humbug...and he believed it, too!

WIFE: More shame for him, Fred!

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

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

WIFE: I have no patience with him.

SISTER: No, neither have I.

FRED: Oh, I have - I'm sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? Only himself. If he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us - what's the consequence? **[Teasingly]** He didn't lose much of a dinner.

WIFE: Indeed! I think he lost a very good dinner.

SISTER: Yes, a very good dinner, indeed.

FRED: I'm very glad to hear it because I haven't great faith in these young housekeepers. What do you say, Topper?

TOPPER: I am a bachelor, and bachelors are wretched creatures who have no right to express an opinion on such a subject...

WIFE: Do go on, Fred. **[To The SISTER]** Topper never finishes what he begins to say! He is such a ridiculous fellow!

FRED: I was going to say that the consequence of him not making merry with us, is that he loses some pleasant moments, which could do him no harm. 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 mood to leave his poor clerk fifty pounds, that's something.

SISTER: Oh yes, it is something. Indeed it is...something.

**The SISTER gets embarrassed and giggles, they all laugh.
DICKENS Enters: the lights come up on the lectern.**

DICKENS: After a while they played at forfeits; for it is good to be children sometimes - and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself.
FRED ties a blindfold over TOPPER's eyes: as DICKENS describes the scene FRED, his WIFE, TOPPER and The SISTER play it.

DICKENS: Stop! There was first a game of blind-man's bluff - of course there was. And I no more believe that Topper was really blind than I believe he had eyes in his boots! My opinion is, that it was a deal struck between him and Scrooge's nephew - the way he went after that plump sister was beyond belief! He wouldn't catch anybody else! If you stood right next to him, he'd sidle off in her direction. She often cried out that it wasn't fair, and, to tell the truth - it wasn't.

TOPPER catches The SISTER amid squeals of delight.

DICKENS: After this they played a game of "How, When and Where", for Scrooge's niece was very good at this - and so was Scrooge. For, quite forgetting in the interest he had in what was going on, that they could not hear his voice, he sometimes came out with his guess quite loud...and very often quite right too...

Lights fade on the lectern.

XMAS PRESENT: It is time to go.

SCROOGE: Dear Spirit, let us stay until the guests depart.

XMAS PRESENT: It cannot be.

SCROOGE: But here's a new game...one half hour, Spirit, only one...?

XMAS PRESENT: Very well...

FRED: No more arguments, then. We shall play "Yes and No"!

WIFE: Are you...a person?

FRED: No!

The others are momentarily nonplussed.

TOPPER: Oh...an animal, then?

FRED: ...Yes!

The WIFE and SISTER applaud: TOPPER is embarrassed by his own brilliance.

SISTER: A nice, little, furry animal?

FRED: No!!

WIFE: ...A savage animal, then - a wild beast?

FRED: **[Growling]** Yes.

WIFE: One that growls and grunts?

FRED: Yes.

TOPPER: From Africa...or India?

FRED: No...no.

SISTER: Does it live in the zoo?

FRED: No - in London...ah! **[Claps his hand over his mouth]**

TOPPER: Aha!...**[Thinks about London]**...A horse?

FRED: No...

WIFE: A cow?

FRED: No...

SISTER: A pussy-cat?

FRED; No!!

TOPPER: A bear?

FRED: No...

SISTER: A tiger?

FRED: In London?!...

SISTER: ...Sorry...

WIFE: ...A pig?

FRED: No...

WIFE: What can it be?

SCROOGE steps forward, certain he knows the answer.

SCROOGE: A dog!!

XMAS PRESENT holds up a warning finger...SCROOGE retreats.

WIFE: A bull?

FRED: No...

TOPPER: I don't think there's another creature in the universe.

FRED: Yes, there is...

SISTER: **[Leaps to her feet]** I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!

FRED: Well, what is it?

SISTER: It's your uncle - your Uncle Scrooge!

FRED: Yes!

TOPPER: Oh, well done! Jolly well done!

WIFE: Oh, Fred...how clever you are, how wonderful!

TOPPER: Well I think it's unfair. You said it wasn't a bear! That's enough to divert a fellow's train of thought, you know.

FRED: Well, 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 wine ready to hand, and I say "Uncle Scrooge"! A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the old man; he wouldn't take it from me, but he may have it, nevertheless...**[Stands and raises his glass]**...Uncle Scrooge!

The others stand and raise their glasses.

ALL: Uncle Scrooge!

SCROOGE: Thankyou, one and all...

XMAS PRESENT: Come, away...

XMAS PRESENT leads SCROOGE away as the lights fade on the sitting room and come up on the lectern.

DICKENS: It was a long night, if it was only a night; but Scrooge had his doubts about this, because the Christmas Holidays appeared to be condensed into the space of time they passed together. It was strange, too, that while Scrooge remained unaltered in his outward form, The Ghost grew older, clearly older. Scrooge had observed this change...

XMAS PRESENT leans on SCROOGE for support.

SCROOGE: Are Spirit's lives so short?

XMAS PRESENT: My life upon this globe is very brief: it ends tonight.

SCROOGE: Tonight?!

XMAS PRESENT: Tonight at midnight. The time is drawing near...and beware, for my departure leaves this world unguarded - and there are other spectres who haunt this very city where you live.

SCROOGE: **[Looks around warily]** Other spectres...? Are they of your family, Spirit?

XMAS PRESENT: They are of Man's! Behold the twin evils of Ignorance and Want! **Through a cloud of mist a barefoot BOY and GIRL, dressed in rags, Enter. They hold their arms out in supplication towards SCROOGE.**

XMAS PRESENT: Beware them both! But, most of all, beware Ignorance - for, unless it be erased, a fearful doom will fall upon this city!

SCROOGE: Is there no refuge or resource?

XMAS PRESENT: Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?

XMAS PRESENT moves between "IGNORANCE" and "WANT" and wraps them in his robe. FX: The church clock strikes twelve. Between the first six chimes XMAS PRESENT repeats "Are there no prisons?"..."Are there no workhouses" as he and the BOY and GIRL slowly Exit. FX: A howling wind. During the second six chimes THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE, shrouded in black, Enters through a cloud of mist. SCROOGE falls to his knees.

SCROOGE: Am I in the presence of..."The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come?"

XMAS FUTURE nods.

SCROOGE: You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before me; is that so, Spirit?

XMAS FUTURE nods...SCROOGE trembles.

SCROOGE: Ghost of The Future...I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to be a different man from the one I was, I am prepared to bear your company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?

XMAS FUTURE points onward.

SCROOGE: Lead on! Lead on! The night is waning fast! and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!

As XMAS FUTURE leads SCROOGE away the lights come up on the street.

DICKENS: The Phantom moved away as silently as it had come to him. Scrooge followed in the shadow of its robe. They scarcely seemed to enter the city, but there they were, in the heart of it, by the Exchange, amongst the merchants.

Two "CITY GENTS" Enter - deep in conversation. XMAS FUTURE points to them.

DICKENS: Observing that the hand was pointed to them, Scrooge advanced, to listen to their talk...

1st GENT: No, I don't know much about it, either way. I only know he's dead.

2nd GENT: When did he die?

1st GENT: Last night, I believe.

2nd GENT: Why, what was the matter with him? I thought he'd never die.

1st GENT: **[Shrugs]** God knows...

2nd GENT: What has he done with his money?

1st GENT: I haven't heard - left it to his company, perhaps. He certainly hasn't left it to me, that's all I know.

2nd GENT: Or me! **[The GENTS laugh]**

1st GENT: It's likely to be a very cheap funeral for, upon my life, I don't know anybody likely to go to it...suppose we make up a party and volunteer?

2nd GENT: I don't mind going - if a lunch is provided.

1st GENT: Well, I never eat lunch, but I'll offer to go, if anybody else will. When I come to think of it, I'm not sure that I wasn't his best friend; for we used to stop and speak whenever we met. Good day.

2nd GENT: Good day.

As The 1st GENT Exits SCROOGE attempts to speak but XMAS FUTURE silences him with a gesture and points to where a 3rd GENT has Entered: he approaches The 2nd GENT, they shake hands.

2nd GENT: How are you?

3rd GENT: How are you?

2nd GENT: Have you heard, "Old Scratch" has breathed his last...?

3rd GENT: **[Disinterestedly]** So I'm told...**[Shivers]** Cold, isn't it?

2nd GENT: Seasonable for Christmas time...you're not a skater, I suppose?

3rd GENT: No, no...better things to think about. Good morning.

2nd GENT: Morning.

The GENTS Exit: XMAS FUTURE leads SCROOGE away as lights fade on the street.

DICKENS: Scrooge was at first surprised that The Spirit should attach importance to such, apparently, trivial conversation; but feeling sure that they must have some hidden purpose, he resolved to treasure up every word he heard...and everything he saw...

Lights fade on the lectern: DICKENS Exits. Lights up revealing...

SCENE TEN

SCROOGE'S ROOMS

The room is bare, the bed curtains missing; on the bed lies a corpse, covered in a dirty, white sheet. Beside it sits, a somewhat apprehensive looking, woman - MRS DILBER, the Laundress. She jumps up, and protects her bundle, as MRS SNITCHEY, the Charwoman, Enters.

MRS SNITCHEY: Well...I thought, the charwoman, would be the first...but here's the laundress...Mrs Dilber! **[Gives MRS DILBER a mock curtsey and calls off]** Look here, Old Joe - here's a chance! If we haven't all three met...without meaning to!

Enter OLD JOE, the Pawnbroker.

JOE: We couldn't have met in a better place...**[Nods towards the bed]**...On the spot, as you might say! Haha! We're all suitable to our calling...we're well-matched! **[Lights his pipe]**

MRS SNITCHEY: What odds, then! What odds, Mrs Dilber? Every person has a right to take of themselves...**[Indicates the body]**...He always did!

MRS DILBER: That's true, indeed! No man more so.

MRS SNITCHEY: Well, then, don't stand staring as if you were afraid, woman. Who's the wiser? We're not going to pick holes in each other's coats, I suppose.

MRS DILBER: No, indeed.

MRS SNITCHEY: If he wanted to keep his things after he was dead, wicked old screw, why wasn't he more generous in his lifetime? If he had been, he'd have had someone to look after him when he was struck with Death...instead of lying there, gasping out his last...all alone...by himself.

MRS DILBER: That's the truest words that was ever spoke! It's a judgement on him!

MRS SNITCHEY: I wish it was an heavier one! Now - open my bundle, Old Joe, and let me know the value of it. Speak out, plain: I'm not afraid! We knew pretty well we were helping ourselves, before we met here...it's no sin! **[Offers her bundle to JOE]** Open the bundle, Joe.

MRS DILBER: Now, wait a minute, Missus - first come...first served! Take a look at mine, Joe. There's some good stuff here, look...

MRS DILBER opens her bundle, JOE examines the contents.

MRS DILBER: A pair of sheets, a towel, an overcoat and waistcoat...

JOE: Where's the buttons, eh?

MRS DILBER: He was too mean to buy new ones! But there's a nice pair of boots.

JOE: **[Sniffs them]** Mmm.

MRS DILBER: And...**[Taking them from her bodice]**...a pair of silver teaspoons... and sugar tongs!

MRS SNITCHEY looks on, green with envy, as JOE examines the hallmarks through a jeweller's glass.

JOE: Well, I've seen better...and I've seen worse! I'll give you...nine shillings for the lot! **[Gives MRS DILBER the money]**

MRS DILBER: Thank'ee, Joe!

MRS SNITCHEY: **[Scornfully - knowing MRS DILBER has been underpaid]** Huh!

JOE: I always give too much to ladies...it's a weakness of mine, and that's the way I ruin myself!

MRS DILBER: Thank'ee, Joe...Good day, Mrs Snitchey.

MRS DILBER Exits.

MRS SNITCHEY; ...Good riddance, Mrs Dilber! And now undo my bundle, Joe.

MRS SNITCHEY's bundle is wrapped in the bed curtains.

JOE: What do you call these? Bed curtains!

MRS SNITCHEY: Yes...bed curtains.

JOE: You don't mean to say you took 'em down, rings and all, with him a-lying there?

MRS SNITCHEY: Yes, I did. Why not?

JOE: You were born to make your fortune, and you'll certainly do it...

MRS SNITCHEY: I certainly shan't hold my hand back when I can get something in it by reaching it out, for the sake of such a man as he was, I promise you, Joe!...Don't drop ash on the blanket, now!

MRS SNITCHEY takes JOE's pipe.

JOE: Is it...**[Looks at the body]**...his blanket?

MRS SNITCHEY: Whose else's do you think? He isn't likely to take cold without it!

JOE drops the blanket.

JOE: I hope he didn't die of anything "catching"...

MRS SNITCHEY: Don't you be afraid of that, I ain't so fond of his company that I'd take such things, if he had...

MRS SNITCHEY tries to smoke JOE's pipe...and chokes.

JOE: Give that here...

JOE takes the pipe and then takes a shirt from MRS SNITCHEY's bundle...and examines it.

JOE: Mmm...mmm..

MRS SNITCHEY: You can look through that shirt till your eyes ache - you won't find an 'ole in it - it's the best he had...and they'd have wasted it if it hadn't been for me!

JOE: What do you mean..."wasting" of it?

MRS SNITCHEY: Putting it on him to be buried in! Somebody was fool enough to do it...but I took it off again! **[Indicates the body]** He couldn't look uglier than he does in his second-best shirt!!

JOE: Haha! Well, it's good stuff you've given; I'll give you fourteen -

MRS SNITCHEY: Joe...it's me, you're talking to...

JOE: ...Sixteen shillings for the lot - and not a penny more!

MRS SNITCHEY: Haha! This is the end of it, you see! He frightened everyone away from him when he was alive! only to profit us - when he was dead"

OLD JOE and MRS SNITCHEY Exit, laughing.

SCROOGE: Spirit, I see, I see! The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way, now. Tell me, who was that poor creature?

XMAS FUTURE points towards the head of the body. SCROOGE moves towards it, as if to lift the sheet, but cannot.

SCROOGE: I understand you, and I would do it if I could. But I have not the power, Spirit, I have not the power!

Lights fade on SCROOGE's rooms as XMAS FUTURE leads SCROOGE away.

SCROOGE: Spirit, I beseech you - let me see some tenderness connected with a death, or that dark chamber, which we left just now will be forever with me.

XMAS FUTURE nods and points. Lights up revealing...

SCENE ELEVEN

BOB CRATCHIT'S HOUSE

PETER is reading to BELINDA from The Bible.
PETER: And there entered a thought into the disciples, which should be the greater, and Jesus, seeing the -

MRS CRATCHIT Enters.

BELINDA: There you are, Mother; why, you look half frozen. You should have worn your shawl

MRS CRATCHIT: I just went along the street, to buy some ribbon, Belinda; some black ribbon for my bonnet. If we are to visit Tiny Tim's grave on Sunday, it is only right we should be seemly dressed.

BELINDA: Yes, mother.

MRS CRATCHIT sits and begins to trim her bonnet.

MRS CRATCHIT: And what have you been doing while I was out?

BELINDA: Peter has been reading to me.

PETER: From The Gospel of St Luke, mother.

MRS CRATCHIT: Well, read on my boy - if anything can comfort us in this time of sorrow, it is the words of Our Good Lord - read on.

PETER: And there entered a thought into the disciples, which should be the greater, and Jesus, seeing the thoughts of their hearts, took a little child and set him in the midst of them...

MRS CRATCHIT puts her bonnet to one side and rubs her eyes.

MRS CRATCHIT: The colour hurts my eyes...they're better now again. It makes them weak by candlelight...and I wouldn't show weak eyes to your father, when he comes home, for the world. It must be near his time.

PETER: Past it, rather; but I think he's walked a little slower than he used to, these last few evenings, Mother.

MRS CRATCHIT: I have known him walk...I have known him walk, with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed.

PETER:]And so have I, often.

BELINDA:]Indeed he did.

MRS CRATCHIT: But he was very light to carry, and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble...no trouble...and here's your father at the door...

MRS CRATCHIT wipes her eyes as BOB CRATCHIT Enters. He embraces MRS CRATCHIT and PETER, then sits beside the fire, with BELINDA on his knee.

BOB: Hello, mother. Hello, Peter. Hello, little Belinda...I trust we are all well? I am sorry I am so late.

MRS CRATCHIT: Did you go...there...today, Robert?

BOB: ...Yes, my dear...I wish you could have gone there. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is...but you'll see it often. I promised him that we'd walk there every Sunday...my little child...my little, little child!

BOB CRATCHIT cries. MRS CRATCHIT, PETER and BELINDA comfort him.

BOB: Thank you...I'm sorry, my dears...thank you...I can't tell you of the kindness of Mr Scrooge's nephew, Fred: whom I met this morning. Seeing me, "just a little down, you know", he asked me what had happened to distress me...so, I told him..."I am heartily sorry for it, Mr

Cratchit", he said; "and heartily sorry for your good wife!...If I can be of any service to you, in any way"...giving me his card..."that's where I live, please come to me". Now, it wasn't for the sake of anything he might be able to do for us, so much as for his kind manner, that this was quite delightful. It really seemed as if he'd known our Tiny Tim, and felt with us.

MRS CRATCHIT: I'm sure he's a good soul.

BOB: You would be even surer of it, my dear, if you saw and spoke to him. I shouldn't be at all surprised and, mark what I say, if he didn't offer Peter a better job.

MRS CRATCHIT: Only hear that, Peter.

BELINDA: **[Teasing him]** And then Peter will be keeping company with some girl, and setting up home for himself.

PETER: **[Pushing her away]** Don't be stupid!

BOB: It's just as likely as not, one of these days; though there's plenty of time for that. But however, and whenever, we part from one another; I am sure that none of us will forget poor Tiny Tim, shall we? Or this first parting that there was among us?

MRS CRATCHIT:]Never, my dear.

PETER:]Never, Father.

BELINDA:]Never, Father.

BOB: And I know, I know, my dears, that when we remember how patient and how mild he was we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves, and forget poor Tiny Tim in doing it.

MRS CRATCHIT:]No, never, my dear.

PETER:]No, never, Father.

BELINDA:]No, never, Father.

BOB: I am very happy...I am very happy.

The CRATCHITS embrace as the lights fade on BOB CRATCHIT'S HOUSE.

SCROOGE: Spectre, something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how. Good Spirit, let me see what I shall be in days to come...

XMAS FUTURE points: a dim light reveals a headstone.

SCROOGE: **[Realising]** Ah...am I that man who lay upon that bed...?

XMAS FUTURE nods gravely.

SCROOGE: ...Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point, answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that will be, or are they, or are they only shadows of things that may be?

XMAS FUTURE moves to the headstone and beckons to SCROOGE: who creeps, unwillingly, forward and reads the name.

SCROOGE: ...Ebenezer Scrooge...No, Spirit! Oh, no, no!! Spirit hear me! I am not the man I was! I will not be the man I would have been but for this meeting! Why show me this, if I am past all hope? Good Spirit, assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me by an altered life! I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present and the Future. I will not forget the lessons I have learnt. Oh, tell me, that I may sponge away the writing on this stone!!!

As SCROOGE reaches up to grasp his hand XMAS FUTURE pulls back his cowl, revealing a skull; SCROOGE reels back in horror and collapses in a dead faint. Blackout. FX: The distorted voice of SCROOGE is heard repeating "I will live in the Past, the Present and the Future!" Lights up revealing...

SCENE TWELVE

SCROOGE'S ROOMS

SCROOGE is lying, asleep, on the bed.

SCROOGE: I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future! The Ghosts of all Three shall strive within me! **[Wakes up with a start]** Oh, Jacob Marley! Heaven and Christmas Time be praised for this! **[Gets out of bed and kneels]** I say it on my knees, Old Jacob; on my knees! **[He touches the bed curtains]** They are not torn down, rings and all. They are here; I am here. The shadows of things that might be can be changed... they will be - I know they will!

SCROOGE rises and, clumsy with joy, starts to dress.

SCROOGE: I don't know what to do! I am as light as a feather; I am as merry as a schoolboy; I am as giddy as a drunken man. A Merry Christmas to everybody! A Happy New Year to all the world! **[Looks around the room]** There's the saucepan that the gruel was in!

SCROOGE: ¡ There's the door by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered! There's the corner where the Ghost of Christmas Present sat! There's the window where I saw the wandering Ghosts! It's all right, it's all true, it all happened. Hahaha! I don't know what day of the month it is! I don't know how long I've been among the Spirits! I don't know anything!

SCROOGE Exits. Lights fade to Blackout. FX: The sound of church bells pealing. Lights up revealing...

SCENE THIRTEEN

SCROOGE'S DOOR

As SCROOGE comes out of his door an URCHIN Enters.

SCROOGE: What's today?

URCHIN: Eh?

SCROOGE: What's today, my fine fellow?

URCHIN: Today? Why, Christmas day!

SCROOGE: It's Christmas Day! I haven't missed it...the Spirits have done it all in one night! They can do anything they like - of course they can, of course they can! Hello...my fine fellow!

URCHIN: **[Warily]** Hello...

SCROOGE: Do you know the poulterers' in the next street but one, at the corner?

URCHIN: 'Course I do.

SCROOGE: An intelligent boy...a remarkable boy! Do you know whether they've sold the prize turkey that was hanging up there? Not the little prize turkey; the big one!

SCROOGE holds his arms wide apart.

URCHIN: What, the one as big as me? **[Picks his nose]**

SCROOGE: What a delightful boy! It's a pleasure to talk to him. Yes, my buck.

URCHIN: It's 'anging there now.

SCROOGE: Is it?...Good...go and buy it!

URCHIN: You must be jokin', Mister! **[Starts to Exit]**

SCROOGE: No, no, I am in earnest. Go and buy it and bring it here so that I can give you the directions where to take it. Come back with it, and I'll give you a shilling. Come back with it in less than five minutes, and I'll give you half a crown!!

The URCHIN Exits at high speed.

SCROOGE: I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's! Though he won't know who has sent it! Haha! It's twice the size of Tiny Tim! **[Looks at the door knocker]** I shall love it as long as I live. I scarcely ever looked at it before. What an earnest expression it has on it's face...it's a wonderful knocker!

The URCHIN Enters, panting and staggering beneath the weight of a huge turkey.

SCROOGE: Here's the turkey! Whoop! **[Shakes the turkey's leg]** How do you do? Merry Christmas! **[To The URCHIN]** Why it's impossible to carry that to Camden Town. You must both have a cab!

DICKENS Enter: lights come up on the lectern and slowly fade on SCROOGE's door. SCROOGE and The URCHIN Exit.

DICKENS: The chuckle with which he said this, and the chuckle with which he paid for the turkey, and the chuckle with which he paid for the cab, were only exceeded by the chuckle with which he recompensed the boy. Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh. The father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs. He went to church and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk - that anything - could give him so much happiness.

Lights up revealing...

SCENE FOURTEEN

FRED'S DOOR

SCROOGE is walking, nervously, along the street.

DICKENS: In the afternoon, he turned his steps towards his nephew's house. He passed the door a dozen times before he had the courage to go up and knock, but he made a dash and did it!

SCROOGE knocks on FRED's door. The MAID, ugly and adenoidal, opens the door.

MAID Yes, sir?

SCROOGE: Is your master at home, my dear?

MAID: He's in the dining-room, sir, along with the mistress.

The MAID sniffs and wipes her nose on her sleeve.

SCROOGE: My, what a very nice little girl you are! Would you tell him I'm here, my love?

MAID: I'll ask him to come down, sir.

The MAID Exits.

SCROOGE: Thank'ee...he knows me, my dear.

FRED's voice is heard.

FRED: Why, bless my soul! Who can it be?

SCROOGE: [Calls] It is I, Fred...your Uncle Scrooge...

FRED appears in the doorway.

SCROOGE: ...I have come to dinner...will you let me in, Fred?

FRED: Uncle...! [Shakes his hand]

DICKENS: Let him in?! It's a mercy he didn't shake his arm off.

Lights fade on the door as FRED ushers SCROOGE in.

DICKENS: He was at home in five minutes. Nothing could be heartier. His niece looked just the same. So did Topper when he came. So did everyone when they came. Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful happiness! But he was early at the office next morning. Oh, he was early there. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had set his heart on. And he did it! The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past No Bob. He was a full eighteen minutes and a half behind his time.

Lights up revealing...

SCENE FIFTEEN

SCROOGE'S COUNTING HOUSE

SCROOGE is at his desk, writing in a ledger.

DICKENS: Scrooge sat with his door wide open so that he might see him come into the tank...

BOB CRATCHIT Enters, throws himself into the chair, and begins to write furiously.

SCROOGE: [Quietly] Hallo...
BOB CRATCHIT freezes in foreboding.

SCROOGE: What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?

BOB: I am very sorry, sir. I am behind my time.

SCROOGE: You are...yes, I think you are...step this way, if you please.

BOB rises and moves to the front of his desk.

BOB: It is only once a year, sir. It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir.

SCROOGE: Now I'll tell you what my friend, I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore, and therefore...**[SCROOGE rises ominously]**...I am about to raise your salary!

DICKENS: Bob trembled and got a little nearer to his ruler. He had a momentary idea of knocking Scrooge down with it; holding him, and calling for the people in the street outside for help...and a straight-jacket.

SCROOGE: **[Goes to BOB CRATCHIT and shakes his hand]** A Merry Christmas, Bob! A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow than I have given you for many a year!! I'll raise your salary and I shall assist your struggling family; and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon over a Christmas bowl of punch, Bob! **[SCROOGE puts his arm around BOB CRATCHIT]** First, make up the fire, and buy another coal scuttle, before you dot another "i", Bob Cratchit.

In a surge of emotion SCROOGE kisses BOB CRATCHIT on the top of his head; on BOB's look of amazement...Blackout on the Counting House.

DICKENS: Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man as the good old City knew. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter. He did not care, for his own heart laughed - and that was quite enough for him.

Lights up revealing...

SCENE FOURTEEN

BOB CRATCHIT'S HOUSE

SCROOGE and The CRATCHIT Family are seated around the table which is laden with festive fare.

DICKENS: He had no further conversations with Spirits; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us!

SCROOGE and The CRATCHITS stand and raise their glasses in a toast.

DICKENS: And so, as Tiny Tim observed...

TINY TIM: God bless us, everyone!

DICKENS: God bless us...everyone!

MUSIC CUE 6

The family start to sing DICKENS closes the book and moves to join them. The other members of The COMPANY Enter and join in.

THE END

SUGGESTED SONGS AND UNDERSCORING

Unlike the Pantomimes we publish, which contain a lot of song suggestions, there are very few Music Cues in this script; in fact, by using unaccompanied voices and some recorded music, A Christmas Carol could be performed without any live musicians at all. I feel this would be a pity as I feel the play is enhanced by the use of various links, character motifs and underscoring. I think that using traditional Christmas carols is one option, there are so many to choose from - and you don't have to pay PRS! These could either be sung by various members of the cast, or by a separate group of actors, dressed as a group of carol singers; some could be performed as solos, others by the whole group. [If there are times when you have problems with the speed of the scene changes adding a verse or two of a carol can help with this].

Alternatively you may like to make the show more of a musical by using more modern music, either from the film of "Scrooge" or from any other suitable musicals...if you wanted to the people queuing at The Baker's could start the scene with "Food, Glorious, Food!" from "Oliver". It is up to you, your Musical Director and the vocal capabilities of your company.

ACT ONE

Music Cue	Song/Music (Composers)	Performer(s)
1	Overture/Carol Medley	Instrumental/Singers
2	In The Bleak Midwinter	Boy Solo
3	Sir Roger De Coverley [Trad]	Instrumental/The Fiddler
4	Silent Night	Instrumental/Singers
5	Entr'acte/Christians Awake!	Instrumental/Singers
6	We Wish You A Merry Christmas	The Company

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS AND CASTING TIPS

As with all of Dickens' novels the characters in **A Christmas Carol** are painted in broad brush strokes, and playing them requires equal bravery. In saying this I do not mean "hamming it up" but playing both the drama and sentiment for all it is worth. Only the parts of Dickens and Scrooge are seen throughout the play and these two characters are the most crucial to cast.

Dickens: It is a fact that Dickens, later in his life, performed dramatised readings of his books, which were highly successful. Such was the emotional intensity of his performances that women in the audience fainted, and some people believe that the strain they imposed on Dickens contributed to his illness and eventual death! It is a part which requires no singing or dancing skills - in fact he moves so little during the play he could even be played by a wheelchair-bound actor. However he does need a good voice: he has to paint verbal pictures, create atmosphere, induce terror...and be able to time laughs! He will need to have all the audience's attention; at other times focus on the action onstage; and, sometimes, merely observe. Physical resemblance to Charles Dickens, [See COSTUME NOTES], is not important, neither is age - ideally mid-fifties, though fifteen years either way would be fine - but talent. Although he can read most of the part, there are moments when "a little learning" will let the actor lift his head, and address the audience directly.

Scrooge: One of the greatest characters Dickens ever created, Scrooge is a wonderful part for a character actor: ideally aged 50-60, though I have seen it played, very successfully, by an actor in his thirties. The key to playing Scrooge is his transformation from hard, heartless miser, through fear and understanding, to a child-like joy when he realises that his redemption is possible. Even in the early scenes, when Scrooge is at his nastiest, he possesses a sharp wit, and he has many opportunities for humour throughout the play which need to be exploited.

Bob Cratchit: Scrooge's hard done by clerk is a mild, kind man who accepts his appalling treatment because he needs to support his beloved family. His grief at the death of Tiny Tim is heartfelt, and by trying to show a brave face to his family, he can make the scene sad, without being overly sentimental. I always think of Bob as a small man in his mid-forties, but finding an actor who can play the "truth" of the part is the real criteria.

Fred: Scrooge's nephew, probably in his mid-twenties, is the complete opposite of his uncle. Generous, optimistic and cheerful. What stops him being overbearingly "goody-goody" is that he cannot help himself from teasing everybody - Scrooge, his wife, his sister-in-law - and Topper.

Marley's Ghost: A wonderfully theatrical part for a "big" actor, both physically and vocally. As the first of The Spirits to visit Scrooge, it is the power of his grief at the mistakes of his past that make Scrooge reconsider his own future.

The Ghost of Christmas Past: Described in the novel as a young man, though with grey hair, and dressed in a Greek tunic, and garlanded with flowers...you'll need a very brave young actor to do this! However, in a film version it was played by Dame Edith Evans! So, the casting possibilities are huge!! Xmas Past does not dominate Scrooge by vocal or physical power, but uses delicately, barbed jibes to make Scrooge reconsider his life. He/She represents what cannot be changed in Scrooge's past, and therefore probably need to be more "spiritual" than the other Ghosts...the voice of conscience.

The Fezziwigs: Somehow, looking at the novel's illustrations, I feel that they both need to be fat...fat enough to make their attempts to embrace, or dance, comically difficult. [See COSTUME NOTES] Mr Fezziwig, unlike Scrooge, loves Christmas, and is almost beside himself with pleasure...the best actor to play this part always reminded me of Ken Dodd, "How tickled I am!"...be brave!

Young Scrooge: Only two scenes, but crucial ones, as they show the transition between the carefree, young apprentice and the miser he is to become. He makes little effort to change Belle's mind, being more concerned that she does not intend suing him for breach of promise.

Belle: A brave and intelligent young woman, she has realised that Scrooge and she have grown apart and that marriage is no longer possible. In the middle of the nineteenth century for a woman to renounce her betrothal, thus risking remaining a spinster for the rest of her life, would be an act of tremendous courage.

The Ghost of Christmas Present: This is a "big" part, certainly in terms of performance, and probably in physical presence too. Xmas Present is an avuncular, hearty character - with more than a touch of Santa Claus about him. However, his final scene, where he denounces the horrors of Ignorance and Want, requires real dramatic strength.

Mrs Cratchit: A warm, motherly woman she is also a strong person who hates the way her husband is exploited by Scrooge, and is not afraid to say so. As with Bob, she needs to play the sorrow of the death of Tiny Tim, very much for real. Her age is not crucial and depending on the ages of her children, could be anywhere between 40 and 55.

Martha Cratchit: The eldest daughter, 18 to 25, who has already left home and works as a maid in a rich person's house.

Peter Cratchit: A teenage son, 14 to 17, who has just started an apprenticeship, probably in an office, but still lives at home. An intelligent lad - though still naive enough to be embarrassed when Belinda teases him about girlfriends.

Belinda Cratchit: A cheeky, excitable girl, 10 to 13, she needs to be able to show real emotion in the Tiny Tim scene.

Tiny Tim: Such a pivotal, though small, part. Depending on the options open to you he can be as young as 7, or played by a - preferably small - 12 year old. If the boy is small he can be carried by other members of the family; if older he should only walk with the aid of his crutch. I imagine that Tim has a deformed leg...rickets?...but that his death is caused by a combination of this weakness plus the more common Victorian diseases of pneumonia, anaemia or cholera.

Fred's Wife: Though this part need not be "doubled" with that of Belle, if it does, it shows Scrooge how happy he might have been, if he had married. Fred's wife is young, cheerful and spirited - I always think that this is the first Christmas Dinner that she has organised, which is why she is so concerned about the quality of the meal. 20 to 30?

Fred's Sister-in-law: Described by Dickens as "the plump sister", she should be younger than Fred's Wife, at her first dinner party, and so overwhelmed that she is only able to repeat

the last words she has heard. Obviously attracted by Topper, she is half repelled, half grateful, when he pursues her.

Topper: A real "Hooray, Henry". Think "Tim-Nice-But-Dim" and you won't go far wrong.

The Ghost of Christmas Future: Although a non-speaking part, a vital role. Showing Scrooge his future is a remorseless task, but Xmas Future has to be a strong actor.

Mrs Dilber: The laundress is an innocent compared with Mrs Snitchey, and although very wary of the proximity of the corpse, she is determined to make some money from the death of Scrooge.

Mrs Snitchey: Although the name of Mrs Snitchey is invented - the Charwoman - is one of Dickens' most grotesque characters. A brave, older actress is needed for a flamboyant part...her lack of respect, for the dead Scrooge, is ghoulish!

Joe - A Pawnbroker: One imagines that this is by no means the first time that Joe has been in this situation. He has no feelings for the dead man and is only concerned with paying the lowest price possible for the goods - though he meets his match in Mrs Snitchey!

A Theatre Manager: An imposing figure, though somewhat overawed by the presence of the great Dickens in his theatre.

The Charity Collectors: Whether played by men or women you can make these roles more interesting if one is played as innocent, genuinely good person and the other as a more unctuous "do-gooder". Their concern for the poor drives Scrooge mad, and one should feel that he is the only person who has refused to contribute to their fund.

Little Fran: Scrooge's sister, and Fred's mother, seen as a teenage girl. She is bright, cheerful and obviously loves her little brother very much.

The City Gents: Three of Scrooge's fellow merchants in the City. Their lack of concern about the death of "Old Scratch", though less ghoulish than that of Joe and Mrs Snitchey, is equally heartless.

An Urchin: A street-wise cockney...think "The Artful Dodger".

Fred's maid: If played as unattractive as possible, the sort of maid that only someone as good-hearted as Fred would employ, it makes Scrooge's compliments to her even funnier.

COSTUME DESCRIPTION

Dickens: At this time in his life Dickens looked like the familiar picture on the back of a ten pound note, therefore a beard and, depending on the actor's own hair, a wig will be needed. He may to show a certain theatrical flamboyance in his dress, perhaps a brocade waistcoat, but basic evening dress is fine. If the actor requires spectacles then try and make these as period as possible, half-moons look particularly effective.

Scrooge: Everyone has a picture of Scrooge in their brain and the rusty black suit, stovepipe hat and somewhat shabby overcoat are just what you need. If necessary a wig, a bald pate

with straggly, collar length white hair looks good; as can wire framed spectacles. However the actor does spend most of the play in his night attire and this is equally important. We used a tailed, white shirt, just below knee-length, with "long johns", slippers and a white night cap. If you wish you could add a full length, dark coloured, Victorian dressing gown to this costume. It greatly helps the undressing and dressing scenes if Scrooge wears his night shirt, with a detachable collar and tie, under his suit.

Bob Cratchit: Though poor, the Cratchits' are a "decent" family, and however threadbare their clothes may be they should look clean and well repaired. Too poor to own an overcoat, Bob needs a hat and a long, woollen scarf.

Fred: Scrooge's nephew, although not rich, obviously spends more on his clothes than his uncle!. Perhaps a light coloured suit or a contrasting jacket and trousers.

Marley's Ghost: A wonderful opportunity here; we chose to dress Marley in the clothes of the previous generation, a suit with knee breeches, tights and buckled shoes. If you use shades of grey these will enhance his ghostly appearance as will a formal white wig - with bow and pigtail - and grey-white make-up. The chains, which for ease of movement, are best made of plastic, can be found in any garden centre - add appropriately painted rubber balls and cash-boxes - these can be attached to the costume's shoulders and hips.

The Ghost of Christmas Past: Described in the novel as a young man, though with grey hair, and dressed in a Greek tunic, and garlanded with flowers...you'll need a very brave young actor to do this...I was lucky, I found one! However, in a later film version it was played by Dame Edith Evans! Whether male or female, Xmas Past, is the most ethereal of The Spirits, and I think that Greek-style draperies are an idea worth pursuing...it's up to you!

The Fezziwigs: This scene is the best opportunity to get away from the more usually monochromatic style of Victorian England. Mr Fezziwig, the complete opposite to Scrooge as a master, can be as bright as you like - checks, stripes, brocade...go for it! In the original illustrations Fezziwig has three cornet-shaped, corkscrews of red hair - one over each ear and the third in the centre of an otherwise totally bald head...great if you can afford it! Dickens describes Mrs Fezziwig as "one vast, substantial smile" - and for this reason we decided to give her a full, crinolined dress in a bright colour - and an outrageous, feathered head-dress.

Young Scrooge: To emphasise the difference between the cheerful atmosphere of the Fezziwig's party and Young Scrooge's scene with Belle, you can dress him in shirt sleeves with a brightly coloured waistcoat for the party and in a newer version of Scrooge's back suit for the second scene.

Belle: We dressed Belle in a grey, black and silver crinoline for the party scene and added a shawl and bonnet for Scene 6.

The Ghost of Christmas Present: Basically a floor length velvet robe, possibly trimmed with fur: to avoid him looking too much like Father Christmas we made this costume dark green. It needs to be full enough for him to wrap it around the two children who play Ignorance and Want. A red "Charles 11" full wig - these can be got quite cheaply in joke shops - and a wreath type head-dress of holly and ivy looks good.

The Cratchit Family: The same notes as those for Bob Cratchit - poor, but clean and well-repaired - apply. You may like to choose a colour theme for the family of soft, earth colours - browns, russets and creams. The exception could be Martha, who having come straight

from her job as a maid, could wear a black dress. All the family make entrances from outside the house and adding hats, bonnets, shawls, scarfs to their basic costumes will look good.

Fred's Wife: A good chance to show the passing of time between Scrooge's youth and the present by not using hooped crinolines but the less formal, softer shapes of the 1870's, maybe with a jacket top over a skirt with more fullness at the back. She is a reasonably well-off young woman and should look much smarter than her sibling...

Fred's Sister-in-law: "The plump sister" probably lacks a little taste, compared with Fred's Wife; it may be that the dress is too fussy, or not quite the right colour, or that her blouse has too much lace on it...it's up to you! Dickens describes her as wearing "a lace tucker" - maybe this can be a little over the top.

Topper: Probably another fashion disaster...a naff waistcoat, a floppy, bow tie in the wrong colour? [As they have retired for an after dinner port, both Fred and Topper could play this scene in shirt sleeves and waistcoats].

The Ghost of Christmas Future: Is the very image of The Grim Reaper: a black, cowed robe -the hood obscuring the face. The actual deathhead, when revealed, can be a joke shop skull, suitably repainted - or if you've got a good prop-maker a more realistic mask. If this mask is attached to a bone coloured balaclava or hood; if the inside of the cowl is then sewn to the edge of the skull there is no chance of the actor's head being revealed when the cowl is thrown back. Long black gloves, or sleeves and gloves, will be needed...you could paint white, spectral bones on the hands?

Mrs Dilber - The Laundress: should look as drab as possible for someone who makes her living washing clothes! Perhaps a mob cap? I have the feeling that Mrs Dilber has put a shawl over her head so that she will not be recognised when entering Scrooge's Rooms.

Mrs Snitchey - The Charwoman: Layers of skirts and shawls will help here, and lacking any shame in her behaviour, Mrs Snitchey might even be wearing her "best hat with a feather"!

Joe - A Pawnbroker: We dressed Joe in a long, grubby military-style greatcoat with plenty of inner pockets to hide his spoils in. As there is no reference to Joe being Jewish we decide to avoid a broad brimmed "Fagin" type hat and instead gave him a woollen balaclava, which looked suitably menacing. Fingerless gloves also look good.

A Theatre Manager: Evening dress, perhaps with a brightly coloured waistcoat.

The Charity Collectors: Male or female they need to look smartly middle class. Overcoats, with appropriate hats, scarfs, muffs etc are all you need.

Boy Scrooge: It helps establish the link with the older Scrooges if he wears a black suit.

Little Fran: Scrooge's sister has travelled by coach to meet him and needs an overcoat and bonnet, but could also wear a dress, shawl and bonnet: she should, of course, look smarter than Belinda Cratchit...which may be another part she will be playing!

Dick Wilkins: Young Scrooge's fellow apprentice, can be simply dressed in a shirt, waistcoat and trousers.

A Fiddler: Because The Fiddler plays the "Sir Roger de Coverley, a traditional English tune, rather than flamenco[!], I think you should resist the temptation to dress him as a gypsy! But he is a professional musician and could have a fancy costume of some kind, maybe a brocade waist-coat and a scarf at the neck.

Ignorance and Want: As these are symbolic figures, rather than real characters, we chose to dress them in ragged linen, suitably broken down. The Boy wore knee length trousers and a ragged shirt; The Girl, a ragged shift. Both were barefoot, dirty and suitably pallid in complexion.

The City Gents: Three of Scrooge's fellow merchants in the City. They need overcoats, hats and scarfs. If you wish to emphasise the heartless, money-obsessed nature of the scene, you could dress them all in black...if budgets allow.

An Urchin: A street-wise cockney...think "The Artful Dodger"...a battered top hat?

Fred's maid: A black dress, white cap and apron.

Guests at The Fezziwigs' Party: As bright and colourful as you can make it.

Customers at The Bakers: Poor, working class people.

Stagehands: If you choose to have your stage-hands in vision, if only partially, use black trousers, waistcoats and lighter coloured shirts. If you don't want to see them, "blacks" will be fine.

SCENERY AND PROP SUGGESTIONS

This section is intended to serve as a guide for the Stage Manager, Producer, and Designer. Please don't treat our recommendations as either essential or exhaustive, they are intended as a starting point. It is far better that you make the production your own, and unique to yourselves. So just because we've said you need a certain prop, or that some scenes should be in frontcloths while others should be fullstage, don't assume that that has to be. Only you know your capabilities in terms of facilities, budgets and staffing - so stick to what you know you can achieve. The show will work however you set it, and on whatever scale you and your fellows are comfortable at.

Dickens' lectern should, if possible, be set on the forestage; if not then as far DR or DL as you can. It may help if there is a reading light, disguised as a gas lamp on a stand. A stool or chair may be useful for Dickens to relax on when he is not speaking will be appreciated.

Unlike pantomimes, which rely on a full stage set, followed by a frontcloth scene to facilitate scene changes, I think A Christmas Carol is a play, better served by another style. Several of the "linking scenes" happen on "The Streets of London" so I suggest a basic set, to represent "London", with the individual, interior sets, placed within this. The basic set can be as simple as as "black box" formed by legs and tabs, or by using shaped, Victorian house-shaped wing flats, with a sky cloth, and a groundrow of the London skyline...which has to include St Paul's Cathedral!

Although there are 16 Scenes listed, you only really need five locations, the others can be differentiated by lighting. We used a shaped truck, using a central pivot - like a revolve -

which helped create four scenes. One fifth represented Scrooge's, and Fred's Door, this backed onto a two fifths section...the door, the fireplace and window of Scrooge's Rooms. The final two fifths of the truck were the backing for Bob Cratchit's House, showing the stove and grate. We used a separate truck in Scenes 3, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 12, which represented Scrooge's four-poster bed: this need not be a realistic size, 6' x 3' is fine. If the upstage side of the bed is backed by black tat this enables Xmas Past to enter unseen when the bed-curtains are closed - these curtains can easily be opened and closed from offstage by the use of Swish curtain track. If the big truck is not practical on your stage then you can use flattage...though I really would try to keep the bed truck as this speeds up the scene changes.

For Scenes 1, 5, 8, 11, 15 and 16 you could use three booked flats, each half of the book being about 8' x 4'; these will self supporting and by arranging them in different positions the various locations can be established. These could be solid canvas flats or, as we used, just frameworks made of lengths of 3" x 1". In all the scenes the use of different dressings can change the look completely.

If you use this open stage style then the scene changes will be partially visible but it is not distracting if the lighting concentrated on the areas of the stage where the action continues - often on the lectern. Members of the cast can help with the changes if required.

Much of the furniture listed can be used in several different scenes, for instance we used a flat topped table for Bob Cratchit's desk which, covered in a patched cloth, became the Cratchit's dining table.

PROLOGUE: THE THEATRE ROYAL

Is played in front of the house tabs; though, if you have unlimited budgets [!], you could build a false proscenium that looks like a "Pollock's" toy, Victorian theatre.

Props:

Dickens' lectern

The book

SC 1 & SC 15: SCROOGE'S COUNTING HOUSE

If using the book flat suggestion then in this scene they could be dressed with framed certificates, scrolls and other office paraphernalia. I think it looks good if Scrooge's desk is of the high, solid-fronted type, behind which Scrooge sits on a high stool.

Props: Scrooge's stool and desk, with inkwell, quill, a ledger and candlestick.

Bob Cratchit's chair and desk, with inkwell, quill, papers, ruler and candlestick.

Scrooge's fire and a coal scuttle

Bob's fire and a shovel

A hat stand

Scrooge's watch and umbrella

The Charity Collectors' collecting box and subscription list

SC 2, SC 13 & SC 14: SCROOGE/FRED'S DOOR

If this is not part of a truck then a simple door truck is fine. If a gauzed panel is put at head height, painted with a large "Lion's Head" type knocker, then by bringing the light up behind the door you can achieve the "dissolve" through to Marley's face. [When used as Fred's door disguise the knocker with a holly wreath].

Props: Scrooge's keys

SC 3, SC 6, SC 7, SC 9, SC 10 & SC 12: SCROOGE'S ROOMS

Whether trucked, or built with flattage, this scene needs a door to the exterior, a fireplace and the window through which Scrooge sees the wandering Spirits. Although it may not be architecturally likely, it works well if these are full length French Windows, opening on to what, one imagines, is a balcony. These, by using fishing line, can be opened from offstage thus giving Marley's Ghost a dramatic exit. [This basic set, with some additional furniture and dressings, can also be used as Fred's sitting room...[See Scene 9].

Props:

Scrooge's four poster bed	A shabby armchair
A low side table	A bell rope
A hat stand [Or coat hooks]	Marley's chains
A folding screen	

SC 4: THE SCHOOLROOM

You could use one or more of your book flats in this scene...but all you really need is small area, defined by light, and a wooden bench.

Props:

The bench	A book
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SC 5: FEZZIWIG'S WAREHOUSE

This scene, in a warehouse, is a chance to use as much of the stage as possible. Set your book flats wide apart, with Fezziwig's high desk, set UC. If you have any type of flying available then by adding a triangular, framed piece - representing the beams and trusses of a high warehouse - it will add another dimension; this need not be more than four foot high so may be an option for those venues which only have limited height. The flats and flying piece should be hung with garlands of Christmas decorations, somehow red and green - with lots of holly and ivy - seem particularly Victorian. [If required Young Scrooge and Dick Wilkins can add these decorations once the scenery has been set.]

Props:

A desk and stool [Use Scrooge's]	Fezziwig's watch and handkerchief
2 brooms	A violin and bow
Christmas decorations	Oil lamps
Crates/sacks/barrels to add to the feeling of a warehouse	

SC 6: YOUNG SCROOGE'S ROOMS

If you have the time and budget then a few different dressings - some cushions, a tablecloth, a vase of flowers, etc - could show how Scrooge's Rooms looked before he stopped caring about his surroundings.

Props:

Belle's engagement ring

SC 7: SCROOGE'S ROOMS

As Scene 6 except add, behind the folding screen, Xmas Present's throne - ideally set on a low rostrum. The throne can be as elaborate as you like...gold?...and looks good when surrounded by cornucopia, or urns, filled with fruit and flowers to suggest an abundance of the good things in life. If you have flying facilities the screen can be flown out, if not two stage crew, positioned behind it merely slide it offstage at the appropriate moment. Xmas Present's torch is of the Olympic type, hopefully one that can be illuminated by a bulb and battery and decorated with holly.

Props:

Xmas Present's throne	Torch
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The scene then moves to "Outside a Baker's Shop", which is your basic open stage, with a simple sign advertising the baker's, either hinged onto a wing flat or a simple "A frame" that stands on the ground. The food the customers are holding are in a variety of covered dishes or roasting trays covered in tea towels; just remember that these are very poor people, so no Le Creuset!

Props:

Baker's sign	Covered dishes, trays etc
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SC 8: BOB CRATCHIT'S HOUSE

Another chance to use your book flats, this time set closely together to emphasise the smallness of The Cratchit's dwelling. You could choose to hang a couple of small, washing lines on the flats this time, as this is probably the only room in the house with a source of heat. You will also need a fireplace and hob - no oven - for the preparation of the Christmas dinner. The furniture needs to be plain wood, no upholstery, though Bob could have a plain, wooden carver. Similarly the small props - china, cutlery, saucepans etc - should be plain and unmatching.

Props:

A fireplace and hob	A table and patched tablecloth
3 chairs, a stool and bench [as Scene 4]	The Goose
China, cutlery, cups, glasses	Jug, Gin bottle, lemons
Carving knife	Tiny Tim's crutch
3 saucepans [Mashed potatoes, gravy and apple sauce]	

SC 9: FRED'S SITTING ROOM

Here you have the choice of "re-dressing" the same set as Scrooge's Rooms - with a different flat replacing the bed - or using the book flats in a different positions. Either way this set needs to look the richest and most comfortable set of all. You could add swags of fabric around the mantelpiece, vases of flowers, and - as these were becoming popular at the time - lots of Christmas cards. You will need an armchair and a low table - use the ones from Scene 2 and add a colourful throwover, cushions and a lace tablecloth; and in addition a chaise longue or sofa.

Props:

A chaise	Armchair
A low table	Salver
Decanter of port	4 glasses

A blindfold

The scene then moves to the basic open stage with no extra scenery or props required until...

SC 10: SCROOGE'S ROOMS

As Scene 3 but with the bed curtains removed and, apart from the armchair, it is completely bare. On the bed is a dead body covered in a dirty, white sheet.

Props:

Joe's pipe	Matches
Jeweller's (or magnifying) glass	Coins
Mrs Dilber's bundle, wrapped in sheets	Towel
Waistcoat	Overcoat
A pair of boots	2 x silver teaspoons
Sugar tongs	
Mrs Snitchey's bundle, wrapped in the bed curtains	
Blanket	White shirt

SC 11: BOB CRATCHIT'S HOUSE

As Scene 8 but without the tablecloth, cooking utensils, china or cutlery.

Props:

A Bible	Mrs Cratchit's bonnet
Paper bag with black ribbon	Needle and thread
A candlestick	Tiny Tim's crutch

The scene then moves to the basic open stage with no extra scenery or props required apart from a headstone reading "EBENEZER SCROOGE...R.I.P.

SC 12: SCROOGE'S ROOMS

As Scene 3 [Bed curtains and dressings restored].

SC 13: SCROOGE'S DOOR

As Scene 2.

Props:

A giant turkey (if "plucked" it can also be used in scene 16!)
Scrooge's coins

SC 14: FRED'S DOOR

We used the same door as Scene 13, though you could alter its position, but add a...

Props:

A holly wreath

SC 15: SCROOGE'S COUNTING HOUSE

As Scene 1: but the fires, coal scuttle and shovel aren't really needed if this simplifies the scene change.

SC 16: BOB CRATCHIT'S HOUSE

As Scene 8: but add the Christmas decorations used in Scene 5, replace the goose with the giant turkey...and, if you're really fussy...get matching china and glasses! [All this suggests is that The Cratchits' fortunes have improved...they are very optional!]

SOUND EFFECTS AND LIGHTING TIPS

In the script we have indicated where sound effects would be beneficial by using the common abbreviation FX, and then describing what the effect should sound like. You'll find everything you need on the BBC sound effect discs.

Suggestions as to what the lighting should be are also contained within the script. In this show you will need to be able to focus attention on, occasionally quite small, separate areas of the stage: particularly a "special" on Dickens' lectern. A basic colour mix, using "Steel" for the Scrooge scenes and "Straw", for The Cratchit scenes, will allow most effects - but a "Red" state for the Xmas Present scenes, if only for first one, is a bonus. Because I had a follow spot available I chose to use this only on "The Spirits": breaking the hard edges of the light by using a gobo, and using different "gels"...Steel for Marley's Ghost/Frost for Xmas Past/Red for Xmas Present/Green for Xmas Past]...and employing a tight focus, was able to emphasise their "ghostly" look. But it's up to you how you want it to look!

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