

NODA Presents

# **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

## **OTHER TITLES AVAILABLE BY PETER DENYER**

ALADDIN AND HIS WONDERFUL LAMP

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

CINDERELLA

DICK WHITTINGTON AND HIS CAT

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MOTHER GOOSE

ROBIN HOOD AND THE BABES IN THE WOOD

SINBAD THE SAILOR

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS

THE SNOW QUEEN

## **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. Fiinally... 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: ...Thus secured against surprise, he took off his hat...his scarf...his coat...his shoes...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 "gravey" 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: ...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

**END OF PERUSAL SCRIPT**