

**NODA PANTOMIMES PRESENT**

***OH SCROOGE!***

**A Christmas Fantasy**

BY

**Leonard H. Caddy**

Based on Dickens 'A Christmas Carol'

NODA Pantomimes

15 The Metro Centre, Peterborough, PE2 7UH

Tel: (00 +44) (0) 1733 374790 – E-mail: [info@noda.org.uk](mailto:info@noda.org.uk) – [www.noda.org.uk](http://www.noda.org.uk)

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NODA LTD  
15 The Metro Centre  
Peterborough PE2 7UH  
Telephone: 01733 374790  
Fax: 01733 237286  
Email: [info@noda.org.uk](mailto:info@noda.org.uk)  
[www.noda.org.uk](http://www.noda.org.uk)

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## INTRODUCTION

'OH SCROOGE!' is an idea for those who want a Christmas entertainment but would like something other than a same familiar pantomime titles. Although it does not have a dame or a principal boy it does have many of the other aspects of pantomime, audience participation, good and bad spirits, comedy ghost etc etc. and should be presented with all the robust attack of a pantomime. Particularly scenes such as the ragpickers and the cavemen. Having said that however, as with pantomime the serious bits should be taken seriously, Scrooge's dilemma and pain for instance should be very real and the verse sequences played with sincerity.

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### \* SCENES \*

Because the story of 'A Christmas Carol' is very well known and is somewhat sombre in nature the scenery has been kept to a minimum just using free standing doors and windows. Heavy realistic sets would present a far too heavy realistic atmosphere, and this is fun and fantasy. For once economy is on the side of art. But make as much use of lighting effects as possible.

SCENE ONE	(p.1)	OUTSIDE OF 'SCROOGE & MARLEY'
SCENE TWO	(p.8)	BY THE CRATCHITS FIRESIDE
SCENE THREE	(p.15)	SCROOGE'S EMPTY HEARTH
SCENE FOUR	(p.19)	BEYOND REALITY
SCENE FIVE	(p.26)	A TIME LONG GONE

Interval.

SCENE SIX	(p.32)	A TIME LESS GONE
SCENE SEVEN	(p.36)	A CHRISTMAS TIME AT - (title to suit item)
SCENE EIGHT	(p.37)	CHRISTMAS TIME AT THE CRATCHIT'S
SCENE NINE	(p.41)	WAY WAY BACK
SCENE TEN	(p.44)	WHAT FUTURE?
SCENE ELEVEN	(p.50)	AT THE CRATCHIT'S, BUT -
SCENE TWELVE	(p.55)	NOWHERE BUT HERE
SCENE THIRTEEN	(p.56)	AT THE CRATCHIT'S (NO BUTS)

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## --CHARACTERS--

The characters are very much as Dickens wrote, with the possible exception of Frederick who is younger and the Cratchits who are a little more lively; but any similarity to Marley's Ghost is of course purely nominal. It is presumed that the supporting parts are all played by the named characters as indicated, with a minimum of costume change. But it is possible if a larger company wishes to use more people for each part to be played by a different person, (with any necessary changes of dialogue)

The part of Future can be played by either a boy or a girl. In truth he is the future Father Christmas and is referred to as 'he' but young 'spirits' are more often portrayed by girls hence the directions as 'she'.

### C A S T

SCROOGE	As Dickens wrote
	The Spirits
CHRISTMAS PRESENT	Father Christmas
CHRISTMAS PAST	Very old
CHRISTMAS FUTURE	Young and perky
MARLEY'S GHOST	A brittle crotchety old scoundrel

### The Cratchits

BOB	A mature Buttons
MRS CRATCHIT	Full of humility and love
MARTHA	A victorian young lady
PETER	Typical boy
BELINDA	The younger sister
TINY TIM	Crippled but spirited

### Others

FREDERICK	Bright talkative nephew of Scrooge
FAITH GOODBODY	A hearty 'do-gooder'
HOPE GOODBODY	Likewise, but meeker

also (played by the above)

YOUNG SCROOGE, FAN, SCHOOL MASTER, TEENAGE SCROOGE, DICKEN, FEZZIWIG, BELLE, BUSINESS MAN, UNDERTAKER, RAGPICKERS.

and

CHORUS of TOWNSFOLK, PARTYGOERS, RAGPICKERS etc.

--ooooOOOOoooo--

## MUSICAL ITEMS

- MUSIC NO 1. OPENNING NUMBER.  
A carol or selection of carols or christmas songs to set a happy christmas atmosphere
- MUSIC NO 2. BOB CRATCHIT & COMPANY.  
A happy lively number with the family
- MUSIC NO 3. THE CRATCHITS.  
Short reprise of No 2. to end scene.
- MUSIC NO 4. THE CRATCHITS WISH.  
They each sing a snatch of song to illustrate their dream.
- MUSIC NO 5. COMEDY TRIO.  
Christmas, Bob Cratchit and Marley's Ghost sing a spookey number.
- MUSIC NO 6. THE GOODBODIES DUET.  
A number about helping people OR about them being sisters.
- MUSIC NO 7. SOLO CHRISTMAS.  
A song of hope or determination,
- MUSIC NO 8. SCHOOLDAYS - CONCERTED.  
A song/dance item of children's happiness.
- MUSIC NO 9. FEZZIWIGS CHRISTMAS - CONCERTED.  
A song/dance Act Finale
- MUSIC NO 10. TRIO - CHRISTMAS, PAST & FUTURE.  
A catchy opening number.
- MUSIC NO 11. COMPANY NUMBER.  
A musical item of the pleasure of Christmas, giving presents, dancing, games etc.
- MUSIC NO 12. SCROOGE'S DILEMA.  
A solo or item to portray the Miser's doubt.
- MUSIC NO 13. DUET - BOB & MRS CRATCHIT.  
A gently romantic song of past present or future happiness.
- MUSIC NO 14. CONCERTED - LADIES (& CHORUS).  
A robust merry number with grotesque dance.
- MUSIC NO 15. CONCERTED - COMPANY.  
A happy scene finale in which Scrooge is feted.
- MUSIC NO 16. LOVE DUET - MARTHA & FREDERICK.  
A sincere little romantic number.
- MUSIC NO 17. COMMUNITY SONG - BOB & AUDIENCE.
- MUSIC NO 18. WALKDOWN - FULL COMPANY.

SCENE ONE

OUTSIDE THE OFFICE OF 'SCROOGE & MARLEY'

Permanent LONDON ground-row (or skyline) on (permanent) sky back-cloth. Operative doorway (labelled 'SCROOGE AND MARLEY'S') R. another doorway labelled 'NOT SCROOGE AND MARLEY'S' L. Profile LAMP-POST and/or HORSE-TROUGH C.

It is Christmas eve, it is a busy scene; there are CAROLLERS, one with a lantern on a pole, MRS CRATCHIT and her CHILDREN, the GOODBODIES etc.

MUSIC NO 1. OPENING NUMBER.

A carol or selection of carols or Christmas songs to set a happy Christmas atmosphere the item ending with a tableau of 'CHRISTMAS CARD' happiness.

The picture breaks up with cries of "Happy Christmas", "And a happy Christmas to you", being distinctly repeated. CHRISTMAS enters and comes forward to talk to the audience. Action continues in mime behind of people coming and going, greeting and donating money to the Goodbodies.

CHRISTMAS Happy Christmas! (assuming at least one voice responds with a 'and a happy Christmas to you') Thank you - both. (tries again) Happy Christmas! (encourages the response by conducting it) That's better, not as good as it will be, but better. (he chuckles, he chuckles a lot, with a 'ho ho ho' rather than a 'ha ha ha') Yes, Christmas, that's who I am, the spirit of Christmas. I come down to earth every year to remind people to be kind to each other. And they are -

FAITH (to passer by) Remember the orphans at Christmas sir.

PASSER-BY Of course, of course. (giving her some money) If we cannot remember the poor little souls at this time of year when can we remember them eh?

HOPE God bless you sir (madam).

FAITH A happy Christmas to you.

PASSER-BY And to you.

There are more murmurs of 'Happy Christmas to you', 'And to you'.

CHRISTMAS You see. The only thing is that during the rest of year they forget all about being kind and I have to come back again the next Christmas to remind them again. But I don't mind, I enjoy making people happy.

The GOODBODIES have approached another person but they have refused their appeal.

FAITH But sir (madam).

HOPE We will add you to our list.

FAITH Nothing at all?

PASSER-BY Nothing at all. (turns away)

CHRISTMAS (to audience) Oh dear, excuse me a moment.

CHRISTMAS steps U.S. and taps the MEAN PASSER-BY on the shoulder as they pass him. THEY stop. CHRISTMAS coughs. THEY think. CHRISTMAS nods. THEY turn and call after the GOODBODIES who have turned away.

PASSER-BY Excuse me a moment. The orphans did you say.

The GOODBODIES and the MEAN PASSER-BY meet C. and the donation is handed over.

CHRISTMAS (D.S. again) The world is a better place while I am around. Mark you I have to come down earlier each year. If it goes on like this you will soon be seeing me by - (as if it was so outrageous as to be funny) a whole week before Christmas. Well, better get on, I'll just pop round and see how things are in ..... (local district or village) I think, I mean, you can never tell there can you. Nice to have met you, don't go away, I'll be back.

CHRISTMAS exits. The scene behind has gradually broken up and ALL have exited leaving the CRATCHITS and the GOODBODIES.

TINY TIM Mama, can I give the ladies something for the orphans?

FAITH We only collect from rich people.

TINY TIM Please mama. We must be richer than somebody.

The GROWN UPS laugh at his logic and MRS CRATCHIT looks through her bag.

MRS. C. Let's see. I can only spare a farthing, will that do.

The GOODBODIES are about to protest that 'they couldn't' - but

TINY TIM Let me put it in the ladies bag. (He takes the coin and proudly places it in) There, it's not much but it must help a little. Will our name go on your list now?

FAITH It will indeed.

HOPE Right at the top.

TINY TIM is pleased and flattered, the GOODBODIES thank them again and move away.

TINY TIM           Mama.

MRS. C.            What is it my dear?

TINY TIM           What is an orphan?

BOB CRATCHIT enters (THROUGH the 'SCROOGE' doorway).

BOB C.            Someone who doesn't have a daddy like me.

The CHILDREN cluster round him. HE kisses his wife. THEY ALL laugh. During this FREDERICK enters looking for an address.

MRS. C.           (referring to the kiss) Oh, Mister Cratchit, really.

BELINDA           Have you finished for the day daddy?

PETER             Has that mean old devil let you out early for once?

The CHILDREN are excited at the prospect.

MRS. C.           Don't refer to Mr Scrooge like that Peter. (to her husband) Has he?

BOB C.            No such luck my dear. More like I shall have to work late again.

BELINDA           On Christmas eve!?

MRS. C.           The mean old devil.

THEY laugh at her as SHE reacts coyly. FREDERICK comes forward.

FREDERICK        Excuse me interrupting, but I am told that the office of 'Scrooge and Marley, Money Lenders and Brokers' is in this vicinity, but I cannot see it. Are you familiar with the establishment at all?

BOB C.            My dear sir, I am so familiar with it that I could describe it's every nook and cranny with my eyes shut. But what is so smart a young man as yourself wanting with such a dismal concern? I implore do not get yourself involved with that business.

FREDERICK        (laughing) I do not intend to. Pon my soul, I come to give not to borrow.

BOB C.            You are going to give money to Scrooge!!

FREDERICK        No, we have little enough for our own needs - but you see Mister Scrooge is my uncle, my mother was his sister, well she still is of course, but we have lived in the country and have only just arrived in London and we thought it would be a generous gesture if we were to extend him the courtesy of the season and invite him to dinner tomorrow.



HIS face falls as he sees their incredulous expressions.

BOB C. You are going to invite Ebenezer Scrooge to your Christmas dinner!?!

FREDERICK Yes. He'll enjoy himself.

BOB C. Like a candle in a pail of water. He is only happy when he is counting money.

FREDERICK I am sure you exaggerate sir. Let us find out this instant, which did you say was his office?

BOB C. (indicates) That's the one. But I am afraid it would be no use, he is out at the moment - collecting money.

FREDERICK Then I shall try again later. I thank you sir, I am sure I shall prove you wrong, no man would could be so sad as to refuse his own family at Christmas. The compliments of the season to you, and to your family.

CRATCHITS Compliments of the season.

TINY TIM Happy Christmas.

FREDERICK jauntily exits. MRS CRATCHIT looks after him approvingly.

MRS. C. What a very pleasant young man.

BOB C. The more so seeing who he is related to. Do you know where old Scrooge has gone to? He has gone round in person to see that someone settles an outstanding account. On today of all days. You'd think that on this once a year day he would soften up a little.

MUSIC NO 2. BOB CRATCHIT & COMPANY.

A happy lively number with the family joining in the first chorus and the CHORUS return for second chorus.

At end of number SCROOGE enters, under cover of the chorus BOB CRATCHIT nips back into his office as he speaks.

SCROOGE What is the meaning of all this jollification right outside my office. How do you expect people to work with all this caterwalling going on?

FAITH It must be mister Scrooge -

SCROOGE Must it?

HOPE Of 'Scrooge & Marley'.

SCROOGE Well.

FAITH How is mister Marley?

SCROOGE Dead madam. Very dead.

HOPE He gave us a donation once.

SCROOGE He was ill before he died.

FAITH Will you not contribute toward the poor sir?

SCROOGE I do contribute toward the poor.

HOPE Indeed sir.

SCROOGE I make them poorer all the time. (he laughs a dry mirthless laugh)

FREDERICK has entered and comes C.

FREDERICK Have I the pleasure of talking to Mister Ebenezer Scrooge?

SCROOGE If you have sir then you have the advantage of me.

FREDERICK How so.

SCROOGE Because I have no pleasure in talking to you. Out of my way if you please.

FREDERICK But I am you nephew sir, Frederick.

SCROOGE I have no nephew.

FREDERICK My mother is your sister. We wish you to partake of our Christmas celebration.

SCROOGE And what if I do not want to? Eh?

FREDERICK is nonplussed.

FAITH Have you never heard of the spirit of Christmas sir.?

CHRISTMAS enters quickly.

CHRISTMAS Spirit of Christmas? Here I am. (realises he wasn't directly summoned) Whoops.

SCROOGE (to Faith Goodbody) 'Spirit of Christmas'? Bah! Humbug!

CHRISTMAS Well really.

SCROOGE Humbug, humbug, humbug! Do you hear?

CHRISTMAS No need to rub it in.

SCROOGE All Christmas is humbug. And there is no such thing as the 'Spirit of Christmas'!

CHRISTMAS (to audience) Excuse me a moment, I have a small matter to attend to.

CHRISTMAS goes U.S. between Scrooge and Goodbodies. He is invisible to the rest of the company. HE taps Frederick on the shoulder and indicates that he should try again.

HE rubs his hands in anticipation as -

FREDERICK (to Scrooge) Are you quite sure uncle?

CHRISTMAS places his hand on Scrooge's shoulder, confident of the result.

SCROOGE Quite sure! Christmas is humbug.

Dramatic chord. CHRISTMAS is thunder-struck. HE presses Scrooge on the shoulder three times.

SCROOGE Humbug, humbug, humbug. In fact all Christmas is bunkum.

HE turns and pushes Christmas out of his way.

SCROOGE Out of my way. (he crosses to the door of his office and turns) Christmas should be abolished - and so should the poor - and so should relations! Bah! (exits)

People 'tut, tut, tut' and gradually exit the CRATCHITS are last to go as, bewildered and crestfallen, CHRISTMAS comes D.S.

CHRISTMAS This has never happened to me before. Don't tell me I am losing my touch. Surely not. Let's give it a test. (to audience) 'Happy Christmas to you!' (conducts response) That's all right, could be better mind, but all right for a start. It's not me. It must be him! That's it, the Spirit of Misery must have claimed his heart for all time.

There is a loud EVIL LAUGH off L. (the VOICE OF MISERY should be amplified with slight echo effect if possible and always accompanied by a lighting change if practical)

BOB CRATCHIT enters from office door putting on his coat and scarf. HE makes to hurry off but hears the laugh and becomes aware of Christmas and crosses down to him.

CHRISTMAS (calling) So you think you can steal a heart, even during my reign do you?

ANOTHER evil laugh.

CHRISTMAS I knew you were there somewhere. You will not get away with this.

MISERY (off) Oh yes I will.

CHRISTMAS encourages audience to respond with the traditional 'Oh no you won't' a couple of times, BOB CRATCHIT joining in heartily, then -

BOB C. (shouting after rest have stopped) Oh no you won't!!

CHRISTMAS turns in surprise.

BOB C. Oh, sorry. Do carry on. Didn't mean to interrupt. Must be off actually. It's Christmas you know. Of course you know, you wouldn't be here if you didn't know that would you. Anyway who'd know better than you. Am I talking too much?

CHRISTMAS Yes.

BOB C. I often do when I am surprised. Are you really Father Christmas? ('The spirit of Christmas')

CHRISTMAS Yes. Can you really see me?

BOB C. Yes. Shouldn't I?

CHRISTMAS It's not usual. Little children often catch a glimpse of me but - you can really see me?

BOB C. (gives him a test prod with his finger) Yes you are there all right.

CHRISTMAS I know I am here. I'm just not used to being seen that's all.

BOB C. (to audience) You can see him too can't you. (to M.D.) Even you can see him.

M.D. See who.

BOB C. Oh, go back to sleep. (as if it explained everything) He is a musician you know.

CHRISTMAS is not really listening, he is deep in thought.

BOB C. What's the problem?

CHRISTMAS What am I going to do about Scrooge?

BOB C. (brightly) Can I make a suggestion?

CHRISTMAS gives him a reproving look.

BOB C. Sorry.

CHRISTMAS I have just learned that he has given his heart over to evil and greed.

BOB C. Don't I know it.

CHRISTMAS I must do something about it.

BOB C. What can you do?

CHRISTMAS I could - no I have just tried that. Or I could - no that wouldn't work. Don't worry, I shall think of something.

BOB C. If you want any help let me know.

TINY TIM hobbles in and hurries to BOB CRATCHIT who picks him up and carries him on his shoulders. He is followed by MRS CRATCHIT and the other CHILDREN. They don't see CHRISTMAS.

TINY TIM            There you are papa.

MRS. C.             Finished at last?

BOB C.              Yes my dear.

TINY TIM            Now Christmas can really start. (up on shoulders)

BOB C.              Yes, now Christmas can really start, and something tells me this is going to be a very special Christmas.

HE looks at CHRISTMAS who nods and winks.

MUSIC NO 3. THE CRATCHITS.

Short reprise of No 2. to end scene played on curtains to change set behind. CHRISTMAS stays on and watches. At the end TINY TIM turns to Christmas and gives him a big wink. CHRISTMAS looks surprised, BLACKOUT.

SCENE TWO

BY THE CRATCHIT'S FIRESIDE

Operative door R. window U.C. bare table and two chairs C.

PETER, BELINDA and TINY TIM are sitting D.C. in front of the imaginary fireplace.

TINY TIM            Just think, this time tomorrow we will be sitting here roasting the Christmas chestnuts.

PETER                And they will be going 'crack' 'bang' 'crack', like musket fire. Bang - bang - bang.

BELINDA             Why are you so noisy?

PETER                Because it's Christmas. Bang bang bang.

BELINDA             You are noisy all the year.

MRS CRATCHIT has entered L. wiping hands and looks out of the window.

MRS. C.             We do not know that you father will be able to get any chestnuts yet.

TINY TIM            I think it should be Christmas all the year.

PETER                But you can only have 'Christmas' in December.

TINY TIM            Then we will call it something else.

PETER                Then it wouldn't be 'Christmas' would it.

TINY TIM            No. But we could still have it all the year.

BELINDA (crossing to join her mother at the window) Is Martha coming?

MRS. C. No sign yet. Perhaps she won't be able to get away until the morning again.

BELINDA It's not always easy being poor is it mummy.

MRS. C. There are worse things than - (being poor) Here she comes now bless her.

There is immediate movement. MRS CRATCHIT smooths her apron then helps TINY TIM to C. to form welcoming committee, PETER moves to side of door, BELINDA goes to the door and opens it as MARTHA enters in a flurry of snow (from the wings). BELINDA shuts the door. With much laughter there are hugs all round. MRS CRATCHIT 'Hello my sweet', hugs MARTHA, then MARTHA hugs TINY TIM, and then BELINDA, while MRS CRATCHIT hugs TINY TIM, then TINY TIM hugs BELINDA. MARTHA realises that someone is missing. PETER jumps out with a 'bang', MARTHA jumps, laughs then hugs him while MRS CRATCHIT hugs anyone in reach.

MRS. C. Was there ever such a welcome? Come to the fire my sweetling.

MARTHA takes off her hat and coat which BELINDA takes off stage L. then returns. MARTHA and MRS CRATCHIT arms round each other come D.S. to fire.

MARTHA Where's father? Don't say - (that mean old Scrooge -)

MRS. C. No. At this very minute your father is out buying the finest goose that ever was.

PETER And some chestnuts. (to window)

MARTHA (warming hands) Umm, lovely warm fire. Not very big, but lovely and warm.

MRS. C. (sagely) That's where Christmas really is, by your own fireside.

Their peaceful reverie is broken by -

PETER Here comes papa. Chestnuts, bang bang.

BELINDA Let's pretend Martha isn't here yet.

General excitement from the CHILDREN and fluster from MRS CRATCHIT. 'Well was there ever - ' - 'Quickly' - 'You stand here' - 'Don't giggle Belinda' - 'Here he cones' etc. as they line up, MARTHA by door, MRS CRATCHIT C. with PETER, BELINDA and TINY TIM beside her. The door opens and, in another flurry of snow,

BOB CRATCHIT enters carrying a not very large 'goose-shaped' brown paper parcel.

BOB C. Ooo, it's just like a Christmas card out there. (hands parcel to Mrs Cratchit) There we are my dear. I thought it was an oversized pigeon but the man assures me it is the finest of geese.

MRS. C. And so it is. The finest.

MRS CRATCHIT hands the parcel to PETER who passes it to BELINDA and thence to TINY TIM each repeating 'The finest'.

BOB C. But where is Martha? Don't say she didn't get away.

MRS. C. She is not here.

PETER She is not here.

BELINDA She is not here.

TINY TIM She is behind you.

ALL laugh as MARTHA jumps forward.

MARTHA We were teasing. (she hugs her father)

BOB C. (hugs Mrs Cratchit) Such a tease.

BELINDA (hugs Peter) Such a tease.

TINY TIM (hugs parcel) Such a tease.

MARTHA (helping her father off with his coat etc.) Now come and sit by the fire.

Everyone is still laughing as MARTHA gives PETER the coat etc. to take off L. MRS CRATCHIT takes the parcel off L. BELINDA brings forward a chair as BOB CRATCHIT carries Tiny Tim D.S. and sits with him on his knee. Others (return and) group round.

BOB C. That's it. Now it's really Christmas, the whole family round the fire.

Lights fade to enhance the picture of the family sitting in the firelight. Music for No. 4 starts quietly under.

MARTHA Shall we sing a carol?

PETER No it's 'Christmas wish' time.

TINY TIM Hurray.

BELINDA Is it time mummy?

MRS. C. Well, it's nearly Christmas, what do you think my dear? Is it time for their 'Christmas wish'.

BOB C. Well, I really don't know. (they wait) I only wish I did.

THEY laugh and get ready.

PETER Me first.

MARTHA It's always youngest first.

MUSIC NO 4. THE CRATCHITS WISH.

They each sing a snatch of song to illustrate their dream. TINY TIM wants to make people happy. BELINDA to be a princess, PETER to be a soldier, MARTHA to be in love. (then optional) BOB CRATCHIT to be rich and MRS CRATCHIT to be just as they are). Add dialogue as necessary.

The item could range from a simple and light-hearted version of 'If I were not upon the stage' up to a full production 'dream sequence' with chorus and costumes.

Exit at end with 'Off to bed now or Christmas will never come' if necessary.

Lights fade to only firelight, clock chime to indicate passing of time. BOB CRATCHIT creeps on (optional in nightgown).

BOB C. (to audience) Shh. Don't wake up the children. (double take on M.D. or someone in the front row) You can wake him up though. Tch tch. It's only scene two. (to others) Shan't be long, got to try and find some little treats for the morning.

The door opens, another flurry of snow, and CHRISTMAS enters.

CHRISTMAS It's like a Christmas card out there.

BOB C. I've heard that before somewhere.

CHRISTMAS The very man. (down to fire) What are you doing?

BOB C. Trying to be Father Christmas

CHRISTMAS (warming hands) So am I. My but it's parkey out there. Still, if Christmas came in June I'd be too hot in this costume wouldn't I?

BOB CRATCHIT brings the two chairs down and they sit by the fire.

CHRISTMAS Thanks, I hope you don't mind my popping in like this.

BOB C. What's your problem?

CHRISTMAS Scrooge

BOB C. He's your problem?

CHRISTMAS You see it is my job to bring happiness and kindness to the world at this time of year.



BOB C. And you do.

CHRISTMAS But Scrooge's heart has been occupied but the Spirit of Misery and unless I can drive him out it could spread. And I shall be considered a failure and not be allowed to come back next year.

Amplified LAUGH as before.

BOB C. (jumps violently) What was that? Was that him?

CHRISTMAS That was.

BOB C. (patting his chest and panting) Keep going you fool. (addressing the laugh) Don't you ever make me jump like that again.

PAUSE. BOB CRATCHIT relaxes. Sudden LAUGH. HE falls out of his chair.

BOB C. I said don't make me -

CHRISTMAS (helping him up) Typical of him. He enjoys frightening people.

BOB C. (stopping suddenly) But that's it.

CHRISTMAS What's what?

BOB C. 'That's' - 'it'.

CHRISTMAS Is it?

BOB C. Yes, with Scrooge. Frighten him into changing his ways.

CHRISTMAS Funny you should say that. (sitting BOB CRATCHIT down again)

BOB C. Nobody laughed.

CHRISTMAS (looking round conspiratorially) That is just what I have decided to do. Frighten him. I have asked Marley's Ghost to appear and make him see the error of his ways.

BOB CRATCHIT 'Ooo-ooo' as he giggles with pleasure at the prospect of Scrooge being frightened.

CHRISTMAS I hope you don't mind, I asked him to meet me here to give him his instructions.

BOB C. (still chortling) Ho hoo, no, ha ha, no, not at all, ha ha YOU HAVE WHAT! (he is up and quaking) You have asked a g-g-g-g to meet you he-he-he-he - oh oh oh oh!

MARLEY'S GHOST enters to U.C. and flits about a bit. He is all white in period costume with ball and large linked chain but these do not appear to weigh anything. He is very old but sprightly with it and laughs with a brittle dry cackle. HE is somewhat bird-like being continually on the move so that you are never sure where he will be next time you speak to him.

MARLEY He he he he.  
 BOB C. (stops - thinks - tests) Oh - oh - oh - - oh.  
 MARLEY He - he - he - - he.  
 BOB C. He isn't -  
 CHRISTMAS He could be. Let's find out.

BUSINESS of them finding MARLEY'S GHOST, such as - THEY turn outwards and U.S. to look as HE comes D.S. to warm his hands, then circles R. to U.C. as THEY come D.C. to ask audience. THEY circle right this time, HE follows but goes out of door as they return D.C. to find out where he is. As THEY go out of door R. HE returns L. then joins on the end as THEY circle the stage on their return. etc. etc. at producers discretion. THEY come D.C., BOB asks Christmas if he can 'hold his hand' as 'he is frightened'. Without looking THEY take hands but MARLEY'S GHOST steps between and all three are holding hands. CHRISTMAS realises and breaks away. When BOB realises he nearly collapses and has to be helped to a chair - by MARLEY'S GHOST, which causes further collapse.

MARLEY (to Christmas) What's the matter with him?  
 CHRISTMAS I think he is surprised to see you.  
 MARLEY Well you sent for me didn't you? I got the right place didn't I? What do you want?  
 CHRISTMAS I want you to frighten somebody.  
 MARLEY Well I have done that. (Bob) Can I go now?  
 CHRISTMAS You were always awkward when you were alive. You haven't improved since have you?  
 MARLEY Why should I?

MARLEY'S GHOST moves from one side of Christmas to the other side of Bob Cratchit, he never seems to be where he is spoken to.

MARLEY Will he live?  
 CHRISTMAS I expect so.  
 MARLEY Good, don't much fancy him for company.  
 BOB C. (recovering but not daring to look) Is he - ? Has he - ?  
 CHRISTMAS No, he is - (indicates)

BOB CRATCHIT slowly turns to face Marley's Ghost. HE reacts to the actuality of the spectre then peers.

BOB C. It is old Marley. (stands) You haven't altered at all.

MARLEY You have young Cratchit, you look awful.

CHRISTMAS Shall we sit down and get on?

MARLEY Certainly.

HE takes chair from behind Bob and sits - so does BOB - on the floor.

MARLEY So you want me to go and have a chat with young Ebenezer do you?

BOB C. 'Young' Ebenezer?

MARLEY What are you doing down there?

BOB C. Somebody took my chair away.

MARLEY No 'body' took your chair away. (another brittle laugh)

CHRISTMAS Not so much a chat, I want you to frighten him out of his miserly ways.

MARLEY Sounds fun, he is a mean old devil.

BOB C. Hark who's talking. (gets up)

MARLEY Me, mean? I gave to charity - once. Something got to me.

CHRISTMAS I did. But I cannot get to Ebenezer Scrooge.

BOB C. Do you know how to haunt anybody?

MARLEY Yes. (he rises and demonstrates) Of course I do. I flit about the place. Moaning. Ooooo. And wailing. Ahhhhhhh. And wheezing. Eeeeeeee.

His demonstration is not very effective. It is more like a dance. BOB takes his opportunity to take the chair and sit on it.

MARLEY Then I come up behind them unexpected (he comes to behind Bob, who is not looking) and go - 'BOOO'.

BOB jumps with surprise and stands momentarily, MARLEY'S GHOST takes chair, BOB sits on floor, HE sits on chair.

MARLEY And they are so frightened they fall flat on the floor. (laughs)

BOB C. He must be a wow at the Spectre's Ball.

CHRISTMAS It is very important that Ebenezer Scrooge change his ways. Or sadness will spread throughout the land.

MARLEY Can't have that can we?  
CHRISTMAS No we can't. About midnight would be the best time.  
MARLEY It's always 'about midnight' for me. Oooooo.

MUSIC NO 5. COMEDY TRIO.

CHRISTMAS, BOB CRATCHIT and MARLEY'S GHOST sing a spookey number with repetitive precise movements but Marley's Ghost is in a different position each time OR repeat the chair business so that every time they come to the point to sit down Bob Cratchit never has a chair to sit on or thinks he has and sits on the floor.

CURTAIN and/or BLACKOUT.

SCENE THREE

SCROOGE'S EMPTY HEARTH

Internal door L. curtained window U.C. fireplace R. arm-chair C. with small table beside with bell on it.

Start scene on curtains (if necessary) open when set.

CAROLLERS are heard singing 'God rest you merry, gentlemen' SCROOGE enters from other side dressed in nightshirt, dressing-gown, nightcap and carrying candle.

SCROOGE (calling off - or through window if ready set) How can any gentleman rest at all with that cacophony going on?!

The singing stopped as he spoke. There is a moments silence, SCROOGE smirks, then in smart unison - 'God rest you merry, gentlemen - '

SCROOGE Be off with you!!

The singing stops again.

BOY (off) Hey, Mister Scrooge.

MOTHER (off) Albert, don't you dare! (say such a rude thing)

SCROOGE Char! The sooner Christmas is over the better.

We hear the carollers wish each other 'A happy Christmas to you' - 'And to you'. etc. Then silence.

SCROOGE Happy Christmas, bah, humbug. (turns to go the way he came but pauses, fist to stomach) What's the use, I can't sleep. That fish pie I ate for supper sits mighty heavily this night.

Crosses up to chair. Candlestick on table.  
CHRISTMAS has entered D.R. and watches sadly.

CHRISTMAS It's not what you have eaten that weighs heavily upon you this Christmas night Ebenezer Scrooge.

SCROOGE Sit by the fire awhile, the sooner it may settle. Huh, even the fire be out. (sits miserably - dozes)

CHRISTMAS For want of tending any fire will die.

LIGHTS to distinct areas if possible to enhance the unreality of following sequence.  
FAITH GOODBODY, HOPE GOODBODY,  
FREDERICK and BOB CRATCHIT enter during dialogue and stand - when they speak they do so flatly and without moving.

CHRISTMAS Oh Scrooge. You sit a lonely man.  
Your heart to meanness given.  
Oh Scrooge. No peace can come to you.  
Your dreams with guilt are riven.

ALL Oh Scrooge.

SCROOGE (disturbed sleep) What's that? Who's there? Not you again.

FAITH The mites are cold and famished.

HOPE The orphans sir they need your help

SCROOGE Why? Is the poorhouse vanished.

ALL Oh Scrooge.

FREDERICK It's an invitation that I bring.  
Not a retribution.  
It's you presence that's requested sir.

SCROOGE You mean my contribution.

ALL Oh Scrooge.

SCROOGE And you will want tomorrow off.

BOB C. It is the custom ever.  
And give an extra Christmas box.

SCROOGE What, waste my money? Never.

ALL Oh Scrooge.

FAITH & HOPE The poor are starving, have no homes.

CHRISTMAS Scrooge think I do implore.

BOB C. My son is crippled. Soon may die.

Pause - will he change?

SCROOGE What are the graveyards for?

ALL (sadly) Oh Scrooge, oh Scrooge.

The GOODBODIES, FREDERICK and BOB CRATCHIT back off. LIGHTS to more natural setting. SCROOGE nods off to sleep again. CHRISTMAS crosses near to him.

CHRISTMAS You lock yourself within yourself,  
Treat starving people with derision,  
Perhaps you'll heed someone you knew.  
Prepare yourself for spectral vision.  
(he steps back in anticipation but nothing happens)  
For spectral vision!

HE looks round, the door rattles, he crosses and opens it, MARLEY'S GHOST stands there.

MARLEY Couldn't open the door.

CHRISTMAS Why didn't you just walk through it?

MARLEY That only happens in books.

CHRISTMAS Don't forget -

MARLEY I know, lay it on a bit.

CHRISTMAS stands to one side as MARLEY'S GHOST rather over does the haunting bit. HE moans, and wails, and drags the ball and chain as if they were tremendously heavy. HE looks, but SCROOGE sleeps on so HE goes through it again; same result. So HE viciously rings the small bell on the table in his ear, that does it.

SCROOGE What - what was that? The door bell at this time of night?

MARLEY'S GHOST rings bell again. SCROOGE realises, turns and stares at the bell as if it were ringing itself. Then slowly looks up at the ghost.

MARLEY Ebenezer Scrooge.

SCROOGE No! It's Jacob Marley. But you have been dead for seven years.

MARLEY Ebenezer Scrooge.

SCROOGE What have you come here for?

MARLEY This -

MARLEY'S GHOST repeats his moaning and dragging etc. As he passes Christmas he pauses and mouths 'How am I doing?' - 'Get on with it', is the mouthed response.

SCROOGE           What do you want with me?

MARLEY            I have come to warn you. (he punctuates his speech with wails and moans)

SCROOGE           Warn me? I won't heed your warning. Go away.

MARLEY            I cannot go, I can only wander the infinite forever bearing the chains I forged in my lifetime.

SCROOGE           What chains?

MARLEY            These - the chains of greed, the chains of meanness and the chains of - of -

CHRISTMAS         (prompting) Avarice.

MARLEY            Average.

CHRISTMAS sighs at the error but SCROOGE doesn't notice, HE is getting worried.

MARLEY            (warming to his task) For every mean and greedy act a link is forged, each heavier than the last. And for eternity they will be carried by he who made them. Your chains are already longer and heavier than mine. If you go on as you are they will be unbearable.

SCROOGE           No stop. (he is on his knees to Marley's Ghost)

MARLEY            Forever, that unbearable load.

SCROOGE           (almost sobbing) I have wrought so much?

MARLEY            Too much - too much.

SCROOGE, on his knees is a pathetic figure. CHRISTMAS joins MARLEY'S GHOST and they stand over him. The former is pleased with himself, the latter satisfied.

MARLEY            (sincerely) You know, it's quite fun helping people isn't it?

CHRISTMAS         Nothing better.

But SCROOGE's manner changes, he pulls himself together and rises and looks straight at Marley's Ghost.

SCROOGE           Char, thought you could fool me did you. you are not the ghost of Jacob Marley.

MARLEY            I am the ghost of -

SCROOGE           You are nothing but a fish pie.

**MARLEY** I should know who - a fish pie?!

**SCROOGE** Marley's Ghost? You are nothing but the result of an ill chosen supper, made of bad fish. Chains wrought of greed. Huh. (he returns to his chair and settles)

**MARLEY** (to Christmas) He called me a fish pie. (trying again) Oh Ebenezer Scrooge -

But CHRISTMAS taps him on the shoulder and sadly shakes his head. 'No use'. THEY come D.S.

**MARLEY** I thought that bit about wandering the infinite for ever was rather good. (as THEY exit R.) But a 'fish pie'.

The gloating LAUGH is heard again as LIGHTS fade and CURTAINS close.

#### SCENE FOUR

#### BEYOND REALITY

The stage is empty, optional clouds ground-row, or projected light pattern (gobos) on back-cloth.

BOB CRATCHIT enters and chats to audience.

**BOB C.** What a carry on. I have never known a Christmas eve like it. And fancy meeting Marley's Ghost like that. What a character. How did he get on with Scrooge? He made him change his mind alright? He didn't? Scrooge wouldn't listen? The mean old bath bun.

MARLEY'S GHOST enters sadly R.

**BOB C.** He called him a what? He said he had fish eyes?

**MARLEY** (R. of him) He called me a fish pie. (behind him to L.)

**BOB C.** Thank you. (realises, turns R. no one there, circles R.)

MARLEY'S GHOST follows him round.

**BOB C.** Who said that.

**MARLEY** (L.) I did. (behind to R.)

Repeat business to L. MARLEY'S GHOST exits L. after circle.

**BOB C.** What's going on? That was who? Where? He has gone again. Let me know if he comes back. Shout 'Mar - ley' if you see him again, that's it, 'Mar - ley', sounds like and advert doesn't it? (looks round) Here, I wonder where I am. I don't recognise this place, it's all sort of empty and peaceful. Like . . . . . (posh area). Or . . . . . (notorious area) on a good night.



HE wanders U.S. as CHRISTMAS enters D.S.

CHRISTMAS (to audience) Happy Christmas to you. (response)

BOB CRATCHIT turns R, with a 'Do what'. HE comes D. and R. as CHRISTMAS crosses behind. 'Who? Where?' HE turns, they meet face to face.

BOB C. Don't you start. (going round me) I was just saying, where on earth am I?

CHRISTMAS Why 'on earth'?

BOB C. I'm not dreaming am I?

CHRISTMAS In the morning you will say you were but you are not really.

BOB C. (bewildered) That's cleared that up. How did I get here?

CHRISTMAS Anyone who wants to help other people is likely to arrive here.

BOB C. Not very crowded is it.

CHRISTMAS People come and go. (turns to go)

BOB C. Where are you going? And what are we going to do about Scrooge?

CHRISTMAS That is why we are here let's see who is about.

HE exits R. followed by BOB CRATCHIT. As they go MUSIC to No 6. starts. FAITH GOODBODY & HOPE GOODBODY enter L.

MUSIC NO 6. THE GOODBODIES DUET.

A number about helping people OR about them being sisters.

FAITH I do enjoy a good sing.

HOPE So do I dear. Haven't heard one for such a long time.

MARLEY'S GHOST enters L. The GOODBODIES turn U.S. (looking to see why people are shouting 'Mar-ley') HE passes D.S. then circles both (or each, figure-of-eight) as THEY turn R. (and L.) and circle still looking; neither seeing the other. HE exits R. as BOB CRATCHIT followed by CHRISTMAS enter R. (different entrance)

BOB C. (to audience) Where? He's gone again? Try to shout louder next time. Ta.

HOPE (to Faith) Who does he keep talking to dear?

FAITH I don't know. I'm getting very worried about young Cratchit.

BOB C. Hello ladies. You haven't seen a ghost about have you?

HOPE (lightly) Good gracious no. We don't mix with such people - a ghost - ooooo. (swoons briefly into her sisters arms)

BOB C. (to Christmas who has crossed to them) I used to have that effect on young women you know. Oh, allow me to introduce you. These are the Goodbody sisters. Faith - Hope.

CHRISTMAS And where's Charity?

BOTH At home.

BOB C. I am glad you two have arrived. We have got to do something about Scrooge you know.

FAITH Such a dreadful man.

HOPE We have arrived yes, but where have we arrived? Are we dreaming?

BOB C. No. In the morning you will think you were but you are not really. (winks at Christmas)

HOPE (doubtfully) I see.

FAITH (to Christmas) Excuse me, but aren't you - um, you know, down the chimney and all that.

CHRISTMAS I am indeed.

FAITH Goodness gracious, I haven't seen you since - well, since I was just a little gal.

HOPE (quietly) I have.

FAITH Didn't know you still existed. Didn't think there was enough faith about these days.

HOPE I knew there was enough hope.

FAITH (to Christmas) So glad to meet you. We do what we can to help you know. In our own small way.

CHRISTMAS That is why you are here. And here comes someone else who is trying to help.

FREDERICK enters jauntily.

FREDERICK A good evening ladies. And to you gentlemen. I had the pleasure of meeting you all earlier this afternoon didn't I? I had no idea the privilege would be repeated so soon. But what are you all doing here? I thought I was asleep. Perhaps I am dreaming.

FAITH In the morning you'll think you were.

HOPE But you are not really.

THEY turn and wink at Christmas.

FREDERICK I see. No I don't.

1/4-22

CHRISTMAS I have stopped time.

THEY accept this. Then realise what he has said and in unison double take, with an 'Eh?' and a 'Do what?'

CHRISTMAS I have delayed Christmas morning.

The power and importance of this statement sinks in.

BOB C. Because of old Scrooge?

CHRISTMAS Yes.

FREDERICK Delayed Christmas because of my uncle!?

FAITH Sounds mighty serious.

CHRISTMAS It could well be -

But before he can continue -

MARTHA (off) Mother! Are you there?

MARTHA hurries on.

MARTHA Hello papa, have you seen mother? I was with her then she just seemed to vanish. (realising others are present) Oh I beg your pardon. Good evening, good evening. (face to face with Frederick) Hello.

THEIR eyes meet, there is a pause. (quick lighting change and a few notes of her part of No. 4.)

MARTHA (breaking look) I wonder where we are.

FREDERICK is about to say she is not dreaming.

MARTHA I know I am not dreaming.

FREDERICK is about to complete the phrase.

MARTHA Although in the morning I expect I shall think I am. (smiles sweetly at him and crosses to her father) I wonder what has happened to mother. She ran off as if she had seen a ghost.

HOPE Oh, another one. (collapses briefly again into Faith's arms)

FREDERICK (crossing) Should I go and look for her? I would be very pleased to.

BOB C. No need, there she is.

HE crosses to meet MRS CRATCHIT as she hurries on L.

MRS. C. Oh dear, he gave me such a start, said something about a fish pie, and I think he is following me.

SHE indicates off L. THEY all look, with a 'Where' - 'Can't see him' etc. They are all in a more or less straight line across the stage. Frederick, Martha, Christmas, Faith, Hope, Bob, Mrs Cratchit.

MARLEY'S GHOST enters R. to FREDERICK who senses him and turns round R. MARLEY'S GHOST passes him U.S. to MARTHA who senses his presence and turns L. HE passes her D.S. This is repeated as MARLEY'S GHOST weaves his way unseen all along the line. They are ALL now looking R. BOB CRATCHIT asks the audience (who should be shouting 'Mar-ley') where he is. After OPTIONAL extra business THEY see him and MRS CRATCHIT swoons into her husbands arms, HOPE GOODBODY into her sisters and MARTHA into a delighted Frederick's. CHRISTMAS crosses to Marley's Ghost.

CHRISTMAS What are you doing here?

MARLEY I'm lost. Can't find my way back.

CHRISTMAS It's left at . . . . . , right at . . . . . (local references) and then straight on til morning.

MARLEY (turns to go then) I'm sorry about old Scrooge.

CHRISTMAS That's all right - off you go.

MARLEY Let me know if there is anything else I can do. I like an outing every now and then. (goes)

Meanwhile the fainters have recovered.  
MARTHA coy and eyelids a-flutter.

FAITH (to Christmas) You were saying you had stopped time.

MRS. C. No Christmas for the children? (gently leads Martha away from Frederick)

CHRISTMAS We must do something about Scrooge before Christmas. So I have - erm - delayed it a little. Don't tell anyone will you.

FREDERICK I don't think they would believe me if I did.

BOB C. You see, Scrooge is in the power of some evil spirit.

CHRISTMAS True meanness occupies his heart, if it is not driven out by Christmas morning it could spread through the whole land.

Silence at the seriousness of this.

CHRISTMAS If we can get one generous action, one kind deed out of him that spirit will disappear. Just one.

THEY think.

FAITH            We have asked him for charity.  
ALL              Nothing.  
MRS. C.          You (Bob) have served him loyally for years.  
ALL              Nothing.  
FREDERICK      I offered him hospitality.  
ALL              Nothing.  
BOB C.          We even tried frightening him.  
MARLEY          (popping his head round wing) Nothing.

ALL think and start to exit.

MARTHA         What can we do?  
FAITH            What we need is more help.  
HOPE             Let us know if there is anything we can do.

The GOODBODIES exit one way as BOB & MRS CRATCHIT, followed by MARTHA, go the other. As this trio pass Frederick MARTHA turns and flutters her eyelids again. MRS CRATCHIT smoothly circles and gently leads her away and out.

MRS. C.         If there is anything we can do to help Mister Scrooge. (collects Martha) Anything at all. (exits)  
BOB C.          (to Frederick) Don't worry, her mother acted just the same, and look what happened to us.

HE winks and follows his family out.  
FREDERICK exits happily another way.

FREDERICK      (as he goes turns to Christmas) Don't worry sir, if we can't think of a way - I'm sure you will.  
CHRISTMAS      Ah, the confidence of youth.

MUSIC NO 7. SOLO CHRISTMAS.

A song of hope or determination,

After number FUTURE flits on. SHE runs rounds Christmas and seems to be forever on the move.

CHRISTMAS      Who's there? What are you doing here?  
FUTURE          First of all I noticed that you had stopped time -