

PLAYS FOR
New Audiences

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

A Christmas Carol

By Barbara Field

Based on the Novel by Charles Dickens

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Characters (in order of appearance):

- Ebenezer Scrooge
- Bob Cratchit
- Fred
- Blakely
- Mr Forrest
- Tiny Tim
- Jacoby Marley
- Mrs. Grigsby
- Ghost of Christmas Past
- Young Ebenezer (boy)
- Fan
- Schoolmaster (Mr. Queue)
- Fezziwig
- Dick Wilkins
- Young Ebenezer (young man)
- Belle Crawford
- Mrs. Fezziwig
- Susan the Cook
- Ghost of Christmas Present
- Peter Cratchit
- Tom Cratchit
- Mary Cratchit
- Mrs. Cratchit
- Belinda Cratchit
- Martha Cratchit
- Cecil
- Topper
- Mrs. Fred
- Dorothea
- Edwards
- Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come
- Grasper
- Snarkers
- Joe
- Mrs. Dilber
- Undertaker
- Nellie
- Maid

Ensemble: Narrators, Carolers, Pallbearers

ACT ONE
STAVE ONE: MARLEY'S GHOST

[SNOW ON THE STREETS BRINGS ALL CAST ON STAGE AND AT THE END OF
SONG, MARLEY'S OPEN COFFIN WITH MARLEY IN IT UP FROM TRAP]

SOLO

*From far away we come to you,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door,
To tell of great tidings strange and true.*

FULL CAST

*Minstrels and maids stand forth on the floor;
From far away we come to you,
To tell of great tidings strange and true.*

[THUNDER]

NARRATOR

[MARLEY SITS UP AND SPEAKS.]

Marley was dead to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it. And Scrooge's signature was as good as gold —

NARRATORS

For he was an excellent man of business.

Old Marley was as dead as a door nail.

[THUNDER AND LIGHTNING.]

NARRATOR (MARLEY)

Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and Marley were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole inheritor, his soul friend and his soul mourner.

[COFFIN COVERED — LID HAMMERED ON.]

NARRATOR

But even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event, for on the very day of the funeral he went to the royal exchange and solemnized it with an undoubted bargain.

[WE SEE TWO STOCKBROKERS.]

SQUEEZE

I see old Scratch has claimed his own at last. The fellow's dead.

[BOY SINGS GOD REST YE AS COFFIN DESCENDS.]

[MORE THUNDER AND LIGHTNING-RAIN]

CAST NARRATION

Oh! but he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge.

A squeezing/
wrenching/
grasping/
scraping/
clutching/
covetous old sinner!

Secret/
self-contained/
and solitary as an oyster.

NARRATORS

Well there's a thing. There is no doubt Marley was dead.

Dead as a door nail!

Just so. You must distinctly understand this or nothing wonderful can come of the story we are going to relate.

ALL (SUNG)

[WE ARE SHIFTING INTO THE OFFICE.]

*Cold is the morning and bleak is the day;
Warm are our hearts as the sunshine of May!*

NARRATORS

Scrooge had never painted out old Marley's name.

[SIGN APPEARS.]

There it stands seven years later: Scrooge and Marley.
Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge, Scrooge, and sometimes Marley.
But he answered to both. It was all the same to him.

ALL (HUMMING)

*Sing, little children, sing in your gladness,
Let Christmas pleasures banish your sadness,
Love, joy and peace to you.*

NARRATOR (OVER HUMMING)

For what did he care? To edge his way along the crowded paths of life warning all humankind to keep its distance was the very thing he liked!

[SCROOGE RINGS BELL; BOB REACTS, ETC.]

NARRATOR

Once upon a time — of all good days in the year, on Christmas Eve — old Scrooge was busy in his counting house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather — foggy withal; but Scrooge carried his own low temperature always about with him.

NARRATOR

No warmth could warm him, no wintry weather chill him.

[BELL STRIKES THREE.]

NARRATOR

Three o'clock, but it was quite dark already. It had not been light all day.

[SCROOGE IS AT HIS DESK. CRATCHIT IS AT HIS OWN COUNTER, SCRIBBLING AWAY. HIS FINGERS ARE NEARLY FROZEN. HE TRIES TO WARM THEM AT A CANDLE. FUTILE. CRATCHIT SNEEZES, SCROOGE GLARES.]

NARRATOR

As the fire was very small — one coal — and as Scrooge kept the coal box — his clerk, Bob Cratchit, could not replenish the heat.

[SCROOGE KICKS THE LID CLOSED.]

NARRATOR

Wherefore the clerk tried to warm himself at his candle, but not being a man of strong imagination, he failed.

[FRED ENTERS.]

FRED

A merry Christmas, Uncle. God save you!

SCROOGE

[PAYS NO ATTENTION.]

Bah! Humbug!

FRED

Christmas a humbug, Uncle? You don't mean that, I'm sure.

SCROOGE

I do. I do! Look at you — what right have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

FRED

What right have you to be dismal? You're rich enough.

SCROOGE

Bah! Humbug.

FRED

Don't be cross, Uncle.

SCROOGE

What else can I be when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas? Out upon 'Merry Christmas!' What's Christmas to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, and not an hour richer?

FRED

Yes, but —

SCROOGE

If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with a 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled in his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly in his heart —

FRED

Uncle!

SCROOGE

Nephew! You 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. How has it ever profited you?

FRED

There are many things from which I have not profited, Uncle, Christmas among the rest. But I've always thought it a good time, a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time. The only time in the long calendar of the year, in fact, when men and women open their shut-up hearts freely. And so, Uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it *has* done me good, and *will* do me good; and I say, God bless it!

[BOB CRATCHIT APPLAUDS.]

SCROOGE

[TO BOB:]

Let me hear another sound from *you*, Cratchit, and you'll keep your Christmas looking for a new situation.

[TO FRED:]

There's another lunatic — 15 shillings a week and five mouths to feed.

CRATCHIT

Six.

SCROOGE

You're such a powerful speaker, Nephew, I wonder you don't go into Parliament.

FRED

Come to dinner tomorrow, Uncle.

SCROOGE

I'll see you in Hell first!

FRED

But why? Why? You have yet to meet my wife.

SCROOGE

Why did you ever get married?

FRED

Because I fell in love.

SCROOGE

Because you fell in love?! The only one thing in the world more ridiculous than Merry Christmas is falling in love.

FRED

Nay, Uncle. You never came to see me before I 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

Ha!

FRED

Why are we enemies? We're family.

SCROOGE

[DISMISS **FRED** WITH BELL.]

Good afternoon —

[TO **BOB**:]

Sit down!

FRED

I'm sorry with all my heart to find you so resolute against me. But I came here in homage to Christmas, and I *will* keep my Christmas humor to the last. And so ... a merry Christmas, Uncle —

SCROOGE

Good afternoon.

FRED

And a happy New Year — !

[**SCROOGE** HURLS HIS PAPERWEIGHT AT **FRED**, WHO CATCHES IT.]

SCROOGE

Good afternoon!

FRED

Why, thank you, Uncle, I shall treasure this fine paperweight.

[**SCROOGE** COMES AFTER **FRED** — **FRED** CROSSES TO DOOR, SHOUTING OUT FOLLOWING].]

Greetings of the season, Bob.

CRATCHIT

And the same to you.

FRED

And to your good wife and your family.

CRATCHIT

Thank you, Mr. Fred.

END OF PREVIEW. PURCHASE PERUSAL FOR FULL SCRIPT