



SOUTH COAST REPERTORY
presents

A  **CHRISTMAS**
CAROL 

by Charles Dickens
adapted by Jerry Patch
directed by John-David Keller

SEGERSTROM STAGE

PLAYGOER'S GUIDE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I: THE PLAY

Background
Prose to Drama
Page to Stage
Title
Setting
Characters
Synopsis

PART II: THE PLAYWRIGHT

Who Was Charles Dickens?
The Man Who Invented Christmas
Christmas Through the Ages
The Real Meaning of Christmas
Quotes
Other Voices
Timeline

PART III: THE PRODUCTION

Director's View
Chatting with Hal
A Miser's Miser
In Defense of Scrooge

PART IV: EDUCATION STATION

Victorian Glossary
Money
Food and Drink
Literary Allusions
Questions

PART V: RESOURCES

Online Study Guides
Bibliography

PART I: THE PLAY

BACKGROUND ON THE SOURCE

Preface to the novella:

“I have endeavoured in this Ghostly little book, to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it.

*Their faithful Friend and Servant, C.D.
December, 1843”*

The most successful book of the 1843 holiday publishing season in London was *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, who had been determined to create a high-quality product for the Christmas trade. Priced at only 5 shillings per copy (roughly equivalent to 25¢), the book was also intended to be affordable to almost everyone. A large percentage of its high production cost was incurred in binding each volume in red cloth with gilding on the cover, spine, and page edges, as well as hand-coloring four of the eight engravings by artist John Leech. Being at odds with his publisher, Dickens paid for the entire cost of printing *A Christmas Carol* himself in hopes of easing his personal financial woes by pocketing all of the profits. Although his little red Christmas book sold out 6,000 copies almost immediately (and nearly 15,000 copies had been purchased within a year), Dickens realized only meager income from the project. In fact, he ended up spending more money to fight the many pirated editions of *A Christmas Carol* than he managed to earn from sales of the original edition.

The story’s enormous popularity guaranteed that theatrical adaptations would soon begin appearing around town. The first script of *A Christmas Carol* was written by Edward Stirling, a theatrical opportunist who was known for pirating popular novels of the day (including others by Dickens) for productions at minor theatres. Playbills posted on February 4, 1844 announced that the Theatre Royal Adelphi would be staging “the only dramatic version sanctioned by C. Dickens, Esquire.” By mid-February 1844, there were seven more unauthorized versions of *A Christmas Carol* running simultaneously on London stages.

Read the complete e-text of the novella (<http://www.literature.org/authors/dickens-charles/christmas-carol/>)

See the illustrations by John Leech (<http://www.fidnet.com/~dap1955/dickens/carol.html>)

The Dickens Page – *A Christmas Carol* (<http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/CD-Carol.html>)

PROSE TO DRAMA WITH JERRY PATCH

Recapturing the spirit of an old-fashioned Christmas was the vision of SCR’s former Resident Dramaturg Jerry Patch when he set about to adapt Dickens’s timeless classic for the stage back in 1980. In designing his version of *A Christmas Carol*, Patch concentrated on how the major themes of the story could most effectively be communicated on the stage. “I wanted families to be able to come to the theatre together and share an experience. Everyone from grandparents to grandchildren could all be touched by the significant message of this classic story. Every year I wait in the lobby after performances and listen to families talking about what they’ve gotten out of the play.”

The story’s focus on humanity and regeneration continues to move audiences of all ages as they experience Scrooge’s transformation along with the character. “This play is a celebration of family, peace and unity,” Patch explains. “It’s not just a British play, nor is it limited in scope to the nineteenth century. Scrooge’s didactic understanding of generosity, charity, and mercy are ideals to be embraced by all people in all times. His story embodies the very tenets of American culture—you can change yourself, you can succeed beyond your means, and after undergoing metaphorical death, you can come back and live a better life. In other words, it’s never too late. This isn’t a complicated message, but it’s an important one nonetheless, and it’s the means by which we hope to touch our audiences.”

Read about film and television versions in *A Christmas Carol and Its Adaptations* by Fred Guida (<http://www.dickenschristmascarol.com/index.html>)

PAGE TO STAGE WITH JOHN-DAVID KELLER

“I try to read the Dickens novella every year because I ask the children in the cast to read it—that’s always their first assignment. Jerry’s script is very faithful to the original, but there are some elements he chose to eliminate because they’re peripheral to our primary focus, which is Scrooge’s through-line. Things such as the engagement and the fates of his fiancée and his sister are still there but only to stimulate Scrooge and not to tell the other characters’ stories. Another change concerns the reconciliation between Cratchit and Scrooge, which in the book occurs at Scrooge’s office, but we didn’t want to have to go back to that set, so our Scrooge goes to the Cratchit home instead. This is a Jerry Patch device that works wonderfully because you get to see the whole family reacting positively to this man who, in an earlier scene, was being called names and started a family fight. Another departure from Dickens is the exchange of gifts in that scene, which is not in Dickens. Every theatre adapts *A Christmas Carol* for their company, and certainly our script was written to suit the personalities and acting styles of our cast. But I believe that if you compare the Dickens book and the Patch play, you’ll see how very loyal Jerry was to his source. After all, it’s hard to improve on Charles Dickens.”

See also “The Director’s View” in Part III: The Production.

TITLE

The full title of the Charles Dickens novella is *A Christmas Carol in Prose: Being a Ghost Story of Christmas*. First published separately in December 1843, it was subsequently collected with four other tales (“The Chimes,” “The Cricket on the Heath,” “The Battle of Life,” and “The Haunted Man”) in 1852 and published as *The Christmas Stories*. The musical imagery of the title is carried throughout the text as Dickens refers to his chapter divisions as “staves,” an archaic term for the stanza or verse of a song.

A “carol” is a song of joy and praise that is frequently intended to teach something. Here Dickens praises Christmas and attempts to show, through Scrooge’s transformation, the greed of humanity and the hope for change. Legend tells us that in Bethlehem, angels sang once in unison to announce the birth of Christ, which became the first Christmas carol. The custom of singing carols at Christmas is English in origin, begun during the Middle Ages when groups of serenading choristers would travel from house to house spreading the holiday spirit.

Most of the popular Christmas carols we sing today were written in the 1800s. Adapter Jerry Patch includes a number of them in his dramatization:

“God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen”
“Ding Dong Merrily on High”
“Deck the Halls”
“Lo, How a Rose ‘Ere Blooming”
“Twelve Days of Christmas”
“Angels We Have Heard on High”
“Past Three O’Clock”
“Carol of the Bells”
“Good King Wenceslas”
“Gloucestershire Wassail”

THE SETTING

The play takes place in two worlds: the dark and gritty real world of 19th-century London, and the dream-like, spiritual world of the Ghosts, where Scrooge revisits scenes from his youth, encounters allegorical figures such as Ignorance and Want, and experiences his own death. Major settings include the office of Scrooge and Marley, Mr. Fezziwig’s warehouse, the homes of Scrooge’s nephew, Fred, and the Bob Cratchits, Scrooge’s bedchamber, a schoolyard and a cemetery.

CHARACTERS

In order of appearance:

LENA, a vendor of second-hand goods

JOE, a cider salesman and receiver of stolen goods

TOY LADY

PUPPETEER

CHIMNEY SWEEP

ELIZABETH SHELLEY

THOMAS SHELLEY, a vendor of second-hand goods

OLIVER SHELLEY

EBENEZER SCROOGE, a grasping, covetous old man

RICH WOMAN

GIRL ABOUT TOWN

CONSTABLE

BOB CRATCHIT, Scrooge's clerk

FRED, Scrooge's nephew

SOLICITORS

WREATH SELLER

JACOB MARLEY'S GHOST, a spectre of Scrooge's former business partner

SPIRIT of Christmas Past, a phantom showing things from the past

EBENEZER as a boy

FAN, Scrooge's sister

MRS. FEZZIWIG

MR. FEZZIWIG, a kind-hearted, jovial old merchant

SPIRIT of CHRISTMAS PRESENT, a spirit of a kind, earthy and generous nature

"TINY" TIM CRATCHIT

MRS. CRATCHIT

BELINDA CRATCHIT

PETER CRATCHIT

MARTHA CRATCHIT

MR. TOPPER, a bachelor

PURSUED MAIDEN

SALLY, Fred's wife

SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS YET-TO-COME, an apparition showing things that may yet happen

WANT

IGNORANCE

GENTLEMEN ON THE STREET

SCAVENGERS

BOY ON THE STREET

POULTERER

SYNOPSIS

Ebenezer Scrooge is a miserly old skinflint who hates Christmas. He thinks of it as simply an excuse for lazy people to miss work and for idle people to expect handouts. He refuses to acknowledge all of the good cheer and charity the holiday season promotes, and he makes sure everyone knows of his contempt.

On the night before Christmas, Scrooge is visited by the ghost of his former business associate, Jacob Marley—a man who was every bit as greedy and cold as Scrooge. Marley warns Scrooge that on this night he will be visited by three spirits whose missions will be to present visions of Christmases past, present, and future. Marley further warns Scrooge that if he continues to live selfishly, he is condemned to spend eternity in the same nightmarish afterlife to which Marley himself is doomed.

As Marley vanishes, the ghostly visitations begin. The Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Yet-To-Come. They show Scrooge glimpses of his past life as a schoolboy,

business apprentice, and young suitor. He is also shown the present happy home life of Bob Cratchit's family, as well as the bleak future awaiting them due to Scrooge's stinginess. Frightened by what he sees, Scrooge promises to change his ways.

When Scrooge awakens on Christmas morning, he is a completely new man. Realizing that he has wasted his life thus far, the old miser turns into the jolly, charitable person he promised the ghosts he would become. He rescues Tiny Tim and forevermore carries the spirit of Christmas in his heart all the year round.

PART II: THE PLAYWRIGHT

WHO WAS CHARLES DICKENS?

The eldest son of John and Elizabeth Dickens, Charles Huffman Dickens was born in Landport (now part of Portsmouth), England, February 7, 1812. In 1824, he was given his first position in business in the employ of Warren's Blacking Factory, Chatham. For six months, the young Dickens adhered labels to containers of blacking, and perhaps unknowingly, collected material for what would become world famous portrayals of Victorian England's working class.

At 15, he entered the professions, taking a position as clerk at Ellis and Blackmore, attorneys. In between his clerking and evening shorthand lessons, he wooed his first love, Maria Beadnell, a flirtatious young lady whose deep impressions on Dickens would be reflected in *Little Dorrit*, written nearly 30 years after their courtship. Forsaking Miss Beadnell, in 1836 he met and married Catherine Hogarth, who would bear him ten children, and began publishing *The Pickwick Papers*.

With the birth year of nearly each of his children came the writing or publication of a major work. In 1837, with the birth of his first son, Charles Jr., came *Oliver Twist*. In 1838, with the arrival of Mary, *Nicholas Nickleby* was begun. In 1843, just prior to the birth of Francis Jeffrey, *A Christmas Carol* was created and quickly became a favorite of the people.

Shortly after the publication of *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens moved his family from their London home to settle briefly in Genoa, Italy, and later moved on to Switzerland and Paris. During these years away from London, his best known works included *Cricket on the Hearth*, *The Battle of Life* and the first installments of *David Copperfield*.

Once again back in England, Dickens would spend his later years creating some of his most internationally acclaimed works. These include *Bleak House* (1859), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) and *Great Expectations* (1861). In 1870, the first installment of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* was published, and the author made his last public appearance. He died in his home at Gad's Hill Place on June 9, 1870.

Dicken's Biography by G. K. Chesterton (<http://www.online-literature.com/chesterton/charlesdickens/>)
Essays on Dickens (<http://www.literatureclassics.com/authors/Dickens/>) (www.essays-on-dickens.com)

THE MAN WHO INVENTED CHRISTMAS

As Dickens himself might have written: "Many had used the word 'merry' before Charles Dickens entered this world, and many more had used the word 'Christmas,' but never before had those two words been brought into such felicitous contact as when they were addressed to an irascible old goat such as Ebenezer Scrooge." Now, of course, "Merry Christmas" is part of the cultural lexicon and scholars widely agree that in publishing *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens single-handedly invented the modern form of this festive holiday in England and the United States."

"The Man Who Invented Christmas" (www.victorianweb.org/dickens/pva/pva63.html)

"Dickens and Christmas" by David Perdue (www.fidnet.com/~dap1955/dickens/christmas.html)

"What Christmas is as We Grow Older" (<http://library.educationworld.net/clas11/p-sc21pg1.html>)

CHRISTMAS THROUGH THE AGES

Christmas as celebrated by Catholics and early Protestants a few hundred years ago was not the secular holiday we recognize today. It was a *Christes Maesee* (Old English for "Christ's Mass"), or Nativity service, plus a large family dinner. But birthday celebrations—even Christ's—were rejected as pagan traditions during the first three hundred years of Christianity.

In 1583 the Presbyterian church suppressed the observation of Christmas in Scotland because there are no Biblical references to Christmas celebrations nor any Biblical commandments to celebrate the Savior's birth. The English Puritans regarded the celebration of Christmas as popish and bacchanalian and Oliver Cromwell's government abolished the English Christmas holiday by an act of Parliament in 1644.

A similar law forbidding Christmas celebration in New England was passed by the Massachusetts Bay Colony Puritans in 1659. However, it was popular in the American South beginning with the Anglican settlement of Jamestown, Virginia in 1607. Virginians were the first to establish eggnog as a holiday beverage. Dutch settlers in New Amsterdam (New York City) helped to create a largely pro-Christmas colony, although there were still strong anti-Christmas sentiments throughout New England and its celebration was not widely accepted in most of the American colonies until the mid-nineteenth century.

THE REAL MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

That the original “meaning” of Christmas has been lost is a common complaint. Those voicing it are usually referring to the celebration of the birth of Christ. In fact, our Christmas customs have much less to do with the Nativity than with midwinter pagan agricultural and solar observances dating centuries before Christ’s birth.

The Roman world into which Christ was born celebrated the Festival of Saturn from December 17-24, a week of parties and exchanging of gifts. The fact that Christmas was celebrated at the time of the winter solstice (December 22, the day on which the sun is at its greatest distance south of the equator – hence, the shortest day of the year for the northern hemisphere) connected it with festivals for the unconquered sun. Houses were decorated with greenery and lights, and presents were given to children and the poor.

Germanic and Celtic Yule customs worked their way into Christmas traditions as well. Special foods and feasts, fellowship, the Yule log and Yule cakes, wassailing, greenery and fir trees all commemorated different aspects of the season.

Two things were common to all European midwinter festivals in earlier times. Fires and lights, symbols of warmth and the endurance of life, were a part of both pagan and Judeo-Christian celebrations. Evergreens, as symbols of survival, had particular meaning for Northern Europeans who faced extremely harsh, long winters. An evergreen tree placed indoors at Christmas was a reminder that the suffering of winter would be followed by seasons of rebirth and fullness in the coming spring and summer.

This experience is difficult to appreciate in our dry, temperate Southern California climate. Our Yule trees stand more often as fire hazards than reminders of spring. But winter for much of the world is a season of dormancy and death in nature; and in earlier centuries it was even more a time of frailty fatal to human beings.

Charles Dickens’ recognition of human mortality pervades *A Christmas Carol*. The deaths of Marley and Fan, the Ghosts, and the possible passing of Tiny Tim, as well as the suffering of the poor and the Cratchits’ lean Christmas are the shadows to be dispelled by the light of human love and the season’s spirit.

More than a century later, Octavio Solis in his *La Posada Mágica* found similar substance in the predicament of his young and reluctant heroine, Gracie. The transforming power of love that Dickens found in 19th-Century London remains constant in Solis’ southwestern barrio at the beginning of the 21st.

The value of love and human life is measured by the fact that it doesn’t last forever. It is the equation Scrooge comes to know, and one which Dickens fully appreciated.

–Jerry Patch

DICKENS QUOTES

am sure that I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round...as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely. I never could have done what I have done without the habits of punctuality, order, and diligence, without the determination to concentrate myself on one subject at a time.

I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all year.

Let us be moral. Let us contemplate existence.

Nature gives to every time and season some beauties of its own; and from morning to night, as from the cradle to the grave, it is but a succession of changes so gentle and easy that we can scarcely mark their progress.

No one is useless in the world who lightens the burden of it for anyone else.

An idea, like a ghost, must be spoken to a little before it will explain itself.

Have a heart that never hardens, and a temper that never tires, and a touch that never hurts.

Whatever I have tried to do in life, I have tried with all my heart to do it well; whatever I have devoted myself to, I have devoted myself completely; in great aims and in small I have always thoroughly been in earnest.

I feel an earnest and humble desire, and shall till I die, to increase the stock of harmless cheerfulness.

Do all the good you can, and make as little fuss about it as possible.

A day wasted on others is not wasted on one's self.

Electric communication will never be a substitute for the face of someone who with their soul encourages another person to be brave and true.

More quotes by Dickens (http://www.online-literature.com/quotes/quotation_search.php?author=Charles%20Dickens)

OTHER VOICES AT CHRISTMAS

“Avarice and happiness never saw each other, how then should they become acquainted?”

– Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Richard's Almanac*, 1734

“Remorse is memory awake.”

– Emily Dickenson, *Poems, Pt. I, No.69*

“Why should I sorrow for what was pain?

A cherished grief is an iron chain.”

– Stephen Vincent Benet, *King David*

“I dreamt the past was never past redeeming;
But whether this was false or honest dreaming
I beg death's pardon now. And mourn the dead.”

– Richard Wilbur, *The Pardon*

“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”

– Isaiah, 9:2

“At Christmas I no more desire a rose
Than wish a snow in May's new-fangled mirth;
But like each thing that in season grows.”

– Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*

“Dickens is a terrible writer. In the original, Scrooge was mean and stingy, but you never know why. We're giving him a mother and father, an unhappy childhood, a whole background which will motivate him.”

– President of Screen Gems, 1968

What greater gift than the love of a cat?

I am quite serious when I say that I do not believe there are, on the whole earth besides, so many intensified bores as in these United States. No man can form an adequate idea of the real meaning of the word, without coming here.

Life is made of ever so many partings welded together.

Subdue your appetites, my dears, and you've conquered human nature.

“I believe in Michelangelo, Velasquez, and Rembrandt: in the might of design, the mystery of color, the redemption of all things by beauty everlasting and the message of Art that has made these hands blessed.”

– George Bernard Shaw

“Create in me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit with me.”

– Psalms 51:10

“Dickens was a mythologist rather than a novelist; he was the last of the mythologists, and perhaps the greatest. He did not always manage to make his characters men, but he always managed, at the least, to make them gods.”

– G.K. Chesterson 1906

Malcolm Kushner relates the story of a man who chaired the charity committee of his local hospital. He reviewed all the fundraising records, and he discovered that the richest person in town had never made a donation. So he went to visit him. He said, “Our records show that you're the richest person in town, but you've never contributed to the hospital.” And the rich man said, “Do your records also show that my widowed mother was left absolutely destitute? Do they show that my brother is totally disabled? Do they show that my sister was abandoned with four young children?” By now the chairperson felt really ashamed. He said, “Well no, our records don't show that.” And the rich man said, “Well, I don't do anything for them, so why should I do anything for you?”

DICKENS TIMELINE

- 1812** - Feb 7 Dickens born in Landport, Portsmouth
1812 - Jun 24 John Dickens moves family to Hawke Street, Kingston, Portsea
1814 - John Dickens transferred to Somerset House, London
1815 - Catherine Hogarth, Dickens' future wife, born
1817 - John Dickens moves family to Chatham
1821 - Dickens starts school at William Giles School, Chatham
1822 - John Dickens transferred to London, moves family to 16 Bayham Street, Camden Town
1824 - Feb John Dickens imprisoned at Marshalsea for debt
1824 - Feb Dickens leaves school, employed at Warren's Blacking House
1824 - Jun Dickens leaves blacking factory, returned to school
1825 - John Dickens retires with small pension
1827 - John Dickens evicted from home, Dickens removed from school
1827 - Dickens begins work as solicitor's clerk, Ellis and Blackmore, Gray's Inn
1828 - Dickens working as a reporter for the *Morning Herald*
1829 - Dickens becomes a freelance reporter at Doctor's Common
1831 - Dickens reporting for the *Mirror of Parliament*
1832 - Dickens reporting for the *True Sun*
1833 - Dickens' first story, "A Dinner at Poplar Walk," published in *Monthly Magazine*
1834 - Dickens meets Catherine Hogarth, 8 more stories published in *Monthly Magazine*
1836 - Dickens marries Catherine Hogarth, begins writing *Pickwick*
1836 - *Sketches by Boz* published
1837 - *Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* published
1838 - *Oliver Twist* published
1839 - *Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* published
1841 - *The Old Curiosity Shop* published
1841 - *Barnaby Rudge* published
1842 - Dickens' first visit to America
1843 - *A Christmas Carol* published
1844 - *Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* published
1845 - Dickens writes *Cricket on the Hearth*
1848 - *Dombey and Son* published
1850 - *David Copperfield* published
1853 - *Bleak House* published
1854 - *Hard Times* published
1857 - *Little Dorrit* published
1858 - Dickens and Catherine are legally separated
1859 - *A Tale of Two Cities* published
1861 - *Great Expectations* published
1865 - *Our Mutual Friend* published
1867 - Dickens second American visit
1869 - Dickens begins writing *Edwin Drood* (never completed)
1870 - Dickens dies, buried in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey

From *A Journal of the Life of Charles Dickens*, Kirk Witmer's year-by-year timeline of Dickens' life.

More useful Dickens links:

Write a letter to Mr. Dickens himself! (<http://youth.net/victorian/welcome.html>)

Go on a Dickens scavenger hunt (<http://oncampus.richmond.edu/academics/education/projects/>)

Visit the Dickens birthplace (www.charlesdickensbirthplace.co.uk/index.htm)

Talk to Charles Dickens (www.talkingto.co.uk/ttcd/index.asp)

PBS Dickens timeline and World Events (www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/olivertwist/dickens_timeline_text.html)

Charles Dickens Live! (www.dickenslive.com/)

Dickens Page (<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Jdickens.htm>)

Dickens Information (<http://www.lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/Dickens.html>)

PART III: THE PRODUCTION

THE DIRECTOR'S VIEW

When people ask director John-David Keller if anything is different about this year's production of *A Christmas Carol*, he's always tempted to say, "Yes, the ending!" For the 27th consecutive season, Keller and his hearty band of Carolers are engaged in what is probably the hardest part of any actor's job—to create the illusion of the first time. "We have fun every year because of the familiarity most of us have with each other. We *have* fun, but it's up to me to make sure that we never *make* fun. This show represents my legacy to SCR, and my biggest responsibilities as director are to preserve its long and proud tradition and to make the show fun both for those who've never seen it, and for those who keep coming back."

More than half of *A Christmas Carol* audience members are returning and they are eager to see their old friends again on the stage, from Hal Landon, Jr. as Scrooge, on down the roster of familiar SCR performers. But Keller believes the production gets an "extra spike" from all the new faces in the cast. "There are 16 children in the show and none of them have ever done it before. Sometimes we have repeats, but because we have such a huge pool of Conservatory students to draw from, we try to spread the wealth around every year. Christmas for these lucky youngsters is one they'll never forget. I watch their faces during rehearsal and I can see them grow with every passing day. It's an intense learning process and they have more fun than anybody . . . well, maybe not more fun than me. That would be very difficult!"

It's a well known fact that *A Christmas Carol* is to theatre what *The Nutcracker* is to ballet, but Keller insists that's not necessarily a bad thing. "This show is such an important part of who we are as a theatre company. The fact is that audiences still look forward to it every year and we still have the same devotion to it now as we did back in 1980, so it really doesn't matter how many productions we've got under our belts. Twenty-six years may have passed, but I haven't gotten any older!"

CHATting WITH HAL

Christmas isn't Christmas in Orange County until you've seen Hal Landon, Jr., one of the founding artists of South Coast Repertory, in SCR's annual production of *A Christmas Carol*. Creating the one and only Scrooge since the play's inception in 1980 has been a "dream role" for Landon. "It's a great part because it has a unique emotional arc—the journey that Scrooge takes through misery and pain to love and joy is incredible. I'm able to measure my progress as an actor in the part by continually looking for different and better ways than I've done it before."

Although Landon has logged more than a thousand performances of this notorious skinflint, he insists that he will never be through working on the role. "I've spent considerable time trying to figure out why Scrooge is the way he is and what makes a man shut down like that in terms of relating to the rest of the world. Why is he so obsessed with money? I've created an entire backstory for Scrooge. For example, he's not just lonely on that one Christmas Eve when we see him; he has felt the same kind of loneliness throughout his entire life, which is something I need to understand and respond to."

Landon imagines that Scrooge's life totally changes after we leave him at Bob Cratchit's home on Christmas Day. "He has a lot of money which he starts using for the common good. I like to think that his relationship with the Cratchits, and with his nephew, Fred, becomes very close, which brings all of them a lot of joy. Scrooge is a symbol of hope for all of humanity because he proves without a doubt that anybody can change."

THE MISER'S MISER BY CHARLES DICKENS

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! A squeezing wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. 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.

External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often "came down" handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blind-men's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, "No eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!"

But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance, was what the knowing ones call "nuts" to Scrooge.

– Excerpted from *A Christmas Carol*

IN DEFENSE OF SCROOGE: AN ESSAY BY MICHAEL LEVIN

“It’s Christmas again, time to celebrate the transformation of Ebenezer Scrooge. You know the ritual: boo the curmudgeon initially encountered in Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*, then cheer the sweetie pie he becomes in the end. It’s too bad no one notices that the curmudgeon had a point—quite a few points, in fact.

“To appreciate them, it is necessary first to distinguish Scrooge’s outlook on life from his disagreeable persona. He is said to have a pointed nose and a harsh voice, but not all hardheaded businessmen are so lamentably endowed, nor are their feckless nephews (remember Fred?) always “ruddy and handsome,” and possessed of pretty wives. These touches of the storyteller’s art only bias the issue”

Read the complete text of Prof. Levin’s lively argument (www.mises.org/fullstory.asp?control=573)

PART IV: EDUCATION STATION

A VICTORIAN GLOSSARY

London Life

Charles Dickens composed *A Christmas Carol* at a time when the disparity of life in Victorian England was being felt by all. The Reform Bill of 1832 sought to bring a greater sense of democracy to England by extending the vote to all men owning property worth ten pounds or more in annual rent and by reducing the power of upper-class landowners. Unfortunately, considerable hardship, injustice and unrest continued for the working and lower classes. The problems of homelessness and economic injustice addressed by Dickens in *A Christmas Carol* were beginning to be the focus of much political discussion during the mid-19th century. By using the personal story of the Cratchit family as the pivotal part of Scrooge's enlightenment and reversal of character, Dickens gave his readers a chance to see themselves in the people presented to Scrooge by the Spirit of Christmas Present. He used the plight of the Cratchits to demonstrate that even in the face of overwhelming want and poverty, the holiday season can inspire good will and generosity toward one's neighbors. The inscription on Dickens's tombstone in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey reads:

"He was a sympathiser to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed; and by his death, one of England's greatest writers is lost to the world."

apprentice – The process of requiring young people to train with a master before practicing a trade lasted well into the 19th century. As a rule, only workhouse children could be forced into apprenticeship without their consent. The term of servitude was generally seven years, after which the apprentice became a journeyman and was able to earn wages.

bakehouse – Also called bakeries or bakers, these establishments would often allowed the poor to use their premises for heating their meals since their homes often lacked ovens so they could only cook over an open fire.

Bedlam – Officially the Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem, Bedlam was founded as a priory but by 1402, it had become a notorious lunatic asylum.

charwoman – a woman hired to do cleaning and other chores

counting-house - a businessman's office

dowry - the wealth a bride is supposed to bring to a marriage

humbug - a hoax or sham; interjection meaning "nonsense"; slang for "to deceive or cheat"

milliner – a maker of women's hats and sometimes other items of clothing

pauper – someone who is very poor, especially those living on public charity

Poor Law - The Victorian answer to poverty was enacted in 1834. Prior to passage of the New Poor Law, indigent care was the burden of individual parishes, but the new regulation required parishes to band together and create regional workhouses where the poor could apply for relief. Little more than prisons for the poor, workhouses were notorious for denying civil liberties, separating family members, and destroying human dignity. As a result, most of the poorest people went to great lengths in order to avoid this degrading solution.

poulterer - a chicken retailer, who also usually sold game, including hares (sometimes illegally poached)

prison – There were several varieties of English prisons, which were characteristic of the crude, haphazard approach to punishment that sought only to confine rather than correct or reform. Newgate was the main prison in London where condemned criminals were kept in the last hours before execution. Prisons such as Marshalsea held those unfortunates who were legally declared to be debtors until they either paid up or agreed to give up all their possessions to their creditors. Imprisonment for debt was not abolished until the 1850s.

ragamuffin – a dirty, shabbily-clothed child, from the Dutch meaning “ragged mitten”

GIRL: Mr. Fezziwig, can we do the “Roger de Coverly”?

FEZZIWIG: Of course, my darlings! Dancers—to the line!

Roger de Coverly - One of the jolliest of all English folk dances, this dance is formed in sets of six or eight couples, with the ladies in one line and their partners directly opposite. It was invented by the great grandfather of Sir Roger de Coverly, a Worcestershire nobleman who died in 1712, and was based on the old country dances (*contre danses*) that were revived in England in the mid-19th century. This was the dance routinely chosen to finish the evening because its steps were simple enough that everyone could—and would—participate. In America, the De Coverly became known as the Virginia Reel.

scavenger – someone who collects things others have discarded

scoundrel – a mean, worthless fellow; a villain; a man without honor or scruples

treadmill – Invented in 1818, this nasty device consisted of a metal cylinder with steps built on it so far apart that one had to step way up to catch the next one before the cylinder revolved around under one’s feet, rather like a wheel in a hamster cage. Convicts were required to walk on the treadmill six hours at a time.

washhouse – an outbuilding for doing laundry

wastrel – an idler or loafer, especially one who wastes money

workhouse – Sometimes called “the house” for short, it was the publicly supported institution to which the sick, destitute, aged, and otherwise impoverished went for food and shelter in return for manual labor. After 1834, they were made grim beyond belief to make sure lazy people did not take advantage. Once people accepted relief from a workhouse, they couldn’t leave unless they found support outside; therefore, workhouses tended to keep the standard of living lower than what could be found in the outside world. Husbands and wives were separated and parents were unable to see their children. Many people preferred death to entering one of these places.

MONEY

Before adoption of a decimal system in 1967, British currency consisted of a dizzying array of coins, bills, denominations. The **pound** (sterling) has always been the basic British monetary unit. It is expressed by the symbol **£**, a variation of the capital letter “L” for *libra*, the Latin word for the Roman pound (weight, not money). This word is also the source of our modern abbreviation “lb.” for the word “pound” (weight). The **sovereign** was a gold coin worth 1£.

There were twenty **shillings** in a pound (also called a **quid**), five shillings in a **crown**. Shillings were expressed by either the symbol /- or by s, which stood for the Latin word *solidus*, a gold Roman coin. The shilling was also referred to as a **bob**. Twelve pennies, or pence, made up a shilling. The symbol for pennies was d, taken from the Latin word *denarius*, a Roman silver coin. A combination such as a crown and six pennies would have been spoken as “**a crown and six**.” Common multiples of the penny were the twopence (or “tuppence”), threepence (or “thrippence”), and sixpence (“a tanner”). Coins valued at less than a penny included the halfpenny (“ha’p’ny”) and the **farthing** (a “fourth-thing”).

FOOD AND DRINK

Throughout his body of work, Dickens takes great delight in celebrating the culinary specialties of Victorian England. Drinking is also ubiquitous in his works, which accurately reflects the fact that in Dickens’ day, alcohol was considerably safer to drink than water. Dickens himself was a moderate drinker, but he apparently had little patience with rabid teetotalers. To an irate advocate of abstinence, he once replied, “I have no doubt whatever that the warm stuff in the jug at Bob Cratchit’s Christmas dinner had a very pleasant effect on the simple party. I am certain that if I had been at Mr. Fezziwig’s ball, I should have taken a little negus—and possibly not a little beer—and been none the worse for it, in heart or in head. I am very sure that the working people

of this country have not too many household enjoyments, and I could not, in my fancy or in actual deed, deprive them of this one when it is so innocently shared.”

BOB CRATCHIT: He'll have a kidney pie and pudding at the Hound and Thorn.

Kidney Pie is a traditional British dish consisting of a cooked mixture of chopped beef, kidneys, mushrooms, onions and beef stock. This mixture is placed in a pie or casserole dish, covered with a pastry crust and baked until crisp and brown. Sometimes potatoes, hard-cooked eggs or oysters are also added to the dish. They are popular all year round, but at Christmas time, butchers all over England will make a pile of these delectable savoury pies for the Christmas Buffet, to be served with pickles and chutneys.

BOB CRATCHIT: On the way home, Tim and I smelled our goose cooking at the baker's.

TINY TIM: Oh, Martha. Such a goose!

Goose was the main course of Winter Solstice feasts from the time of the ancient Egyptians. Henry VIII of England is credited with replacing goose with turkey—that exotic new bird from North America. Fruit from an exotic American plant called the cranberry was also added to English Christmas dinners.

PETER: Papa, why is Mama so worried about the pudding?

CRATCHIT: Well, Peter—and you, too, Tim—if ever you want to make some woman a good husband, you must not only not ask such questions, you also must learn how to receive the pudding. Just watch your father and learn.

(Mrs. Cratchit returns with the pudding, walking slowly with it held in front of her. She sets it carefully on the table. CRATCHIT leads the children in applause for the pudding.)

CRATCHIT: My dear, my joys with you have been many, but I can honestly say that I believe this pudding to be the greatest success, aside from our children, you have achieved since our marriage.

Christmas Plum Pudding was still made from meat in some parts of the British Isles as late as the early 1800s, and the so-called plums from which it drew its name were actually raisins, not the plump, juicy fruits the name suggests to us today. Pudding was an excellent dish for the poor because it didn't require as much fat to prepare as other pastries require. An English Christmas dinner is not complete without a serving of this dense, moist, heavily-fruited steamed cake. There are many customs associated with Christmas Pudding: stirring the mixture with a wooden spoon and making a wish, placing charms in the mixture such as a sixpence or a ring (which meant marriage), a thimble (which meant spinsterhood for a girl), a button (bachelorhood for a man), and pouring brandy over the pudding and lighting as it's served.

FEZZIWIG: Get out of that hat and coat, Ebenezer, and we'll warm you with a cup of punch.

Punch was the preferred alternative to drinking water, which was avoided for fear of contamination. It came to the English colonies in America from the English colonies in India. To the Orientals we owe the word "punch," which comes either from the Hindu word *panch*, the Sanskrit word *panchan*, or the Persian word *panj*, all of which mean "five." This refers to the number of ingredients originally used in the drink: tea, liquor, sugar, fruit, and water. Two popular punches called Purl (beer heated to near-boiling then flavored with gin, sugar, and ginger) and Bishop (heated red wine, oranges, sugar, and spices) were regularly consumed by Victorian partygoers of all ages. Using the word alone one expects it to be hot; if cold, the word is qualified by iced. Of all the spirits that can be used to make a punchrum is the one that most quickly comes to mind, and of all fruits, the lime was the most popular.

MRS. FEZZIWIG: What about the shepherd's pie, Mr. Fezziwig?

FEZZIWIG: Done, Mrs. Fezziwig.

MRS. FEZZIWIG: The gingerbread scones? The holiday trifle?

FEZZIWIG: Done and done. It's all done, my dear.

MRS. FEZZIWIG: The porter, Mr. Fezziwig?

FEZZIWIG: The porter and negus and cold roast and pies! Done! You must fortify yourself! The party begins!

Shepherd's Pie dates back to King Henry VIII. Legend has it that the British ruler was livid when he found out that one of his abbots was building an elaborate and expensive kitchen. The wise abbot abated the King's anger

by sending him a delicious, warm pie. Two early examples were shepherd's pie and cottage pie. Shepherd's pie was made with lamb and vegetables, and cottage pie was made with beef and vegetables. Both are topped with potatoes and baked until the mixture is hot and the potato crust browns. Shepherd's pie is also an economical way to use leftovers from the ubiquitous Sunday roast.

Gingerbread Scones derive from the Scottish bannock, which was a soft cake of barley meal baked on an iron plate known as a girdle—the forerunner to the hotplate. The Bannock was round and cut into four pieces, the individual triangles of which are called scones. Gingerbread products date back over eight centuries in the United Kingdom, and ginger had been used as a spice for many centuries before its appearance in Britain. Gingerbread evolved through the addition of ginger, honey and fat to coarse meal dough. Lightness of texture was achieved by natural fermentation of the dough. The Church helped the popularity of gingerbread by making figures of saints or other religious figures, which is perhaps where the first Gingerbread Men were born.

Holiday Trifle was once described by Oliver Wendell Holmes as “that most wonderful object of domestic art . . . with its charming confusion of cream and cake and almonds and jam and jelly and wine and cinnamon and froth.” The first trifles were very much like fools (old confections of pureed fruit mixed with cream), and indeed, the two terms were used almost interchangeably for many years. The very first known recipe from 1596 bears almost no resemblance to what we now call a trifle, which comes from the Old French “*truffle*,” and literally means something whimsical or of little consequence. Trifles are not just for Christmas; in Britain, the trifle is a popular year-round party dish, particularly with children who love all the layers of cake, fruit, custard and cream, and the bold pattern of the decoration on top.

Porter was introduced into England in 1720. It differs from beer because of the kind of malt used. At the time, it was common for a customer in a tavern to order a pint of “three threads,” which was equal portions of ale, beer, and twopenny (the strongest beer, costing twopence a quart). Because each one of these liquors had to be drawn from a separate vat, a brewer named Harwood devised a plan of brewing a drink that would yield the same flavor as these three combined ingredients. It was originally called “entire” or “entire butt” because it was taken from one butt or vat, but the drink was so often ordered by porters that it soon became known as “porter.” Porter that was extra strong was known as “Stout Porter” and eventually, “Stout.”

Negus is a warm wine punch that was first concocted in Queen Anne's day by Col. Frances Negus, who mixed sugar with water and a wine such as port or sherry. Apparently a popular drink for balls and dances, negus was also improved by a flavoring of nutmeg. In Victorian England, children were served small glasses of wine at the dinner table, and it was also added to their party punch cups. When served to children, the wine didn't need to be very old or expensive, but it was always a sweet wine, such as port or sherry

Roast Beef is the most popular traditional dinner associated with England, usually accompanied by two or three vegetables and Yorkshire Pudding. Variations on this theme include roast chicken, roast pork, and roast lamb. One sure sign that this is still one of the most revered traditional dishes is that in 2000, the National Gallery in London had an art exhibition dedicated to the mouth-watering subject, entitled “Roast Beef.

SCROOGE: I can't understand how I managed it, but I purchased a turkey for Christmas and had already accepted an invitation to dinner. The bird won't keep, of course, and you'd do me the greatest favor if you and your family could use it today.

Turkey was taken back to Europe by Sebastian Cabot upon his return from the New World and only began to appear on British Christmas menus around 1650. When the Pilgrims and other settlers arrived in America, they were already familiar with raising and eating turkey and naturally included it as part of their Thanksgiving feast. (Did you know that California raises more turkeys than any other state?) The big bird got its name after merchants from Turkey made it a popular dish. Prior to this, swan, goose, peacock and boar were part of the traditional Christmas feast. Although we associate Victorian Christmas festivities with roast goose, for those who could not afford it the meatier turkey was preferable.

SCROOGE: (*toasting*) To Christmas. Wassail!

Wassail is a drink made of hot ale, cream, spices, and beaten eggs that is served to enhance the merriment of the season. The word is derived from the Anglo-Saxon phrase *waes hael*, meaning “good health.” Like many ancient

customs, wassailing has a legend to explain its origin. It seems that a beautiful Saxon maiden named Rowena presented Prince Vortigen with a bowl of wine while toasting him with the words *Waes bael*. Over the centuries a great deal of ceremony has developed around the custom of drinking wassail. The bowl is carried into a room with great fanfare, a traditional carol about the drink is sung, and finally, the steaming hot beverage is served. Wassailing is almost always accompanied by the song: "Here We Come A-Wassailing," which is a Christmas classic loved by many but understood by few. It is often misinterpreted and likened to the act of singing... hence "Here We Come A-Caroling" is frequently substituted for the first line of this popular carol. Although wassailing is classically observed during the Christmas holiday season, it is also practiced at weddings and other such similar events where community and family are celebrated.

LITERARY ALLUSIONS

SCROOGE: I remember reading about Ali Baba. And Valentine. And his wild brother, Orson, and the Genii! I remember the parrot in *Robinson Crusoe* calling out 'Poor Robinson Crusoe, where have you been, Robinson Crusoe?' And Crusoe thought he was dreaming but he wasn't . . . the poor boy.

Young Charles Dickens spent much of his early childhood alone in an attic room, reading. By the time he was eight years old, he had read, among other great works of classic literature, all of *The Arabian Nights* and *Robinson Crusoe*. "**Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves**" is a tale within *The Arabian Nights*, a legendary collection of anonymous Persian, Arabian, and Indian folk tales that have been handed down through the centuries. Two of the most popular English-language translations are by Sir Richard Burton and Andrew Lang.

Robinson Crusoe is one of the most famous adventure novels ever written. Daniel Defoe based his classic tale of shipwreck and survival the true story of Scotsman Alexander Selkirk who ran off to sea in 1695. The following year he joined a pirate expedition to the Pacific Ocean, where he was put ashore alone on the island of Juan Fernandez about 400 miles off the coast of Chile. (Selkirk may also have been in the mind of Robert Louis Stevenson when he wrote *Treasure Island*). Much like Ebenezer Scrooge, Robinson Crusoe is a fictional character who long ago crossed over into fact in the minds of many.

SCROOGE: Ring out wild bells, to the wild sky,
 The flying cloud, the frosty light;
 The year is dying in the night.
 Ring out wild bells and let him die.

Alfred Lord Tennyson, who is regarded by many as the chief literary representative of the Victorian age, succeeded William Wordsworth as England's Poet Laureate in 1850 when he was appointed to this prestigious office by Queen Victoria. Among Tennyson's major poetic achievements is the elegy mourning the death of his friend Arthur Hallam, excerpts from which Scrooge recites in Jerry Patch's adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*. Entitled "In Memoriam A.H.H.," the poem contains Tennyson's thoughts on faith, immortality, and the meaning of loss.

Read the complete text of Tennyson's poem at <http://home.att.net/~TennysonPoetry/106.htm>

Read *The Arabian Nights* at www.arabiannights.org

Read *Robinson Crusoe* at www.uoregon.edu/~rbear/crusoe.html

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Who are the two allegorical characters in *A Christmas Carol* and how are they representative of the Victorian era?
2. How are the lives of the Cratchit and Dickens families similar?
3. When did Charles Dickens begin his own career as a writer and for whom did he work? What effect did his early life have on his writing?
4. What primary themes of the universal human condition are found in *A Christmas Carol*?

5. How did *A Christmas Carol* contribute to the celebration of the Christmas holiday?
6. What was Scrooge's relationship with Jacob Marley and why is Marley's presence significant throughout the entire play?
7. What is the pivotal point in the play and how does the suspense shift at this point?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Analyze Scrooge's reaction to the appearance of Marley's ghost. Discuss why Marley is fettered and how he is trying to save Scrooge from the same destiny. Why does Scrooge bless Marley's soul in the end? Will Scrooge be a changed man from his encounters with the spirits? Why or why not?
2. The literary device of flashback recurs repeatedly throughout the play to build empathy for Scrooge. What do we learn of Scrooge's life from the first two visiting spirits? Why does Scrooge shut himself off from the world? What does Scrooge fear? How do the flashbacks help us to understand Scrooge's motivations?
3. The themes of regeneration and rebirth are conveyed dramatically through Scrooge's transformation. In what ways are these themes universally true? Think about a time in your life when you needed to change the way you were behaving. How did you feel before, during, and after the incident? How did you change and what did you learn about yourself in the process?
4. Although the play is titled *A Christmas Carol*, its message clearly transcends cultures and generations. Why was the original work relevant in the 19th century when written by Dickens, and how are its ideas applicable today?

PART V: RESOURCES

ONLINE STUDY GUIDES

SparkNotes by Brian Phillips (www.sparknotes.com/lit/christmascarol/)
BookRags Book Notes (www.bookrags.com/notes/xmas/PART1.htm)
TNT Learning Guide (<http://turnerlearning.com/tntlearning/christmascarol/index.html>)

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