

# The Ghost of London's Past



Prime Minister Lord Melbourne (1779-1848) did not care for Charles Dickens (1812-70). By the mid-1800s, Dickens had achieved widespread fame with the publications of *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist* and *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*. Lord Melbourne advised Queen Victoria against reading the work of Her Majesty's famous subject, due to the fact that Dickens' books were full of "unpleasant subjects"

such as prostitutes, pickpockets, murderers and houses of ill repute. Dickens' vivid London was a place from which the good Prime Minister wished to shield his Queen.

Imagine yourself in London in Charles Dickens' time. Nearly two million Londoners, rich and poor alike, spill into the city streets and try to navigate around the manure left by literally thousands of horse-drawn carriages. Smoke swarms out of chimney pots and soot coats all that it falls upon. In parts of the city, raw sewage pours

from the gutters into the Thames—your main water supply. If you were a common laborer, your average weekly wage was 3 shillings, 9 pence—that's approximately \$4. With a loaf of bread costing about 2 pence a day and rent for the year costing £25 (about \$47), you are still extraordinarily poor; however, this was a luckier existence than the very destitute, who would receive aid in the form of employment in a workhouse.

From this dank and vile reality came countless Romantic



London (Dudley Street in Seven Dials) by Blanchard Jerrold and Gustave Doré (1872).

literary offerings, including Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. His account of mean old Ebenezer Scrooge changing his ways became essential reading during Christmastime in London, and indeed, throughout the world. Romanticism revolted against aristocratic, social and political norms, stressing in their place the wonder experienced in nature. Dickens' work denounced the moving forward of industry and lauded those unfortunate souls who fell victim to it. Those "unpleasant subjects" that Prime Minister Melbourne was so quick to cover up became the heroes of Dickens' stories.

Melbourne's efforts were successful, at least to a point. At first the Queen seemingly turned a blind eye to the rampant pollution, severe sanitation problems and insurmountable poverty that plagued her urban subjects. Tuberculosis, typhoid fever and, finally, the dreaded cholera epidemic would ravage the streets of the destitute and the opulent alike. Although Queen Victoria would continue to have her sights set on trade and commerce and Lord Melbourne would resign his duties twice, the workers of London attempted to solve the greatest issue of their day. Toward the end of the 1850s, English engineers finally brought forth a water filtering system that would end the cholera epidemic. Although the extreme indigence of London's common man would continue for years, even after Queen Victoria's death, the age would be remembered as a time of progress.

The Victorian Age was, in many ways, a time of profound sadness and deprivation for ordinary people. But it also was a time of discovery and expectation. It was a time that infuriated and inspired its people. While royalty guarded trade agreements and sought to expand their empires, everyday Londoners were searching for everyday chances and small kindnesses. That was Charles Dickens' London.

Dickens made sure the voices of the unfortunate were heard in his work, along with huge doses of good humor and myriad evocations of the joys of home and hearth. He continues to do the same for us today. In all of his stories, we remember that there are those less fortunate than ourselves. We remember that there are those willing to change. Most importantly, we remember that there is hope. After all, Dickens observed, "It is a fair, even-handed, noble adjustment of things, that while there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good-humour."



## Other Voices at Christmas

There are several film versions of *A Christmas Carol* — have you seen them all?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <i>Scrooge</i> (1935),<br>starring Sir Seymour Hicks                      | starring Albert Finney<br>and Alec Guinness  |
| <i>A Christmas Carol</i> (1938),<br>starring Reginald Owen                | <i>A Christmas Carol</i> (1971),<br>an animated Oscar-winning<br>short film, with Alastair Sim |
| <i>A Christmas Carol</i> (1951),<br>starring Alastair Sim                 | <i>A Christmas Carol</i> (1984),<br>a TV movie, starring George<br>C. Scott                    |
| <i>A Christmas Carol</i> (1954),<br>a TV movie, starring<br>Fredric March | <i>A Christmas Carol</i> (1999),<br>a TV movie, starring Patrick<br>Stewart                    |
| <i>Scrooge</i> (1970),<br>a musical film adaptation,                      |  |

Not quite enough Ebenezer for you?  
What about these adaptations?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <i>Mister Magoo's<br/>Christmas Carol</i> (1962)   | <i>The Muppet Christmas<br/>Carol</i> (1992), starring<br>Michael Caine and the<br>Muppets                 |
| <i>Rich Little's Christmas<br/>Carol</i> (1978)  | <i>Ebbie</i> (1995), the first version to<br>imagine Scrooge as a woman,<br>starring Susan Lucci           |
| <i>The Stingiest Man in Town</i><br>(1979), animated, with the<br>voices of Walter Matthau and<br>Tom Bosley | <i>Ebenezer</i> (1997), a Canadian,<br>western-themed adaptation,<br>starring Jack Palance                 |
| <i>An American Christmas<br/>Carol</i> (1979), starring Henry<br>Winkler                                     | <i>A Diva's Christmas Carol</i><br>(2000), starring<br>Vanessa Williams                                    |
| <i>Bugs Bunny's Christmas<br/>Carol</i> (1979)   | <i>A Sesame Street<br/>Christmas Carol</i> (2006),<br>featuring Oscar the Grouch, of<br>course, as Scrooge |
| <i>Mickey's Christmas Carol</i><br>(1983), starring Scrooge<br>McDuck  |  |
| <i>Scrooged</i> (1988), starring Bill<br>Murray  |  |

Other Dickens Christmas stories:

*A Christmas Carol* was a bestseller when it was published in 1843, and it created an insatiable demand in the public for more Christmas stories. Dickens obliged by writing one Christmas novella a year for four years, they were:

<i>The Chimes</i>	<i>The Battle of Life</i>
<i>The Cricket on the Hearth</i>	<i>The Haunted Man</i>

If you are interested in reading any of these works or more on Charles Dickens, try these websites:

[literature.org/authors/dickens-charles/](http://literature.org/authors/dickens-charles/)  
[charlesdickenspage.com/](http://charlesdickenspage.com/)

# A Miser's Miser



h! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! A squeezing wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!

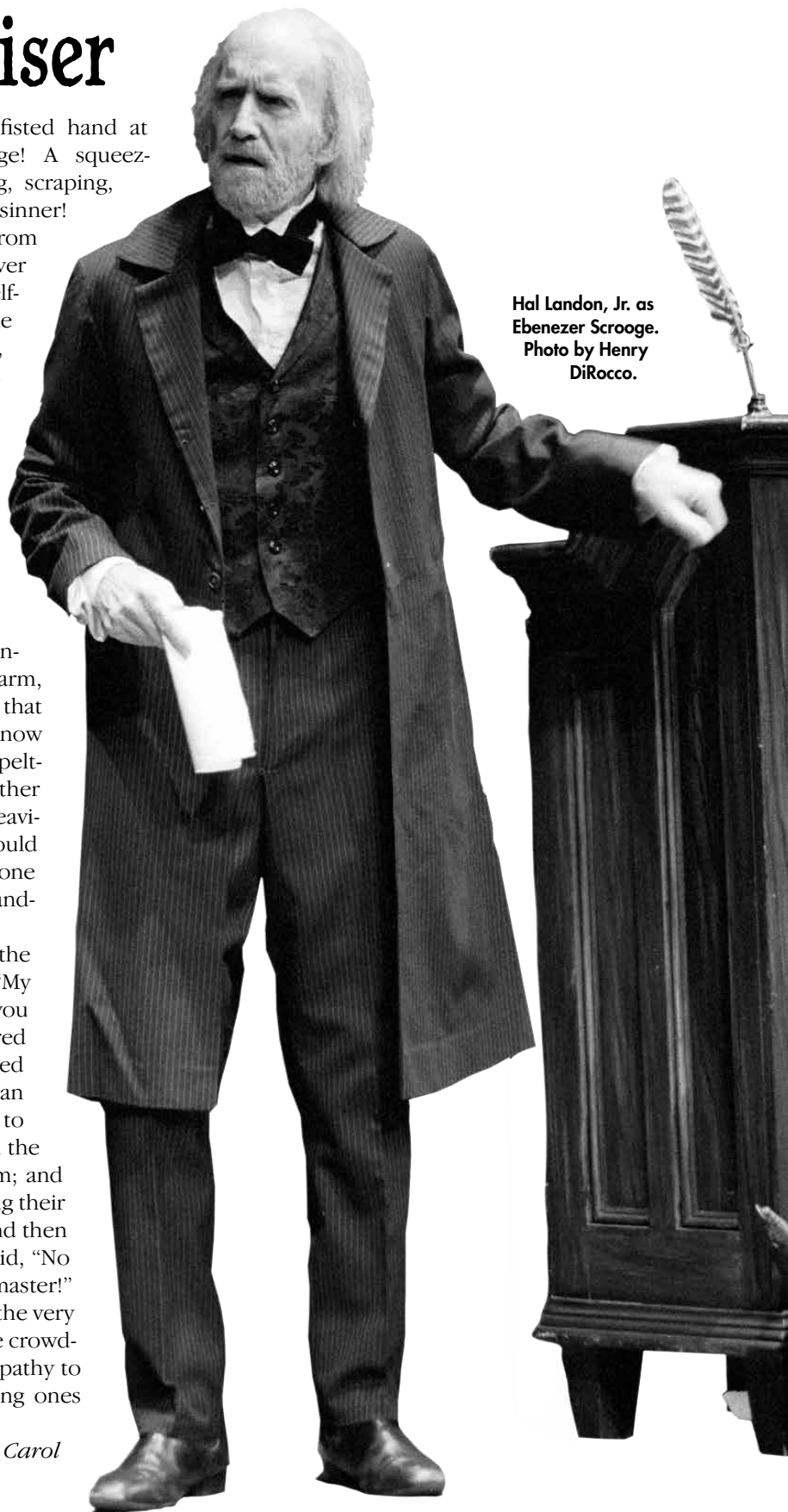
Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly 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 blindmen'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*



Hal Landon, Jr. as Ebenezer Scrooge.  
Photo by Henry DiRocco.

# Who Was Charles Dickens?

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

~Inscription on Dickens' tombstone at Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey



he eldest son of John and Elizabeth Dickens, Charles Huff-

man Dickens was born in Landport (now part of Portsmouth), England, Feb. 7, 1812. In 1824, he was given his first position in business in the employ of Warren's Blacking Factory, Chatham. For six months, 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 10 children, and began the publication of *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.

The first of his Christmas books, *A Christmas Carol* quickly became a favorite of the people. It would be followed by *The Chimes*, *Dombey and Son* and *Christmas Stories*.

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*.

After returning to England, Dickens would spend his later years creating some of his most internationally acclaimed works including *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.



Engraving of Charles Dickens from *A Portrait Gallery of Eminent Men and Women of Europe and America, with Biographies*, by Evert A. Duykinck (1872).





Liam McHugh, Daniel Blinkoff, Nika Natalie Aydin, Jennifer Parsons, Jillian Tabone and Grace O'Brien in the 2013 production of *A Christmas Carol*. Photo by Jim Cox.

# SCR Theatre Conservatory Students Shine on Stage

**I**n today's performance of *A Christmas Carol*, you'll see young actors in the roles of Martha, Belinda, Peter and Tiny Tim Cratchit. And Turkey Boy. And the specters of "Want" and "Ignorance." And the young people among the partygoers. All of them are students in SCR's Theatre Conservatory who earned the roles through hard work, talent, and the growth and promise they have shown in their classes.

"The students selected for *A Christmas Carol* show maturity, focus, confidence and an overall readiness to take on the exciting challenge. It's a thrill for us to provide young actors this singular opportunity to perform and learn next to professional artists in this beloved classic," says Hisa Takakuwa, conservatory director, who portrayed Sally and Toy Lady in *A Christmas Carol* for 14 years and has been assistant director for the past 11 years. "Each year's cast of 16 young actors brings a new life and energy to this wonderful show."

Nearly 80 conservatory students, between the ages of 8 and 18, audition for the annual holiday classic. They must have at least two years of conservatory training, show strength in their class work and have the recommendation of their teacher.

"Conservatory acting classes guide students toward understanding the artistic process, discovering their creativity and building their ability to work confidently with others," explains Takakuwa. "Our students learn through their work in this production and when they resume classes, we see how much they have grown as artists."

## "A Christmas Carol" Experience Leaves Lasting Impact

We asked Theatre Conservatory students from past productions of SCR's *A Christmas Carol* what made the experience special for them.

"All the other actors shared my enthusiasm for acting. I also loved being in a professional play and having to work really hard because it was fun to work hard. I also enjoyed performing in front of a lot of people."

—Carissa Diller (Belinda Cratchit, 2015)

"*A Christmas Carol* was integral to my growth as an artist and in my education. I learned that dedication requires stamina, that being present requires focus, and commitment to your fellow artists requires commitment to your choices. This experience shaped me and I am so grateful for that."

—Sanaz Toossi (Martha Cratchit, 2008)

"*A Christmas Carol* was my first professional stage experience and it helped me gain insight into the entire production process, which inspired me to pursue a BA in theatre from UCSD. Today, I am a K-8 educator and theatre artist—I even worked as the child assistant for the 2015 season of *A Christmas Carol*—and I would argue that the experience of working on this production was one of the most impactful moments of my training in the Theatre Conservatory's Kids and Teen Program, as well as my academic career."

—Brianna Beach (Martha Cratchit, 2007 and Fan, 2008)

"*A Christmas Carol* was a portal into the world of the professional actor. While I got the chance to explore my craft with sage adult actors, I also developed crucial leadership skills among the younger actors."

—Christopher Huntley (Boy Scrooge, 2008 and Peter Cratchit, 2011)

# Find the Hidden Objects

“Hurray for the Pudding!” Peer into this Victorian dining room and find cleverly hidden images. Look for the following: duck, mug, horse-and-cart, sheep, train, spoon, knife, fork, jack-in-the-box, tea cup, trumpet, elephant and rose.



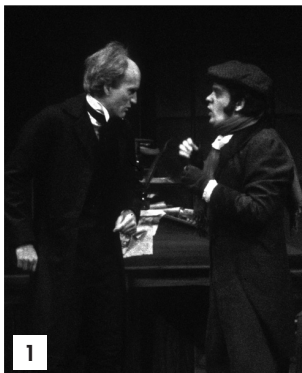


# How We Keep Christmas

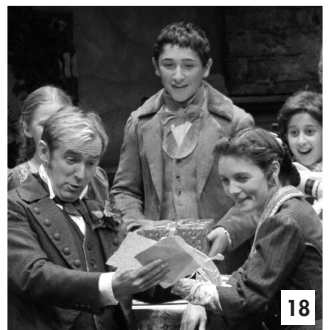


his season, we celebrate our 40th consecutive year of staging Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, adapted by Jerry Patch. Once again, Hal Landon Jr. plays Ebenezer Scrooge and John-David Keller directs. SCR Founding Artists Richard Doyle and Art Koustik, who have reprised their roles virtually every season, also are back this year. The *Christmas Carol* cast has become a family, gathering each November to do its work. New folks are made kin by our veterans; the veterans are invigorated by the newcomers. By December, we've re-created our clan (and

our show) anew. But we're not complete until joined by SCR's greater family: our audiences. A few of you have seen the show every year since 1980. Many of you first came with your parents and now bring your own children—or even grandchildren! Our production of *A Christmas Carol* has endured because it brings families together. We are reminded to celebrate the season and to consider, together, Ebenezer Scrooge's redemption. The value of love, life and family is heightened by the fact that these don't last forever. It is the equation Scrooge comes to know and one our family appreciates again each year.







See photo information on page 15.



# Mr. Landon & Mr. Keller

## Bid Farewell to *A Christmas Carol*



body “bah-humbugs” quite like actor Hal Landon Jr. Or somersaults into a top hat and comes up ready to greet Christmas Day in style. *The New York Times* acknowledged him as one of the longest-running Ebenezer Scrooges in the country. But, now, after 40 years of playing Scrooge—a role he originated for South Coast Repertory’s popular adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*—Landon will hang up his top hat. Joining him in retirement from the show will be its 40-year director, John-David Keller, who also portrayed the beloved Mr. Fezziwig for a number of years. And once, in 1997, Keller filled in as Scrooge. [Read more fun facts about *A Christmas Carol* on the facing page.]

As this milestone year approached, the pair spent time reflecting on the show, what it has meant to each of them and the impact on more than a half-million playgoers.

“For me, this 40-year run has so many stand-outs,” says Landon. “Playing such a terrific role and having an extended period of time to develop it has been immensely satisfying and made me a better actor, too. And to share the success of *A Christmas Carol* with the SCR family of talented actors and be able to create a true ensemble under director J-D Keller’s inspired guidance. And, of course, the response from our audience—knowing how much the show

means to them—is one of the big reasons I’ve done it for so long.”

The audience repays that sentiment in kind. Years ago, Esther Fitzgerald brought her first two grandchildren to see a then-newish show at South Coast Repertory—*A Christmas Carol*.

“She initiated this family tradition,” says daughter Mariann Raymond. “As time moved on, and as other grandchildren ‘came of age,’ Esther was treating all of them and their parents to an evening of *A Christmas Carol* delight. We now total 38 family members and every year there have been many of us in attendance, flying in from New York, Colorado, Washington, D.C., Seattle

and Northern California. Thank you, Hal Landon Jr., for pouring your heart and soul into the role of Scrooge for the last 40 years. You have brought our family much joy. You will surely be missed!”

One of Keller’s delights through the years comes from the 16 SCR Theatre Conservatory students who audition and are cast for roles that include Tiny Tim, the other Cratchit children, Turkey Boy, Girl About Town and others.

“They make me cry every year,” says Keller. “I think the best part is to watch them have those ‘aha!’ moments because I don’t think the kids realize what it means to do this show until they have their first audience and to see that audience stand up and cheer. For the children, this is so new and so joyful. I also tell them, at the very first rehearsal, ‘You think you don’t have any responsibility in this show, but that’s not true at all. Besides ‘bah, humbug,’ what is the most quoted line in this play?’ ‘God bless us. Everyone.’ And it’s said by a tiny child. That is a huge responsibility.”

Founding Artist Art Koustik, one of the original actors who joined South Coast Repertory in its early days, marks his 39th year in the show in 2019. He calls Landon and Keller bright spots in the show.

“I find delight in the consistency of Hal



John-David Keller as Mr. Fezziwig and Hal Landon Jr. as Ebenezer Scrooge.



Art Koustik as Joe.

Landon in this awesome task as Scrooge, every year and in every performance,” Koustik says. “There’s also delight for me in John-David’s joy and commitment to the production and, in particular, with the younger members of the cast.”

Alex Knox is inspired by both Landon and Keller. Some 20 years ago, while a student in the Theatre Conservatory, Knox was cast as Peter Cratchit. Now a professional actor, this is his sixth year in *A Christmas Carol* in the role of Ebenezer as a Young Man.

“Being in rehearsal is wonderful,” Knox says. “John-David is engaged with every run-through and inspires me. Hal gives it his all with every rehearsal. He sets the bar high and I love getting to watch him and model my version of Ebenezer off of him.”

As the 40th year of *A Christmas Carol* draws to a close for Landon and Keller, emotions may run high. While both men appreciate what the play has meant to Orange County audiences—it also has given them many priceless moments.

“Being in *A Christmas Carol* has been a great lesson in the value of living in the present moment, of not being concerned with past moments and not anticipating future moments,” Landon says.

“This show gives you the spirit of the season,” Keller adds. “It’s a gorgeous show to look at, there’s singing, there’s dancing, there’s joy and there are moments of great tenderness. It has everything we would want people to come to the theatre for.”

And look for the show to continue.

“Rest assured that *A Christmas Carol* will remain part of the tradition and the fabric of South Coast Repertory,” says Artistic Director David Ivers. “This Dickens timeless classic—with its rich language—will be at the center of our programming.”

**SHARE YOUR BEST WISHES:** In the lobby are two memory books for Mr. Landon & Mr. Keller. We hope you will write down a memory or message for the men.

## “A Christmas Carol” By the Numbers

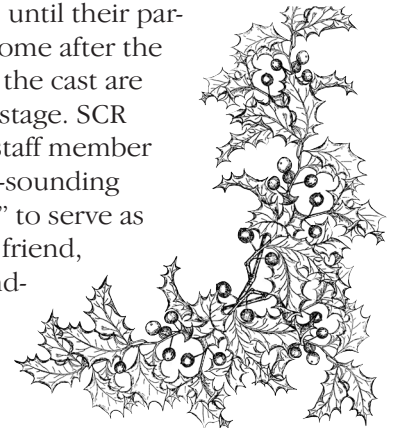


*A Christmas Carol* marks its 40th year, Orange County’s favorite (and longest-running) holiday show has delighted nearly 575,000 audience members

during more than 1,400 performances. Many of the theatregoers are new to the show, but others are so familiar with it that they can recite the dialogue.

Here are some other fun facts about the show:

- Over 40 years, 219 professional actors have held adult roles in the show and some 532 Theatre Conservatory children have portrayed the likes of Tiny Tim, the Cratchits and others.
- There have been roughly 5,400 hours of rehearsal time over the four decades.
- Landon’s battle scars include two broken toes—the little toe on his left foot when, in stocking feet, he ran into furniture backstage, and the little toe on his right foot, also in stocking feet, when he ran into the foot of Scrooge’s bed.
- Landon’s daughter, Caroline, auditioned and was cast as Young Girl About Town in the 1996 production, and his granddaughter, Presley, was cast as Tiny Tim (2018).
- Richard Doyle is best-known as The Spirit of Christmas Past, but also has portrayed a Solicitor, Joe, Mr. Fezziwig, a Gentleman and even Scrooge’s nephew, Fred.
- Doyle’s daughter, Sarah, auditioned and was cast as Martha Cratchit (1996).
- Conservatory Director Hisa Takakuwa, who marks 28 years with the production this year, portrayed Sally and Toy Lady for 14 years.
- From the half-hour call (30 minutes until show time), until their parents take them home after the show, the kids in the cast are never alone backstage. SCR has a fun-loving staff member with the western-sounding title of “wrangler” to serve as backstage guide, friend, mentor and sound-ing board.





# The Last of the Mythologists

Charles Dickens Writes *A Christmas Carol*

BY KRISTIN FROBERG

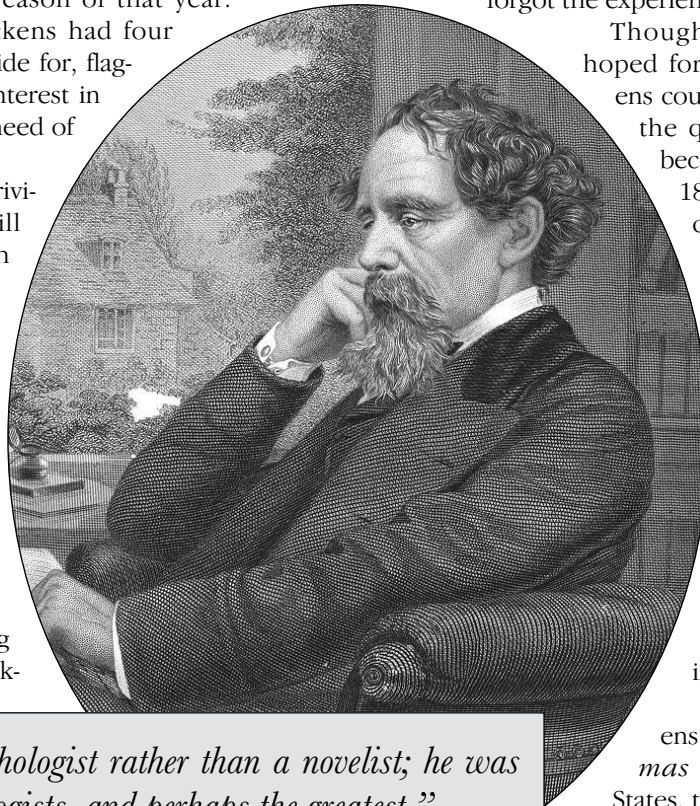


In the late fall of 1843, the 31-year-old author of *Oliver Twist* and *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* began writing a story to be published during the Christmas season of that year.

Charles Dickens had four children and a wife to provide for, flagging sales and decreasing interest in his latest work, and was in need of a career jump-start.

At this time, some privileged English families still celebrated Christmas with feasts, pageants and revelry. But England's working class—about 85 percent of the population—could not. For many people in Dickens' London, December was a time of hardship, not celebration.

In October 1843, moved to action by a Parliamentary report on the plight of children laboring in mines and factories, Dick-



*“Dickens was a mythologist rather than a novelist; he was the last of the mythologists, and perhaps the greatest.”*

— G.K. Chesterton

ens visited a copper mine. Appalled by what he saw there, Dickens began to develop ideas for his next story — a story that would, in the author's words, “strike a sledgehammer blow on behalf of the poor man's child.” He titled the piece *The Sledgehammer*; more than 150 years later, it's the story known to the world as *A Christmas Carol*.

Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in just six weeks. He told friends that the Cratchits were “ever tugging at his coat sleeve, as if impatient for him to get back to his desk and continue the story of their lives.” *A Christmas Carol*, like many of Dickens' other works, has autobiographical elements woven throughout. Like Peter Cratchit, Dickens was the eldest of six children. His own

frail, sickly youngest brother called “Tiny Fred.” Dickens' spendthrift father, John, caused the family—save 12-year-old Charles—to relocate to debtors' prison for a time. Charles worked in a factory during this time and never forgot the experience.

Though he certainly must have hoped for career rejuvenation, Dickens could hardly have imagined that the quickly written story would become beloved by so many. In 1857, *A Christmas Carol* became the first of Dickens' works that he performed publicly and was, in 1868, the last. He preferred to act the story for the audience, adapting his presentation as he went along. The *Manchester Examiner* reported, “There is always a freshness about what Mr. Dickens does—one reading is never anything like a mechanical following of a previous reading.”

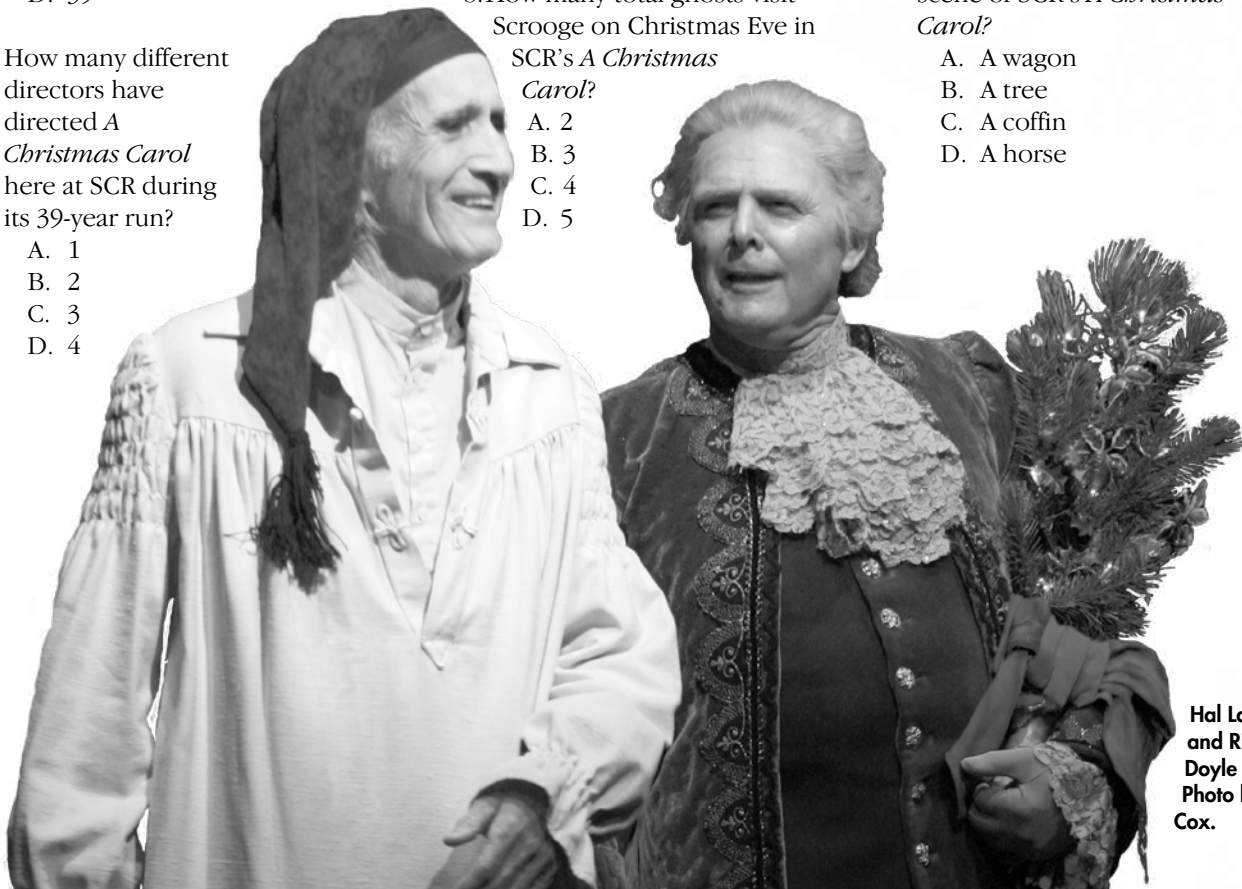
In 1867 and 1868, Dickens put on a blockbuster *Christmas Carol* tour of the United States, turning a profit of \$140,000—nearly \$2-million dollars today. President Andrew Johnson took his family to every performance in Washington, D.C., and theatregoers camped overnight in the streets to purchase tickets the next morning.

*A Christmas Carol* has been translated for readers all over the world and adapted into dozens of stage productions, films and even an opera. Though he could not have anticipated, during that fall of 1843, how successful his novella would prove to be, Dickens would surely be very happy that his story of the virtues of goodwill and generosity continues to reach millions of people every year.

Engraving of Charles Dickens from *A Portrait Gallery of Eminent Men and Women of Europe and America, with Biographies*, by Evert A. Duykinck (1873).

# “A Christmas Carol” Trivia

1. *A Christmas Carol* was written by Charles Dickens in:
  - A. 1848
  - B. 1843
  - C. 1855
  - D. 1862
2. Who has NOT played the infamous role of Ebenezer Scrooge in a film adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*?
  - A. John Wayne
  - B. Kelsey Grammer
  - C. Jim Carrey
  - D. All of the above
3. How many years, including this year, has Hal Landon Jr. played the role of Ebenezer Scrooge in SCR's production of *A Christmas Carol*?
  - A. 16
  - B. 22
  - C. 25
  - D. 39
4. How many different directors have directed *A Christmas Carol* here at SCR during its 39-year run?
  - A. 1
  - B. 2
  - C. 3
  - D. 4
5. In SCR's *A Christmas Carol*, what is Scrooge's business called?
  - A. Marley & Me
  - B. Scrooge & Marley
  - C. Scrooge's Finances
  - D. Marley & Scrooged
6. What is Ebenezer Scrooge's nightly eatery?
  - A. Brown's Landing
  - B. Pig & Whistle
  - C. Hound & Thorn
  - D. The Lucky Duck
7. Which actor in the role of Ebenezer Scrooge was surrounded by Muppets in the Brian Henson film, *The Muppet Christmas Carol*?
  - A. Michael Caine
  - B. Ian McKellan
  - C. Patrick Stewart
  - D. Bill Murray
8. How many total ghosts visit Scrooge on Christmas Eve in SCR's *A Christmas Carol*?
  - A. 2
  - B. 3
  - C. 4
  - D. 5
9. How many children do the Cratchits have in SCR's production of *A Christmas Carol*?
  - A. 2
  - B. 3
  - C. 4
  - D. 5
10. Who has been with SCR's *A Christmas Carol* since its inception?
  - A. Hal Landon Jr.
  - B. John-David Keller
  - C. Art Koustik
  - D. Tom & Donna Ruzika
  - E. All of the above
11. What is Scrooge's sister's name?
  - A. Brittany
  - B. Constance
  - C. Fan
  - D. Belle
12. What comes onstage in the first scene of SCR's *A Christmas Carol*?
  - A. A wagon
  - B. A tree
  - C. A coffin
  - D. A horse



Hal Landon Jr.  
and Richard  
Doyle in 2009.  
Photo by Jim  
Cox.



# The Real Meaning of Christmas

As it relates to the telling of *A Christmas Carol*



hat 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, Christmas customs have much less to do with the Nativity than with mid-winter pagan agricultural and solar observances dating centuries before Jesus Christ’s birth. The Roman world, into which Christ was born, celebrated the Festival of Saturn from Dec. 17-24, a week of parties and exchanging of gifts. The fact that Christmas was celebrated at the time of the winter solstice (Dec. 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, was-sailing, 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 the dry, temperate Southern California climate, where 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 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 remained 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



# 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 deal."

—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

"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 within me."

—Psalms 51:10

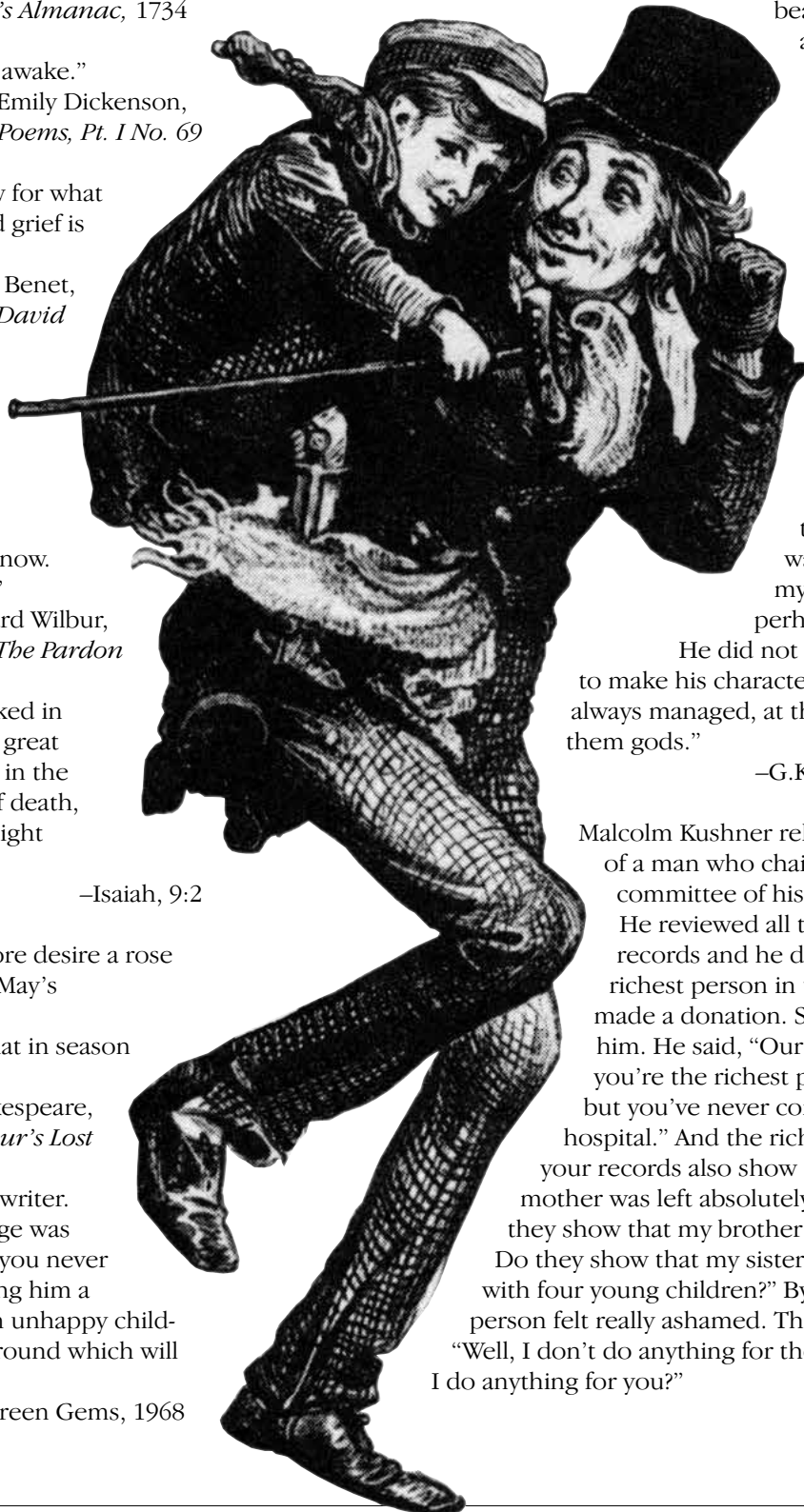
"Dickens was a mythologist rather than a novelist: he was the last of the mythologists, and perhaps the greatest.

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 fund-raising 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. The rich man ended, "Well, I don't do anything for them, so why should I do anything for you?"





# How We Keep Christmas



This year we celebrate our 34th staging of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Once again, Hal Landon Jr. plays Ebenezer Scrooge and John-David Keller directs. SCR Founding Artists Richard Doyle and Art Koustik, who have reprised their roles virtually every season, also are back this year. The *Christmas Carol* cast has become a family, gathering each November to do our work. New folks are made kin by our veterans; the veterans are invigorated by the newcomers. By December we've re-created our clan (and our show) anew. But we're not complete until joined by our greater family: our audiences. A few of you have seen the show every year since 1980. Many of



you first came with your parents and are now bringing your own children. SCR's *A Christmas Carol* has endured because it brings families together. We are reminded to celebrate the season and to consider together Ebenezer Scrooge's redemption. The value of love, life and family is heightened by the fact that these don't last forever. It is the equation Scrooge comes to know, and one our family appreciates again each year.

Read on as some members of the cast and creative team share their stories and memories of *A Christmas Carol*.

## Hal Landon Jr.

**34 years: Actor (Scrooge)**

"As the seasons have gone by, so many people have come up to me during the course of the year and told me how much the play means to them. The Christmas spirit is revived in them every year, and people who were children when they first saw it now bring their children."

## John-David Keller

**34 years: Director and Actor (Mr. Fezziwig)**

"Many of my favorite memories revolve around the children in the cast. I always insist that they not have their own dressing room, but share with the adults, so they can really experience what it is like to be part of a production. Of course, the children are given instruction in rules of behavior that the adults are not. I remember one time asking a father about how his child was enjoying being a part of the show, and the father replied, 'He's having the time of his life, and his vocabulary has become quite colorful.'"

## Daniel Blinkoff

**11 years: Actor (Bob Cratchit)**

"A few years ago, on Christmas Eve, our last show for that year, I was waiting backstage for the scene where we glimpse into Tiny Tim's future. I feel a tug



John-David Keller and Karen Hensel as Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig (2009).



Daniel Blinkoff and Angeliki Katya Harris as Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim (2009).

on my sleeve, and it's Tiny Tim. This was a kid with a lot of initial anxiety about performing, but through the course of the production he really fell in love with the show and became a real actor. He says to me, 'Don't go on.' I ask him why, and he says, 'If you go on, that means it will all be over soon.'



Howard Shangraw and Hisa Takakuwa as Fred and Sally (2000).

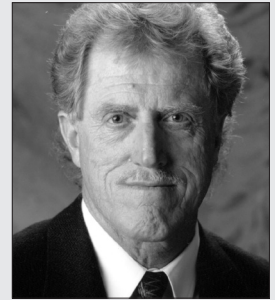
## Hisa Takakuwa

**15 years: Actor (Sally/Toy Lady/Scavenger),  
8 years: Assistant Director**

"Of all the shows in which I have ever performed, *A Christmas Carol* is special and intimate in its interface between the audience and the actors. As an actor in the show, and now as an audience member, I have become truly aware of the emotional flow between the audience and cast that occurs each night. It really exemplifies the best of the live theatre experience."

# Reminiscing with Jerry Patch

A chat with SCR's *A Christmas Carol* adaptor, Jerry Patch



## What is your favorite memory of SCR's *A Christmas Carol*?

I remember getting up at 4:30 a.m. in Huntington Beach during the summer of 1980 to write the adaptation SCR first presented that Christmas. The sun was up early, blazing across my desk, while I tried to put myself in London in December. It wasn't that hard—Dickens over-powered life at the beach almost every morning.

## How has SCR's *A Christmas Carol* changed for you over the years?

That first production in 1980 had SCR's young company actors playing roles considerably older than they were. One of the gifts of *A Christmas Carol* has been watching those actors return annually with deeper, more authentic portrayals of characters they've come to know very well. To have Hal Landon Jr. as Scrooge and John-David Keller directing for 34 years is truly a treasure, and could only be possible in a theatre like SCR.

## Why do you think the story of *A Christmas Carol* has endured?

Most writers never manage to create an archetypal role. Charles Dickens created a number of them, and Ebenezer Scrooge is probably the most widely known. Dickens' account of his redemption is an annual reminder that while we're alive we still have the capacity to serve others, to reach for greater humanity, and that, as Scrooge comes to know, to do so is a privilege.

## There are so many adaptations and variations on the original Dickens story as part of our cultural holiday tradition. To you, what makes SCR's adaptation unique?

I think SCR's decision to create a production set in London, but not specifically British or realistic, has given the show a universal quality that speaks to our Southern California audiences. The resultant theatricality of the production makes it immediate, accessible and communal for our audiences in ways that some of the very good film versions, which rely on specificity and realistic detail, can't really do as well. At the play's end, our audiences are as much a part of Fred's Christmas party as the actors onstage.

*Jerry Patch is now director of artistic development at Manhattan Theatre Club.*



# History of 'A Christmas Carol'



In the late fall of 1843, the 31-year-old author of *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* began writing a story to be published during the Christmas season. With four children and a wife to provide for, flagging sales and decreasing interest in his latest work, Charles Dickens was in need of a career jump start.

Moved to action by a Parliamentary report on the plight of child laborers, Dickens visited a copper mine. Appalled by what he saw, Dickens began to develop ideas for his next story—a story that would, in the author's words, "strike a blow on behalf of the poor man's child." He titled the piece *The Sledgehammer*; more than 150 years later, it's the story known all over the world as *A Christmas Carol*.

## Success of 'A Christmas Carol'



Writing the story in just six weeks, Dickens told friends that the Cratchits were "ever tugging at his coat sleeve, as if impatient for him to get back to his desk and continue the story of their lives." Dickens could hardly have imagined that his tale would become beloved by so many.

In 1857, *A Christmas Carol* became the first of Dickens' works that he performed publicly. The Manchester *Examiner* reported that "there is always a freshness about what Mr. Dickens does—one reading is never anything like a mechanical following of a previous reading." In 1867 and 1868, Dickens put on a blockbuster *A Christmas Carol* tour of the United States, turning a profit of \$140,000—nearly two million dollars today. President Andrew Johnson took his family to every performance in Washington D.C., and theatergoers camped overnight in the streets to purchase tickets.

*A Christmas Carol* has been translated for readers all over the world and adapted into dozens of stage productions, films and even an opera. Though he could not have anticipated how successful his novella would prove to be, Dickens would surely be happy that his story of the virtues of goodwill and generosity continues to reach millions of people every year.

The *Illustrated London News* depicted Dickens giving his last public reading of *A Christmas Carol* in March 1870.



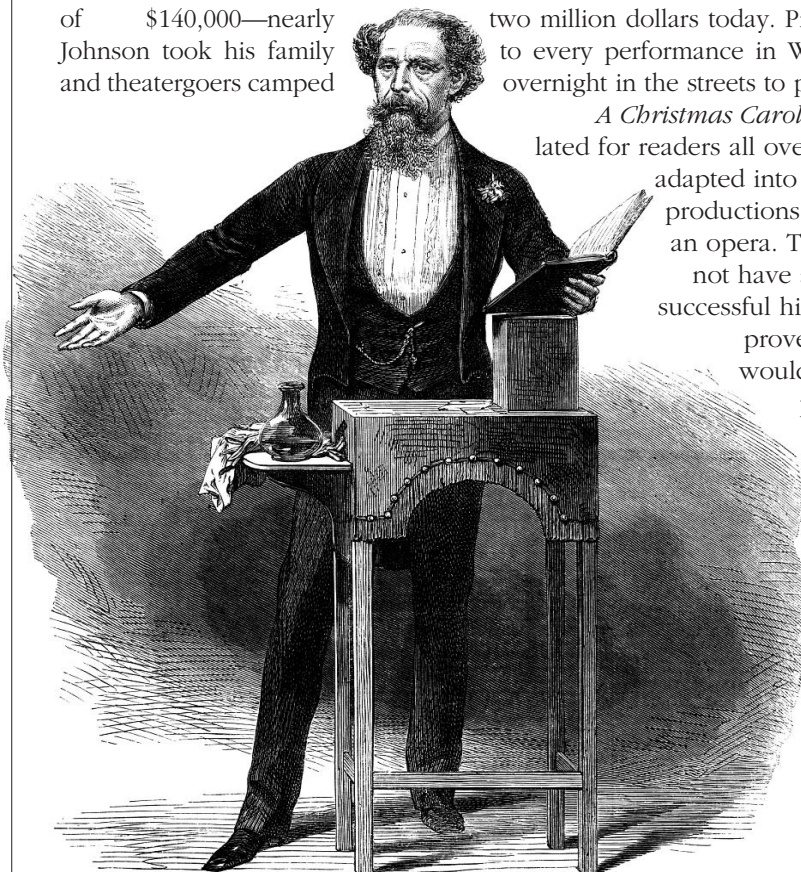
## About Dickens



Charles Huffman Dickens was born in Landport (now part of Portsmouth), England, on 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. By the mid 1800s, Dickens had achieved widespread fame with the publication of *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist* and *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*.

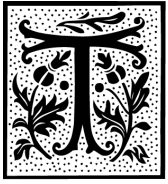
*A Christmas Carol*, like many of Dickens' other works, has autobiographical elements woven throughout. Like the Cratchits, the Dickens were a large brood. His own frail, sickly brother often was called "Tiny Fred." Dickens' spendthrift father, John, caused the family, except 12-year-old Charles, to relocate to a debtor's prison for a time. Charles worked in a factory during this time, and never forgot the experience.

Engraving of Charles Dickens from *A Portrait Gallery of Eminent Men and Women of Europe and America, with Biographies*, by Evert A. Duykinck.





# Christmas Woodcuttings



he art of woodcutting was originally developed in China as a means of creating an illustration on paper by carving a block of wood that was then inked and stamped on paper. In England, the technique was mastered by the prolific woodcutter John Leech, whose woodcuttings were used as illustrations in the original publication of *A Christmas Carol* in 1843 (pictured below). Leech and other popular woodcutters, such as William Hogarth, used their woodcuttings to echo the themes of poverty, redemption and goodwill in Victorian England. The scenic design of SCR's *A Christmas Carol* was inspired by the woodcuttings and the way they portrayed the glimmers of light and hope during the darkness of Victorian England. But don't take our word for it; see for yourself!



Scrooge extinguishes the first of three Spirits.



Reformed Scrooge and Bob Cratchit.



The Fezziwig Ball.

## Victorian London



Imagine yourself in London in Charles Dickens' time. Nearly two million Londoners, rich and poor alike, spill into the city streets among the manure left by thousands of horse-drawn carriages. Smoke swarms out of chimneys and soot coats all that it falls upon. In parts of the city, raw sewage pours from the gutters into the Thames—the main water supply. A common laborer's average weekly wage was three shillings, nine pence—that's approximately 14 modern U.S. dollars. A loaf of bread cost about two pence (65¢ in modern USD) and rent

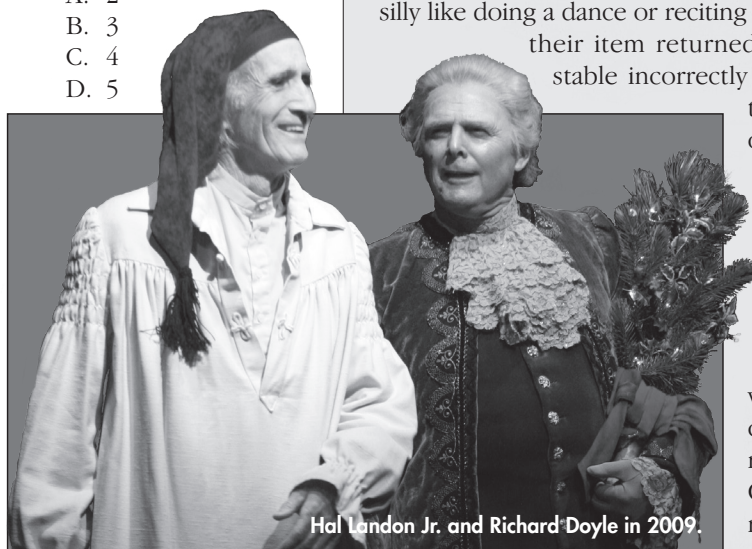
**“It is a fair, even-handed, noble adjustment of things, that while there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good humour.”**  
— Charles Dickens

for the year cost about 25 pounds (about \$1,900 modern USD). However, this was a luckier existence than the destitution of those poor folk who would receive aid in the form of employment in a workhouse.

Dickens made sure the voices of the unfortunate were heard in his work, along with huge doses of good humor and myriad evocations of the joys of home and hearth. He continues to do the same for us today. In all of his stories, we remember that there are those less fortunate than ourselves. We remember that there are those willing to change. Most importantly, we remember that there is hope.

# Christmas Carol Trivia

1. *A Christmas Carol* was written by Charles Dickens in:
  - A. 1848
  - B. 1843
  - C. 1855
  - D. 1862
2. Who has NOT played the infamous role of Ebenezer Scrooge in a film adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*?
  - A. John Wayne
  - B. Kelsey Grammer
  - C. Jim Carrey
  - D. None of the Above
3. How many years, including this year, has Hal Landon Jr. played the role of Ebenezer Scrooge in SCR's production of *A Christmas Carol*?
  - A. 16
  - B. 22
  - C. 25
  - D. 34
4. How many different directors have directed *A Christmas Carol* here at SCR during its 34-year run?
  - A. 1
  - B. 2
  - C. 3
  - D. 4
5. In SCR's *A Christmas Carol*, what is Scrooge's business called?
  - A. Marley & Me
  - B. Scrooge & Marley
  - C. Scrooge's Finances
  - D. Marley & Scrooged
6. What is Ebenezer Scrooge's nightly eatery?
  - A. Brown's Landing
  - B. Pig & Whistle
  - C. Hound & Thorn
  - D. The Lucky Duck
7. Who was surrounded by Muppets in the role of Ebenezer Scrooge in the Brian Henson film, *The Muppet Christmas Carol*?
  - A. Michael Caine
  - B. Ian McKellan
  - C. Patrick Stewart
  - D. Bill Murray
8. How many total ghosts visit Scrooge on Christmas Eve in SCR's *A Christmas Carol*?
  - A. 2
  - B. 3
  - C. 4
  - D. 5
9. How many children do the Cratchits have in SCR's production of *A Christmas Carol*?
  - A. 2
  - B. 3
  - C. 4
  - D. 5
10. Who has been with SCR's *A Christmas Carol* since its inception?
  - A. Hal Landon Jr.
  - B. John-David Keller
  - C. Art Koustik
  - D. Tom & Donna Ruzika
  - E. Dwight Richard Odle
  - F. All of the Above



Hal Landon Jr. and Richard Doyle in 2009.

# Games for a Victorian Christmas

## FORFEITS



To play, the guests choose a "Constable," the British term for a police officer, who then exits the room. Once the Constable is out of earshot each player "forfeits" an article, be it a pen, brooch, bracelet, etc., into a pile. The Constable enters the room blindfolded and unaware of what object each player has deposited into the pile. The object of the game is for the Constable to match the article to the person by only feeling the object. If the Constable is correct the owner must obey an order of the Constable, something silly like doing a dance or reciting a funny phrase, to have their item returned to them. If the Constable incorrectly matches the article to

the owner, the owner of the object gives the Constable something silly to do. This continues until all of the items in the pile have been given back. The Constable wins if he or she can match owner with article more times correctly than incorrectly. At the end the Constable chooses a replacement and the game starts all over.

## DICTIONARY



This parlor game is not only good for Christmas, but for any occasion. The guests all receive a piece of paper and a pen and sit around a table. This game requires a dictionary from which each party guest picks a word, preferably one that is unknown to the other guests. After writing the chosen word down on a piece of paper, he or she must create four definitions for the word, one being correct and three being incorrect. Then all the words are read aloud with their definitions. The person who can identify the most correct definitions wins.

### Example: Humbug

- A. Something said during Christmastime to welcome someone to a holiday party.
- B. A person or thing that tricks or deceives.
- C. A singing bug.
- D. Someone who gives to charities.