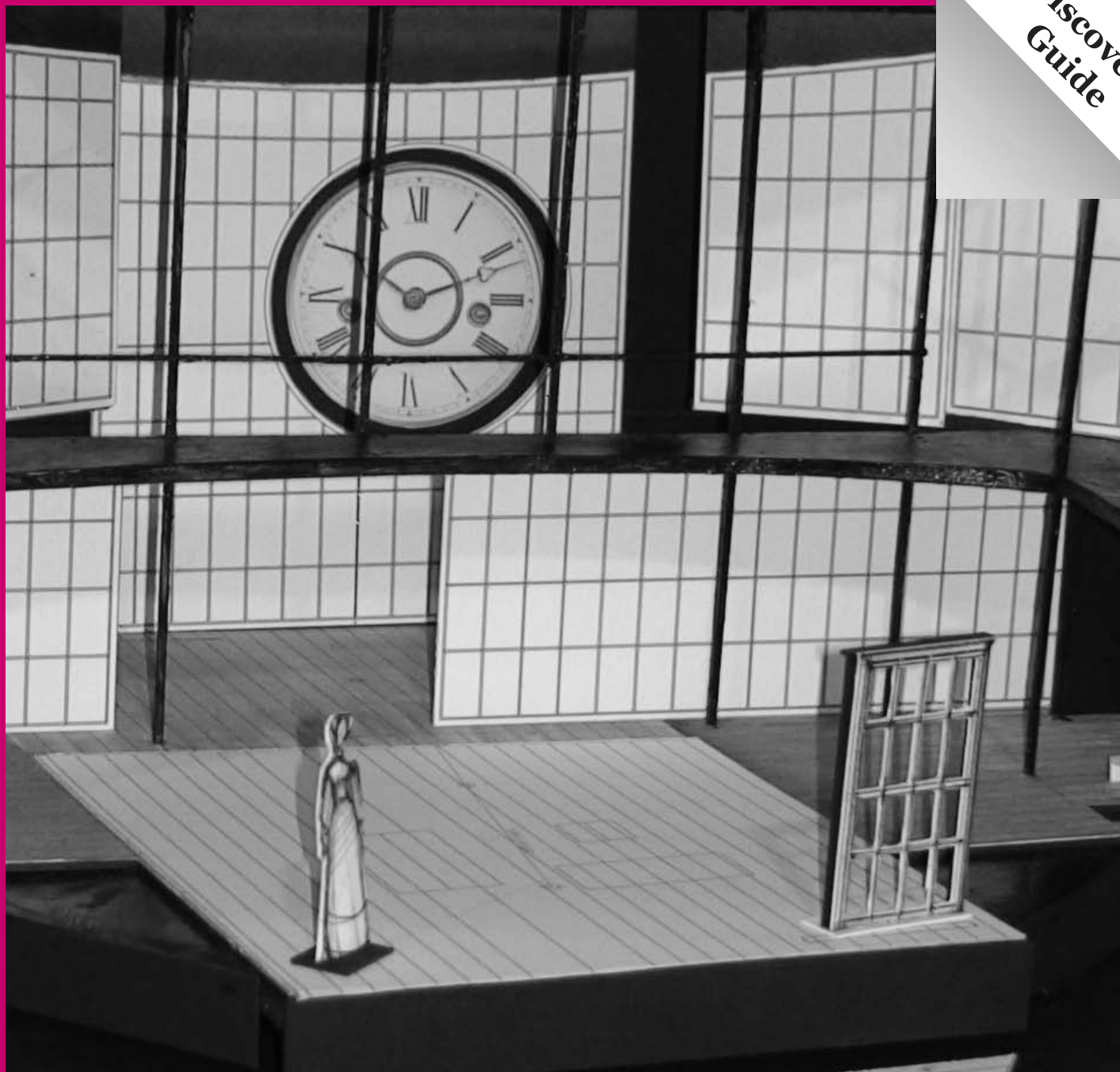


Discovery  
Guide



# A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Written by  
Charles Dickens  
Adapted and Directed by  
Mark Cuddy  
Music and Lyrics by  
Gregg Coffin



**P.L.A.Y.**  
(Performance = Literature + Art + You)

**Student Matinee Series**

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Participation in this production and supplemental activities suggested in this guide support the following NYS Learning Standards:  
A: 2, 3, 4;  
ELA: 1, 2, 3; SS: 2

Cover image: Scenic designer Adam Koch's scale model for the Geva production

## Dear Educators,

This holiday season we share our new production of *A Christmas Carol*, and I'm thrilled that you will join us for the unveiling of this brand-new script, original music and excitingly bold designs, all created just for this community. Re-conceiving this play in a new staging gives us the opportunity to cherish a beloved holiday tradition by lavishing it with the very best of our artists' fresh creativity, skills and passion, the best of what Geva has to offer. With this play welcoming so many young people for their very first experience of live theatre, I can't think of a better gift we could give.

When we tell a story that is well-known, I'm aware that our audiences come to the theatre not only to see *what* happens, but *how* it happens. From the original Dickens text to countless reiterations on stage and film, many of our audience members will already know the steps of Scrooge's journey. It is the experience of how that journey comes to life for all our senses that makes theatre powerful and rich; the sounds, the settings, the voices and the vibrant performances of gifted storytellers just a few feet away all combine to become so much more than the sum of the parts.

In this guide we've chosen to highlight the unique choices and distinctive interpretations of this artistic journey, so that you and your classes can explore not only *what* to expect from this new production, but also the more critical thinking behind *why*. These pages are filled with first-hand observations, inspirations and discoveries from our creative team, and we hope that their thinking will inspire your own investigations of this work. Meanwhile, this new staging will not alter *A Christmas Carol's* enduring questions about character, humanity and community, and I know your classrooms will continue these important discussions as well.

By prioritizing this behind-the-scenes look at the genesis of the new production, we have not reproduced materials some of you may remember from past years' guides, such as historical context and background on Dickens himself. This is a great opportunity for you to (re)discover our online archive of guides to previous productions, including additional resource materials for *A Christmas Carol*. They are found at <http://www.gevatheatre.org/learn/guide-archive.php>.

Finally, please don't forget to share your thoughts. We'll host short post-performance talkbacks with cast members following each performance, and we also welcome letters and essays from students – and teachers as well! We can't wait to hear about your experience.

Best wishes for days of compassion and warmth this winter and always.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Moroney  
Associate Director of Education  
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### SPECIAL EVENT

One of the last stops on Charles Dickens' final US tour in 1868 was Rochester, NY. Now his great great grandson, Gerald Charles Dickens makes his first visit to Rochester in *Mr. Dickens is Coming!*

The performance includes scenes from the great author's works, diary extracts and observations from those who knew and worked with him.

*The New York Times* has described Gerald Dickens' performance as "a once in a lifetime brush with literary history."

A wonderful treat for the Dickens' devotee and a terrific companion piece to *A Christmas Carol!*

Saturday, December 4, 2010 at 8 p.m. in the Nextstage.

Tickets: \$25  
Tickets are limited for this one-time only event. Reserve today by calling 232-Geva (4382)!

"Keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine." – Scrooge

## Reimagining a classic

“I think the challenge in any well-known classical story is in trying to get back to whatever the original artistic impulse was,” explains **Mark Cuddy, author and director** of Geva’s new adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*. “Whether you’re directing or adapting something from an original source, you’re trying to ask what is at the center of the work so that you can capture that spark. After all, it was always new at one point: why did that writer or composer make it in the first place? You’re trying to work with that same curiosity and intention.”

For Cuddy that point of curiosity was Scrooge himself, and a search for the deeper personal reasons *why* Scrooge’s story happens. Why would a man become so closed off from the world, and then why would he need to undergo such an astonishing transformation? Cuddy found he was interested in a story of redemption that comes from the man’s unique experiences and choices, rather than a tale of a surprise supernatural rescue. He prefers to think of the spirits’ visits as Scrooge’s dream, which is one possibility suggested when Dickens allows Scrooge to awaken in his own bed and discover, “The spirits have done it all in one night!” The new adaptation pays close attention to cause and effect, and it prioritizes a depiction, not of the whole world of London society, but of how Scrooge, uniquely, views the world around him.

“What’s the traumatic event that sparks his nightmares? I started playing with the question of why *that* happens on *that* night. In the adaptation I have really tried to keep him as the center focus: how we track his journey and what he goes through.”

For instance, Cuddy shaped one important moment that happens just before Scrooge leaves the office on Christmas Eve: “I think he *really* comes close to hitting that young child who is singing a carol, and it kind of freaks him out a little bit, that he could lose it that much. I think that really does something to him.” Cuddy also reflects about the full course of Scrooge’s life so far: “I think it’s about mortality; I know myself that at a certain point you do start to think ahead about the last years of your life, and the end of his life and his death have got to be on his mind, or else he wouldn’t have the dream of the Ghost of Yet to Come.” One of the very first images that became important to the new adaptation was the appearance of gravestones and gravediggers both at the beginning of the play – marking the anniversary of Marley’s death – and later in Scrooge’s dream of his own death. “What else is dead in Scrooge’s life besides Marley?” Cuddy asks. “Memory, joy, life, hope, possibility? Love?”

“Scrooge is in mourning for his life and doesn’t know it. That’s what he realizes, it’s not that he’s going to die, it’s that his life is dead, that he’s lived a dead life.” But, Cuddy reminds us, “This is a story about redemption. My favorite Shakespeare plays are the romances, those final plays where someone is given a second chance. That redemptive spirit, I think it’s very American, actually, we give people second chances all the time.” ♦



Scrooge is dressed for a night of intense dreaming. This rendering, and those throughout, was created by costume designer Devon Painter. She selected a distinctive pattern of strong stripes in Scrooge’s clothing. What might the stripes suggest to you? (See also the discussion of Scrooge and Marley’s clothes on page 9.)

**What do you already think or know about Scrooge? What do you want to find out by watching the play? Does your opinion change afterward?**

**Have you known someone who died, or been close to someone who is in mourning? How does that feel, and how does it change our behavior? Can you imagine feeling that way your whole life?**

**Think about when we label someone “nice” or “mean.” Do those labels describe the person? Or only the person’s actions? Is “nice” or “mean” part of who you are, like your eye color? Is it a choice you can make?**

**Do we want to be judged for our mistakes or our successes?**

**When have you needed a second chance? What did you do about it?**

**“I don’t myself make merry at Christmas and I can’t afford to make idle people merry.” – Scrooge**

## Adaptation: what story to tell?

### Mark Cuddy explained some of his steps in writing this script

**Identify the most important pieces of the story.** “I actually watched every version on film and video I could find,” Cuddy explained. “What did each group of people telling this story think was important, what were the elements that artists chose to include in their versions, what do you *have to have* to make this story work?”

**Identify the most important characters.** “Who are the most important characters in the story, outside of Scrooge?” Cuddy asked, “I think that what you find is that a character like Tiny Tim actually is kind of more important maybe than Bob Cratchit himself. He has one line! But he’s important in a symbolic way. So I was trying to ask and answer those questions. Is Fred important? Is Belle important? And then shaping the script to make sure that we were spending time with the most important characters.”

**Look at the dialogue line by line.** As he did with Geva’s stage adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, Cuddy went to the original text and extracted every single quotation where Dickens provided a line of dialogue for a character, and put them all together in a new document. That provided a starting place to cut and shape, to identify areas that would require him to write original lines, or to revise or remove lines that were not essential to this story’s focus.

### What is your favorite part of the story and why? Does that change after seeing the performance at Geva?

**Choose a scene from a book and use Mark’s suggestions to create your own script. Remember to think about what the audience will witness for themselves (such as settings, characters’ appearances, behavior and actions, and sounds) and what doesn’t need to be spoken. In the following pages, you’ll learn about the unspoken, visual information that this production shares.**

### Unique story, Unique choices

Geva’s new production includes a scene that is rarely included when *A Christmas Carol* is staged in theatres. Dickens describes The Ghost of Christmas Present taking Scrooge far beyond the neighborhoods of his London to the darkness of a coal mine, to a lighthouse, and even to sailors far out at sea. Cuddy explains why the scene was important to him:

“I’m a proponent of saying that the more we know, the more we don’t know. The world around us is not getting smaller, it’s the opposite. The world is always getting larger. It was important for me that during Scrooge’s journey he started to place himself in context, and that was part of the lesson for him: he needed to know that the world was much bigger than him. If part of his journey is about becoming more engaged with his world, what are the specific lessons? It’s not just about Fred and Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim, but about what he doesn’t know: that he’s just a tiny speck in this universe. So ideally in this moment we’ve created an entire universe in the world on stage.”

One of Gregg Coffin’s original songs marks this point in the story; music begins to travel out into the world, describing a spirit of generosity and open-hearts beyond Scrooge’s isolation and loneliness.

#### “Will You Let it In?”

*A cold Christmas night  
No warmth or light  
The bitter wind proceeding  
A child wanders lost  
Through the snow and  
the frost*

*From doorstep to  
doorstep repeating  
Will you let me in?  
Will you let me in?  
With my feet so bare  
With no coat to wear  
Will you let me in?*

*Down in the mines  
Where the sun never  
shines  
Just a flickering lantern  
to guide us  
But a light comes this  
way*

*Turning night into day  
And bright’ning the  
darkness inside us  
And will you let it in?  
Will you let it in?  
For redemption is born  
On this Christmas morn  
And will you let it in?*

*The watch says, “All  
clear,”  
The stars help to steer  
When a voice down on  
deck starts a-singing  
The carol begins  
One by one, men join in  
Till through the whole  
vessel, it’s ringing  
And will you let it in?  
Will you let it in?  
As the time draws near  
Will you join in the  
cheer ...? ♦*

“Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!” – Jacob Marley

## Who is Scrooge?



### Some thoughts from Geva's creative team...

Dickens wrote a number of indelible characters, but Scrooge! He is someone who will last and last and last, because there's always a part of Scrooge in everybody. He is a character so seemingly *apart* from the human race, but that people really love; you really do want to be in the theatre with him. Thinking about Scrooge at the center of this story, I had to ask why, what was it that *caused* him to shut the world away, and for me, it was *abandonment* – which is very Dickensian, actually. When he gets sent away to school, he just never recovers. That scar was there, and I think he was always trying to compensate for that, to over-compensate, perhaps. So he moved toward achieving importance and stature, very much like you hear about some of those who lived through the Great Depression: he became focused on making money, the safety of having it. He will never go through that again, never feel vulnerable, he'll be in charge and in control. But of course you can't control your heart.

#### Adapter and Director Mark Cuddy

As Mark astutely pointed out from the get-go, there is no surprise or satisfaction in *A Christmas Carol* if we the audience are just watching an (inexplicably) greedy cantankerous gentleman be grouchy all evening. We are all, no doubt, (for better and sometimes worse) the sum total of our own bizarre and deeply personal life experiences. Ebenezer, who of course wasn't born a "humbug" as a newborn infant, has, as a result of intense traumatic abandonment and emotional neglect from his father, loss of his first young love, and gradual obsession with financial earthly gain, literally become a half-dead man walking amongst the living.

#### Scenic Designer Adam Koch

Scrooge has been "nickel and dime-ing" his life, controlling and counting rather than connecting. He's missing the emotional part of life. I actually think so many of us can fall into that today without realizing it. We're working all the time: it's like we get on the treadmill and just go as fast as we can. You can think of all the technology and devices we have to get things done faster, and how the result is that people seem to have even less personal time than ever before. I think in many ways Scrooge is living like that at the beginning of the story; he has allowed his work to completely replace any personal connections.

#### Lighting Designer Paul Hackenmueller

The heart of this story is in the reclamation of a man's life, self-induced, on Christmas Eve. A man removes himself from his own life and from the lives of everyone around him. He becomes "secret and self-contained and solitary as an oyster." And after the course of one night's passing, he re-enters the land of the living with real vigor.

#### Composer and Lyricist Gregg Coffin

I asked the children who were auditioning for the play if they already knew the story. When they did, I asked, "What's your favorite part?" 80-90% of their answers were the same: when Scrooge becomes nice, when he is transformed at the end. This was not what I expected! I guess I thought they would be more excited about the ghosts, or about when Marley comes in with his chains, and of course some kids did mention those things, too. But overwhelmingly they mentioned Scrooge's transformation. And so I think that's something that's in us, we root for someone to undergo some sort of spiritual change, and that's embedded in whatever makes up the human psyche. **Thoughts from young audiences (as related by Mark Cuddy)**

"I want the grandest house on the grandest street and everyone bowing to me as I pass because I am the richest man in town." – Scrooge



## What is music's role?

### The composer's playlist

A great deal of the underscoring and incidental cueing that you'll hear in this new adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* is based on these early tunes:

The Wexford,  
Coventry,  
Sussex Carols

"The Gloucestershire  
Wassail"

"In Dulci Jubilo"

"Lo, How a Rose  
E'er Blooming"

"The Seven Joys  
of Mary"

"The Holly and  
the Ivy"

"Tomorrow Shall Be  
My Dancing Day"

The Cherry Tree  
Carol

"In Old Judea"

You can listen to  
a variety of  
performances from  
around the world  
on YouTube.

**Which holidays or other occasions do you celebrate by singing? What can music add to a holiday or other special time?**

**Composer and lyricist Gregg Coffin** has a special appreciation of Christmas music. He shared: "I love Christmas music for its sense of fellowship, joy, hope and redemption. The non-secular music of the season is steeped in joy and rebirth, brightness coming out of darkness, the promise of new life. The secular music of the season focuses on families coming together, highly caloric holiday cooking, laughter, snowfall, warmth and children's expectations through it all. Most importantly, the holidays are a time when music really comes to the foreground in everyone's life. The airwaves are inundated with carols and holiday songs. People who don't usually sing at any other time of the year will find themselves humming a Christmas tune during the holidays. For a composer and musician it's a wonderful time of year and a wonderful collection of songs to enjoy.

"I love all kinds of Christmas music, but I have a special place in my ear for early carols – both English and American. Again, the fellowship and community at this time of year are what carol singing is all about. I come at the tradition of carol-singing not as a scholar, but as a musician. Listen to some of these carols and I hope you'll see what I mean. Beautiful melodies, beautiful lyrics, beautiful harmonies." (See list at left.)

### How does music fit the story?

"I hope my music adds to the peaks and the valleys of Scrooge's journey," says Coffin. "The 'songs' in this production are specifically written to be songs for a play-with-music. That means none of them develop character or move plot along. All the sung moments elaborate on textual ideas that have already been presented. At no moment in this production does a character step forward and start singing about how he or she feels. At no moment in this production does an actor step forward and sing about what happened when Scrooge went out into the London streets. The songs in this production underscore scenes, set up a dance at Fezziwig's, show us London on Christmas morning, put the Cratchit children to bed, entertain party guests at Fred's party and open Scrooge's eyes to the world around him at the end. They all have verbs behind them, they all have intents to elaborate on a moment already occurring in the adaptation. Songs of support, if you will.

"I needed to find where the adaptation 'sings' and where it underscores and supports the text. Once Mark and I knew where we'd be singing, I started to write *what* we'd be singing. That takes a while. I relied heavily on the Dickens for lyrical content, using specific references which don't appear in Mark's adaptation."

Mark Cuddy offered an observation about Scrooge's relationship to music. "If he's hiding from life, then he hates music because music is life. There's music all the time at Christmas and so he hates Christmas time." That idea suggested that it might be important for Cuddy and Coffin as writers to pay attention to when Scrooge might and might not sing in this story. What do you notice about Scrooge and music? ♦



"I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, Greed, engrosses you." – Belle

## Different worlds, different sounds

Gregg Coffin's music provides not just melodies to sing, but instrumental underscoring, too: "I had to answer the question of what the orchestration sounds like really early, and both Mark and I agreed that we like a blend of traditional sounding instrumentation in some moments and wildly orchestral instrumentation in other places. The opening moments of the show are all steeped in English traditional orchestrations of holiday songs and carols – guitars, fiddles, hammered dulcimers, concertinas, bells, brass and voice.

"When we move into the dream-scape of Scrooge's journey I freed myself up to start exploring other instrumentation. That's when the string sections and the winds and percussion kicks in. BIG sounds for BIG ideas. And then, as we move towards the conclusion of the story, those orchestrations start to mix and the 'bigness' of Scrooge's inner landscape blends with the traditional orchestrations you'd hear on the streets of London. The final moment starts with Scrooge hearing bells rejoice for the first time in a long while; the bells become voices, the voices join in unison, then harmonies develop and then the full orchestra kicks in to support the fullness of Scrooge's experience."

### What doesn't sound like music?

**Sound designer Lindsay Jones** has a few important roles. Sound design can help to fully realize scenes in a streamlined adaptation that Jones calls "stripped down to its essence and lightning fast on its feet," traveling between many locations. "Sound can flesh out an environment, even if we're only there very briefly, so that we can still feel like we're really right there."

Perhaps most exciting, sound can play a role in "heightening the stakes." Jones explains: "It's important that we feel the possibility that Scrooge may not be redeemed: there has to be real danger, very realistic and somewhat scary stakes. It always bugs me when we see a production of this story and we all know that it's going to turn out okay; it cuts the legs out from under the story. We have to know what that night means, and really feel it. Sound can help." Jones proposes that the visit of Marley provides the first important example. "We have to be scared by him, by what has become of him, and by what will happen to Scrooge. We have to make that a fate that no one would want, something that cannot be dismissed." (See also the discussion of Marley on page 9.)

"This production has so much music that is beautiful and lush, full of the holiday spirit. With sound I can bring the darkness, the moments of tension and danger that contrast with that. Gregg and I basically agree that he – with music, songs and underscoring – does the light, and that I do the dark. Where are the parts of the story that are 'anti-musical' – unplanned, unpredictable, unusual? The sound design can provide that world of irregular rhythms and dangerous surprises."

One of the most challenging sections is the visit of Yet to Come. The designers have worked together to find choices that will make that sequence "feel like completely its own world – like we've stepped into a whole other dimension – and yet still related back to what Scrooge has experienced. Everything should be a surprise, and yet not a surprise." ♦



This production includes a fiddle player as one of the characters on stage.

### The composer suggests ...

Listen to how the music supports the spoken word.

Listen for themes of redemption and reclamation in the lyrics.

Listen to Dickens' references in the lyrics as well.

Listen for the difference in the orchestrations: from traditional instruments in "real" moments (guitar, fiddle, dulcimer, bells) to orchestral instruments in "dream" moments (full orchestra, string sections, winds, percussion).

**What sound effect would you choose to help create a part of this story, and why? Is it part of the real or imagined world of the story? Of the light or the dark? Does that influence how it should sound?**

"Spirit, conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion and I learnt a lesson which is even working now." – Scrooge

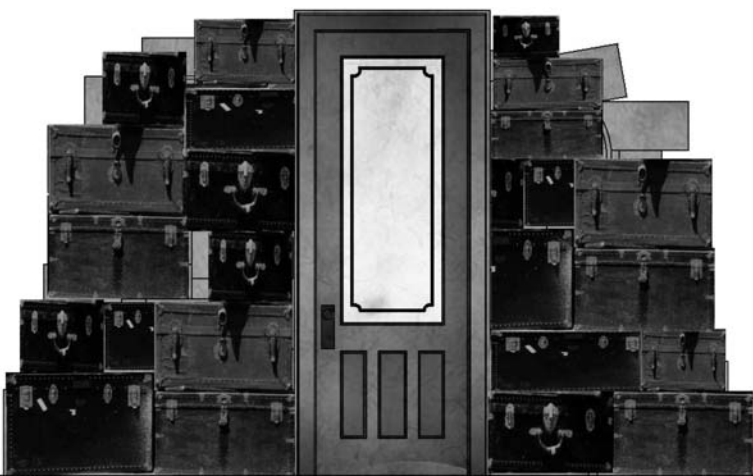
## How Scrooge sees the world

“For this production of *A Christmas Carol*,” says scenic designer Adam Koch, “we wanted to strip away the heavy adornment and the usual formal decorative baggage that can come with a telling of this traditional Dickensian holiday story. This is a new design for a new production of a new script of a story everyone already knows.” One of the thrills and challenges of designing for this production, he continues, is the opportunity to make a “seemingly simple space magically transform into all the haunting, joyous, scary, splendid, freezing, cozy, and infinite worlds within *A Christmas Carol*.” Since this production invites us to traverse the emotional landscape of Scrooge’s journey, Koch uses the “magic of suggestion” to take us “to a hundred locations, across London and memory and time itself.”

To accomplish this task, Koch began with “scribbled notes and ideas, immersing [himself] with research and sketches, just bits and pieces that speak to the moments of the story. It’s the most ethereal part of the process.” Koch’s design emerged with an expansive bridge, a massive clock, a maze of stairs and banks of windows which, when coupled with lighting and furniture, can become any number of settings – Ebenezer’s chambers, for example, or the Cratchit household, the school of Scrooge’s youth or the graveyard of his envisioned demise. With such an open set and what he calls the “chamber elements” within, Mark Cuddy is able to “keep the aperture wide and then the aperture small,” allowing the story to travel fluidly amongst the various settings. For example, the physically sparse space of the



Detail of stairs from Koch’s set model



Koch’s rendering for Scrooge’s office

classroom can evoke Scrooge’s feelings of abandonment over the emotional neglect by his widowed father, or the drab, colorless look of his home might reflect the equally grim manner with which he lives his life. As Cuddy noted, “the meager fire in his old school matches the meager fire in his office, in his chambers and in his heart.” With this pairing of space and emotion as a guide, Koch sought to bypass creating “environments Scrooge would have *seen* to illustrate, instead, what his journey *felt* like.”

Why do you imagine the designer included so many stairs in the design? Why do you think windows became such an important part of the set? How do windows, gates and stairs work? What can they do literally? And metaphorically?

Much of the set is painted shades of midnight blue – not quite a traditional Christmas holiday color. What feelings do you associate with this color and what might those have to do with Scrooge’s story?

Look at the designer’s rendering for Scrooge’s office. What do you think it tells about the kind of person Scrooge is? Can you describe your impression with a mood or emotion?

“It should be Christmas Day, I am sure, on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge.” – Mrs. Cratchit

Think of a location in the story - if you could only introduce two or three elements to set the scene, what would you chose and why?

Pick an image that represents how you think of your past, present and your imagined future. Can you also represent these with a color and a texture?

One of the major features of the set is a large clock face. In how many different ways is time important to Scrooge's story?



Rendering of the clock used in this production

**SCROOGE:** I wish to be left alone! Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer ... It's enough for a man to understand his own business, and not interfere with other people's.

Scrooge, says Cuddy, “looks at the world in a very two-dimensional way, like he’s watching a movie or watching the world go by.” To help us understand Scrooge’s self-imposed exile, Cuddy decided to incorporate video projections into the show’s design. Koch offers that “providing the vast glass window surround as (occasional, surprising) projection surfaces seamlessly melds together the magic of projections with the permanent environment of the production.”

One of the priorities of representing this two-dimensional world, according to **video designer Dan Scully**, is to “try to stay connected to Scrooge ... to try to show what he is thinking, feeling, or seeing. His change must be driven from him, not something done to him.” Like Koch, Scully also began his process of creating Scrooge’s world by exploring a number of resources including period research, contemporary images and video footage as well as his own original artwork.

In the course of developing the designs, Scully realized the effect that one area of research could have on the entire proces. “While looking at collections of Victorian engravings of London, I discovered each technique of engraving imparts its own emotional charge.” This emotional charge guided Scully in his considerations of Scrooge’s relationship with each individual ghost. “I’m trying,” says Scully, “to illuminate the different kinds of experiences each ghost brings. The imagery for the Ghost of Christmas Past is a combination of ripple light reflections over period engravings in an attempt to capture the idea of the past and the imprecise nature of memory.” The Ghost of Christmas Present, continues Scully, “is a marriage of black and white photography and material sourced from various film productions of *A Christmas Carol* ... I’m trying to get at the firmness of present [as well as] the dullness in how Scrooge sees it.” And the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come? That, tempts Scully, is a surprise. The design finally lands us on Christmas Day where, Scully promises, “things are bright and in color.”

**MARLEY:** It is required of every man that the spirit *within* him should walk in fellowship among mankind; if that spirit fails to do so in *life*, it is condemned to do so after *death*.

In echoing Cuddy’s notion that Scrooge “needed to know that the world was much larger than him,” Scully set about capturing Scrooge’s travels throughout London and beyond. To give the audience a sense of London, Scully employed “montages and maps of the city, but that’s just a method of getting at the magic of Scrooge’s dreams ... and allowing us to see how Scrooge sees his world.” In the end, Scully says, it’s not about the city but, rather, about “the common human experience of these people” and Scrooge’s new-found appreciation for those around him. ♦

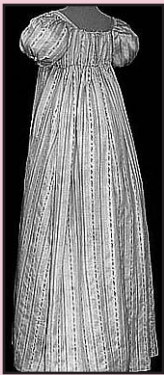
“Spirit, I begin to see how the mere mention of my name casts such a shadow!” – Scrooge

## “Memories are ghosts”

“How is dreaming connected to memory? Does memory unlock imagination?” Mark Cuddy asked while writing the play. “Memories are lessons, they grow in Scrooge. Memories are ghosts.”

Costume Designer Devon Painter plays an important role in creating the indelible impressions of Scrooge’s dreams and the lessons they bring. “Scrooge probably thinks he and his life are basically alright, and Marley is the first warning saying: No, you’re not at all alright.” She knew that Marley’s fate needed “to be truly scary, gruesome enough to be truly gross and uncomfortable.” To explore a realism that would be frightening when Scrooge’s dead partner appears, Painter took inspiration from photographs of the bodies preserved in the crypts of Palermo. The figures are remarkable for the degree to which fabrics, facial hair, even tissues of the eyes, musculature, and skin have resisted disintegration. This research inspired ideas for Marley’s costume, including a mask of decaying skin, a partial wig of hair and make-up transforming the actors lips to resemble teeth (since decaying lips can recede away leaving teeth exposed).

Painter’s design for Marley is fantastical, too. The ghost’s chains actually create the tailcoat he wears, and when he pushes his glasses up on his head he reveals his white eyes. His clothing is intentionally similar to Scrooge’s, “as if they’re both frozen in time,” including strong stripes as a distinctive pattern (see also page 2), but on Marley, “stripes have become chains.”



Elements of the design for the Ghost of Christmas Past come from the 1790s, when Scrooge was a child. The far-left image provides a comparison for that style, and Scrooge’s sister Fan will be dressed for that time period. However, Painter created this Ghost as an ethereal, other-worldly presence. Images like the lower-left photo, while much more contemporary in appearance, inspired Painter with the potential that lighting and reflective fabrics could “blur the image of the girl, so you can’t see her whole shape, hiding her human form.” Painter describes, “She’s somewhat adult, too, calm, centered and present.” A white wig, pale make-up, headpiece and lighting enhance the ethereal look.

“The approach for the spirits was different from the work on Marley,” Painter says. “He’s a ghost, he’s dead, but the spirits are of a different breed: more glamorous, with that sparkle of magic.”

Christmas Present’s rich green robes were inspired by research images of Father Christmas’ traditional dress in brown and green.

Want and Ignorance? “They’re also spirits, and come from that same world.”



“I am not the man I was! This is not the man I will be!” – Scrooge

In our production three men and one woman play all the following parts:

**Business Man**  
**Bob Cratchit**  
**Mrs. Cratchit**  
**Mrs. Dilber**  
**Fezziwig**  
**Mrs. Fezziwig**  
**Ghost of Christmas Present**  
**Marley**  
**Schoolmaster**  
**Subscription Gentleman**  
**Undertaker's Man**  
**Dick Wilkins**

If you know the story, which characters would you choose to be played by the same actor? If you were the director, how would you imagine dividing up these roles, and why?

You might choose one actor and pay attention as that person transforms from one character to the next. What tools does that actor use to create separate characters?

How does the costume design help, and what does the actor do to transform his or her body and voice?

**Devon Painter did not design a costume for the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, and there is no actor playing the role. How do you imagine this ghost will appear onstage to tell its part of the story?**

In a play featuring as many characters as *A Christmas Carol*, it is not uncommon for actors to change costumes and portray multiple characters. However, this production takes advantage of that strategy to help reinforce the importance of memory and dreaming.

For instance, two actors play Scrooge's nephew Fred and his wife. That same pair will also portray Belle and apprentice-age Scrooge; they will also play the roles of another young couple during Scrooge's dream of Yet to Come. Cuddy explained that these choices were not accidental. If these visions are all Scrooge's dream, his imagination weaving fantasy from his life and memories, then it makes sense that the people are vaguely familiar, in the same way that Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz* recognizes the faces in her real life as having appeared – though transformed – in her dream.

Furthermore, seeing the same actor in multiple roles can subtly invite us to think about the choices Scrooge has made, and his roads not taken. If his younger self and Belle had not separated, might he, too, enjoy the warmth, love and hope that Fred radiates?

This casting decision led to another choice for the costuming: whether to emphasize that the same people keep appearing so they are always recognizable, or to let each character transform completely. Painter chose the latter. "The role assignments do allow an actor to bring some similarity to each role; there's going to be a link directly from the actor's own personality and physicality. Ultimately, we will see just what Scrooge sees: a resemblance, a memory of something else that happened earlier in this night, which is perfect. The costume doesn't need to heighten that continuity." Actors appear dressed for the 1790s to early 1800s period of the past, with a "lighter, cleaner" look Painter has chosen for Scrooge's early memories. Traveling to the Present, they appear in the "darker, heavier, patterned clothes of the Victorian;" the date was selected based on the novella's publication in 1843. And, a few actors are further transformed as spirits or ghosts in the realm of Scrooge's imagination. ♦



The Ghost of Christmas Past is not among the adult characters listed at left; Past is played by a younger actress who is also the "Turkey Girl," the first to see and speak with Scrooge when he awakes on Christmas morning. Why might Cuddy have paired these roles to be shared by a young girl?

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**Jean Gordon Ryon**

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**Carrie Chapter**

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**Mark Cuddy**

Artistic Director

"Scrooge was better than his word. He became as good a friend, as good an employer, and as good a man, as the good old city knew." – Londoners

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