Spotlight Publications

A Christmas Carol

Adapted by Ron Nicol

Dickens
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All enquiries to:
Spotlight Publications, 259 The Moorings, Dalgety Bay, Fife, KY11 9GX
Tel. 01383 825737

Email: wwpanto@gmail.com
Website: www.spotlightpublications.com

A CHRISTMAS CAROL
By Ron Nicol
Adapted from the Charles Dickens story

CAST (in order of appearance)
Ebenezer Scrooge
Bob Cratchit, his clerk
Fred, Scrooge’s nephew
Lady, a collector for a charity fund
Jacob Marley
Spirit of Christmas Past
Scrooge as a boy
Fan, Scrooge’s younger sister
Ebenezer, Scrooge as a young man
Dick Wilkins, an apprentice of Mr Fezziwig
Mr Fezziwig, a kind-hearted jovial old merchant
Mrs Fezziwig, his wife, equally kind-hearted and jovial
Fiddler n/s
Belle, Scrooge’s fiancée
Spirit of Christmas Present
Mrs Cratchit
Belinda Cratchit
Peter Cratchit
Martha Cratchit
Tiny Tim Cratchit
Caroline, Fred’s wife
Spirit of Christmas Yet To Come
Old Joe, a receiver of stolen goods
Charwoman
Mrs Dilber, a laundress
Gravedigger n/s
Child
Street-traders, Shoppers, Friends, Neighbours

Much doubling and trebling is possible

Time: London in the 1840s

Running time: 50 minutes.
Light fades up on Scrooge’s Counting House. There are two desks with high stools behind them, a table US and some upright chairs. Beside the fire place is a high-backed wing armchair with a blanket thrown over it. Scrooge and Cratchit are sitting at the desks. Cratchit blows on his hands, rubs them together, and looks towards Scrooge. He rises stealthily and goes to the fire, holding his hands as close to it as possible in an attempt to get some warmth. He speaks to the audience in a low voice

**Cratchit** It’s cold. Bleak, biting weather, and foggy withal. As cold in this dismal little cell as it is outside, but heat and cold have little influence on him.

*He gestures towards Scrooge*


**Scrooge** What are you muttering about, Cratchit? And why are you skulking there?

**Cratchit** I – I was about to put another coal on the fire, Mr Scrooge.

**Scrooge** If you intend to be extravagant with my coal, Cratchit, the extra expense might put me in mind to terminate your employment.

**Cratchit** Yes, Mr Scrooge, sir. As you say, Mr Scrooge, sir.

**Cratchit returns to his place and tries to warm his hands at the candle on his desk. Scrooge’s nephew Fred enters**

**Fred** A merry Christmas, Uncle! God save you!

**Scrooge** Bah! Humbug!

**Fred** Christmas a humbug, Uncle? You don’t mean that, I’m sure.

**Scrooge** I do. Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You’re poor enough.

**Fred** What right have you to be dismal, Uncle? What reason have you to be morose? You’re rich enough.

**Scrooge** Bah! Humbug! Out upon merry Christmas! What’s Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money. A time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer. Every idiot who goes about with ‘Merry Christmas’ on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart! Keep Christmas in your own way, nephew, and let me keep it in mine.

**Fred** But you don’t keep it.

**Scrooge** Let me leave it alone, then. Much good may it do you!

**Fred** I’ve always thought of Christmas time as a good time. A kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time when men and women open their hearts freely and think of other people. And therefore, Uncle, though it’s never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe it’s done me good and will do me good, and I say, God bless it!

**Cratchit applauds. Scrooge glares at him**

**Fred** The season’s greetings, Bob! Merry Christmas!

**Cratchit** whispers And a very merry Christmas to you, sir, I’m sure!
Fred exits

Scrooge You’re another one, Cratchit! Fifteen shillings a week and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas! I’ll retire to Bedlam.

A Lady enters

Lady Scrooge and Marley’s, I believe. Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr Scrooge or Mr Marley?
Scrooge Mr Marley’s been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago this very night. He’s dead. Dead as a doornail.
Lady I’m sure his liberalty is well represented by his surviving partner.
Scrooge It certainly is. Mr Marley and I were two kindred spirits, I assure you.
Lady At this festive season, Mr Scrooge, it’s more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities, hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts.
Scrooge Are there no prisons?
Lady Plenty of prisons.
Scrooge And the workhouses? Are they still in operation?
Lady They scarcely furnish Christian cheer, Mr Scrooge. A few of us are endeavouring to raise a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. We choose Christmas because it’s a time when want is keenly felt. (She produces a note-book) What shall I put you down for?
Scrooge Nothing.

Lady You wish to be anonymous?
Scrooge I wish to be left alone. I don’t make merry myself at Christmas and I can’t afford to make idle people merry. I help support the establishments I’ve mentioned. They cost enough, and those who are badly off must go there.
Lady Many can’t go there, and many would rather die.
Scrooge If they’d rather die, they’d better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Good afternoon!

The Lady exits. A church bell rings a quarter to the hour. Cratchit rises quietly, snuffs out the candle, and puts on his coat and scarf

Scrooge Where are you going, Cratchit?
Cratchit Home, sir. It’s Christmas Eve, sir.
Scrooge Christmas Eve! Is that sufficient reason for finishing early? And you’ll want all day tomorrow, I suppose?
Cratchit If it’s quite convenient, sir.
Scrooge It’s not convenient. And it’s not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you’d think yourself ill-used, yet you don’t think me ill-used when I pay a day’s wages for no work.
Cratchit It’s only once a year, sir.
Scrooge A poor excuse for picking a man’s pocket every twenty-fifth of December! Well, I suppose you must have the whole day - but be here all the earlier next morning.
Cratchit Yes, sir. I will, sir. A merry - er - goodbye, Mr Scrooge.

Cratchit exits hastily. Scrooge begins to clear his desk. The light fades slightly. Knocking at the door. Scrooge looks up

Marley (off) Ebenezer Scrooge!

Scrooge cautiously looks around. The light continues to fade

Scrooge Bah! Humbug!
Marley (off, louder) Ebenezer Scrooge!

Thunderous knocking. Scrooge dives behind his desk. The echoes die away. Scrooge peers from behind the desk. The lighting is now dim

Scrooge Humbug!
He takes off his coat, hangs it on the hat-stand, pulls out his long shirt as a night-shirt, puts on his dressing- 
gown and slippers, takes a night-cap from the dressing-gown pocket, puts it on, and sits in the high-backed wing 
chair by the fireplace. He takes a bowl of gruel from the hearth and begins to eat. The sound of clanking chains 
and echoing footsteps approaches slowly, getting louder. The light gradually changes to a ghostly green

It’s humbug still. I won’t believe it.

Marley’s Ghost enters. His clothes belong to a period some ten years earlier – pigtail, waistcoat, tails, and 
boots with tassels. Chains with attached cash-boxes, keys and padlocks are wound round his body 

How now! What do you want with me?
Marley Much.
Scrooge Who are you?
Marley Ask me who I was.
Scrooge Who were you, then?
Marley In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.
Scrooge Humbug!
Marley You don’t believe in me.
Scrooge I don’t.
Marley Why do you doubt your senses?
Scrooge Because a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You might be 
an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There’s 
more of gravy than the grave about you, whoever you are. Humbug, I tell you. Humbug!

A Christmas Carol
One of three Charles Dickens short stories adapted by Ron Nicol as one-act plays. The others are ”The Chimes” 
and ”The Cricket on the Hearth”.

Plot Summary
‘A Christmas Carol’ is the first and best known of the series of ‘Christmas Books’ written by Charles Dickens 
between 1945 and 1848.

Miser Ebenezer Scrooge has no time for Christmas. On Christmas Eve the ghost of his former business partner 
Jacob Marley warns him that if he doesn’t change his miserly ways he’ll come to a miserable end. That night 
Scrooge is visited by the Spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Future. Glimpses of his past life, visits to the 
happy households of his clerk and his nephew, and frightening visions of the future persuade Scrooge to change 
his covetous nature.