

EBENEZER SCROOGE'S BIG [YOUR TOWN HERE] CHRISTMAS SHOW

**BY GORDON GREENBERG
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A DPS ACTING EDITION PUBLISHED BY

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L I C E N S I N G G R O U P

EBENEZER SCROOGE'S BIG [YOUR TOWN HERE] CHRISTMAS SHOW!

Based on *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens
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EBENEZER SCROOGE'S BIG [YOUR TOWN HERE] CHRISTMAS SHOW! was originally commissioned by and world premiere presented by New Hope Productions (Alexander Fraser, Robyn Goodman, Stephen Kocis, Josh Fielder, Producers) in New Hope, Pennsylvania, in 2017. It was directed by Josh Rhodes, the set design was by Michael Carnahan, the costume design was by Brian C. Hemesath, the lighting design was by Cory Pattak, the sound design was by Matthew Given, the wig design was by J. Jared Janas, and the stage manager was Christopher Flores. The cast was as follows:

EBENEZER SCROOGE	Don Stephenson
ACTOR ONE	Evan Alexander Smith
ACTOR TWO	Tracey Conyer Lee
ACTOR THREE	Kate Wetherhead
ACTOR FOUR	James Ludwig

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The goal in writing this streamlined, American adaptation of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* was that any theatre in America could have a funny holiday show that used local references and promoted the community values inherent to the season.

This show takes place wherever it is performed. The title should be *Ebenezer Scrooge's Big [Your Town or Theatre] Christmas Show*. At the Old Globe in San Diego, it was *Ebenezer Scrooge's Big San Diego Christmas Show*. At the Bucks County Playhouse in Pennsylvania, it was *Ebenezer Scrooge's Big Playhouse Christmas Show*.

All [bracketed] references offer opportunities to fill in the blanks with local people, places, and things that will be recognizable, beloved, and amusing to your audience. Most powerfully, in the end, the play becomes an origin story for the theatre in which it is performed.

It can be done with great theatricality on a limited budget. Clever lighting and low-fi staging tricks tell the entire story and engage the audience's collective imagination.

At the Old Globe, it was performed with the following set pieces: one rolling ladder, one rolling door frame, one rolling window frame, some old crates, and the illusion of a bed created with a blanket and pillow held by ensemble members.

In classic Story Theatre style, it was performed using five actors who narrate and change characters and costume pieces at the drop of a hat. You can use more actors if you wish, but a big part of the fun is watching talented, funny people navigate the lunacy.

We encourage the use of a local choir at the end of the show. It's a great opportunity for your theatre to partner with schools, churches, or other social groups.

All the music referenced is public domain and available to use free of charge.

Have fun!

Gordon Greenberg & Steve Rosen

CHARACTERS

ACTOR ONE

Fred, Young Scrooge, Medium Scrooge, Tiny Tim puppet, Isaac,
Leader of the Sons of Pitches, Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

ACTOR TWO

Gertrude Saint, Lavinia, Ghost of Christmas Present, Archibald,
Team Captain, Boy, Maxine, Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

ACTOR THREE

Prudence Saint, Ghost of Christmas Past, Lady Marmalade,
Mrs. Cratchit, Jennie, Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

ACTOR FOUR

Mr. Cratchit, Marley, Charles, Fezzi, Purser, Jack, Jean,
Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

ACTOR FIVE

Scrooge

EBENEZER SCROOGE'S BIG [YOUR TOWN HERE] CHRISTMAS SHOW!

Sound cue: Dickensian fiddle music leading to a crescendo.

A simple bare stage with a ghost light.

Five actors enter and move to position, surrounding the ghost light, facing out toward the audience.

ACTOR FIVE. A ghost light.

ACTOR TWO. You may have seen them on empty stages and wondered, "What the blazes is that?"

ACTOR THREE. Well, it's simple.

ACTOR FOUR. It's a light bulb.

ACTOR FIVE. Clearly.

ACTOR FOUR. A special light bulb.

ACTOR ONE. Meant to fend off ghosts.

ACTOR FIVE. Hence

ALL. A ghost light.

ACTOR FOUR. A popular theatrical superstition holds that every theatre has a ghost.

ACTOR ONE. Or two.

ACTOR TWO. Or three.

ACTOR THREE. For example, the Palace Theatre in London keeps two seats permanently empty just for their resident phantoms.

ACTOR TWO. So this light is here to keep the ghosts away.

ACTOR FIVE. You can't be too careful.

ACTOR THREE. We have more than our fair share of haunted places here in [your town].

ACTOR ONE. [Name of “haunted” place in your town.*]

ACTOR TWO. [Name of another “haunted” place in your town.**]

ACTOR THREE. [Name of a comedically empty place in your town.***]

ACTOR FOUR. Which makes this the perfect setting for a ghost story.

ACTOR ONE. A holiday story.

ACTOR TWO. A heartwarming story.

ACTOR THREE. And best of all—a story we can tell in less than ninety minutes.

ACTOR FIVE. It takes place right on this very spot.

Music note.

ACTOR THREE. Long before it was a theatre...

ACTOR ONE. This property belonged to a man you might have heard of.

ACTOR TWO. A man with bad manners...

ACTOR THREE. A bad attitude...

ACTOR ONE. And bad breath.

ACTOR FOUR. A man named—

ALL. Scrooge.

Sound cue: They all blow the light out.

It is dark. Quite dark. The cast dresses Actor Five in top hat and coat over the narration.

ACTOR TWO. On December the twenty-fourth...

ACTOR ONE. In the early part of the last century...

ACTOR TWO. There lived an unhappy man named...

Examples:

* The old cemetery on [street with a cemetery]

** The creepy abandoned house on [street with an abandoned house]

*** This theatre on Super Bowl Sunday

Sound cue: Whoosh! Loud, quick wind gust.

Lights up on Scrooge.

ACTOR FIVE. Ebenezer Scrooge.

The ensemble sets up his office.

ACTOR ONE. He was a tightfisted

ACTOR TWO. squeezing

ACTOR THREE. wrenching

ACTOR FOUR. grasping

ACTOR ONE. scraping

ACTOR TWO. clutching

ACTOR THREE. Covetous old grump!

ACTOR ONE. Hard and sharp as flint and solitary as an oyster.

ACTOR FOUR. His blood ran so cold it shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait, and made his thin lips blue.

ACTOR ONE. Which was compounded by the fact that [your town] was in the midst of a record-breaking cold snap.

ACTOR THREE. Brought in by a low pressure system from the North.

ACTOR TWO. As wind gusts howled...

ACTOR ONE. Children bundled up in blankets.

ACTOR TWO. Parents collected firewood.

ACTOR ONE. And families were moved to snuggle just a little bit closer this holiday season.

ACTOR THREE. And yet, despite the warmth being generated around town, Ebenezer Scrooge's heart didn't warm one degree.

ACTOR ONE. Which is why he was still working after dark.

ACTOR FOUR. Working? On Christmas Eve?

ACTOR ONE. When was he *not* working?

Sound cue: Whoosh! Then, loud clock ticking.

SCROOGE (ACTOR FIVE). (*Nastily.*) *Cratchit!* If you're not working, you're not *earning*.

ACTOR ONE. He never felt like he had enough.

SCROOGE. Have you tallied up today's accounts, Cratchit?

ACTOR ONE. So he kept a very tight rein on finances.

CRATCHIT (ACTOR FOUR). (*Shivering.*) Almost, sir. It's a bit frosty in here, though. And the wind is picking up. Do you think I might add some wood to the fire?

SCROOGE. Is that a feeble attempt at humor? Do you know how much wood costs? Why don't we just set our *money* on fire?

ACTOR ONE. Did I mention he was cheap?

SCROOGE. That's what blankets are for, you profligate spendthrift!

ACTOR ONE. So cheap, he wouldn't let his only friend in the world keep himself warm while he worked alongside him.

SCROOGE. Friend? A friend is merely an enemy you haven't known long enough.

ACTOR ONE. So cheap, he wouldn't give so much as a penny to the neediest and worthiest of causes.

Prudence and Gertrude Saint enter through the door.

Sound cue: Ding, ding (shop door) and extreme wind.

As they enter through a door frame, they are comedically "blown in" from outside, miming difficulty closing the door.

PRUDENCE (ACTOR THREE). Mr. Scrod!

GERTRUDE (ACTOR TWO). Scrooge!

PRUDENCE. That's what I said!

GERTRUDE. It's us!

PRUDENCE and GERTRUDE. The Saint sisters!

PRUDENCE. I'm Prudence and she's Grapefruit.

GERTRUDE. Gertrude!

PRUDENCE. That's what I said!

GERTRUDE. Nevertheless

PRUDENCE and GERTRUDE. Merry Christmas!

ACTOR ONE. He was only ever interested in making a sale.

SCROOGE. Ah, customers! Welcome.

GERTRUDE. (*Straightening her dress.*) That wind is really something. I hear we may even see snow.

PRUDENCE. Perspiration!

GERTRUDE. Precipitation.

PRUDENCE. That's what I said. Snow on Christmas! Extraordinary, isn't it, Mr. Scrim?

GERTRUDE. Scrooge.

SCROOGE. That's what she said. What can I do for you two lovely ladies? Can I interest you in a loan, perhaps?

Sound cue: Unfurling scroll.

He unfurls a long scroll with a menu of loan options.

We offer home equity, reverse mortgage, unforgivable student loans, and bridge loans.

GERTRUDE. Why would we need a bridge loan?

PRUDENCE. To get to [location nearby that you cross a bridge to get to]?

Sound cue: Ratchet.

Lights shift. Saint sisters freeze.

ACTOR ONE. Scrooge and Marley Building Society financed all sorts of construction. Including the very building you're sitting in right now. Before it was a theatre. But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

Sound cue: Ratchet.

Lights shift. Saint sisters unfreeze.

GERTRUDE. Oh, we're not looking for a loan, sir.

SCROOGE. You're not?

PRUDENCE. No, sir. We represent a charitable organization devoted to providing holiday gifts for nerdy children.

GERTRUDE. *Needy* children!

PRUDENCE. That's what I said.

GERTRUDE. Your contribution will help needy children, helpless war widows, and the terminally ill.

SCROOGE. Those all sound like very worthy candidates.

PRUDENCE and GERTRUDE. They doooo??

SCROOGE. For the *poorhouse*. There's a fine one in [affluent town nearby].

PRUDENCE. They are not nice places, sir.

GERTRUDE. Many would prefer death to the cruelty of the poorhouse.

SCROOGE. Well, if that is their preference, they should be my guest and help control overpopulation. The world won't miss one more poor person.

GERTRUDE. But sir, I'm not sure you understand the dire circumstances these people face, right here in our own community.

PRUDENCE. We cannot ignore the plight of those that live among us.

GERTRUDE. They are our neighbors.

PRUDENCE. Our friends.

GERTRUDE. Our children's friends.

SCROOGE. And drains on society. This building doesn't survive on hope and stardust. I'm afraid some of us actually work for a living.

PRUDENCE. But sir, I beg your indulgence.

SCROOGE. Are you a maker or a taker? Time is money. And as far as I'm concerned, you are thieves. Kindly remove yourself from the premises or I'll summon the authorities.

GERTRUDE. I...I'm sorry to take up your time, Mr. Scrooge.

PRUDENCE. We'll move along to Mr. [well-known local family name]'s shop down the street.

Cratchit raises his head from his work and steps forward, wrapped in a blanket.

CRATCHIT. (*Quietly.*) Excuse me, miss?

GERTRUDE. Did you hear something?

PRUDENCE. Possibly. Is there an animal behind the wall?

CRATCHIT. (*Under blanket.*) It was me, miss.

PRUDENCE and GERTRUDE. (*Startled.*) AH!

CRATCHIT. (*Removes blanket.*) Cratchit.

PRUDENCE and GERTRUDE. (*Who?*) AH?

CRATCHIT. Bob Cratchit.

PRUDENCE and GERTRUDE. (*Of course!*) AH!

PRUDENCE. Nice to see you, Crunchit!

CRATCHIT. Cratchit.

GERTRUDE. That's what she said.

PRUDENCE. How is little Tom?

CRATCHIT. Tim.

GERTRUDE. That's what she said.

CRATCHIT. Not well, ma'am, but he's got a fighter's spirit.

PRUDENCE. Did he like his new walking brace?

CRATCHIT. Yes, ma'am. Thank you again, ma'am. I don't know what we'd do without your generosity. I'm afraid it's not much. But I'd like to contribute to the cause.

Sound cue: Plink, plink (of coins hitting a tin cup).

He mimes dropping change into their collection box.

GERTRUDE. Sir, you are indeed a man of integrity and kindness.

PRUDENCE. We will not soon forget your largesse.

CRATCHIT. It's just a few pennies.

PRUDENCE. Still, you know what they say? A butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil can make a tornado in Toronto.

GERTRUDE. Forgive Prudence, she got into the ether this morning.

PRUDENCE. I can taste colors.

GERTRUDE. Let's go, sister. God bless you, Mr. Cratchit.

PRUDENCE and GERTRUDE. Merry Christmas! (*Then, warily.*) Merry Christmas, Mr. Scrooge!

Sound cue: Ding, ding (shop door) and extreme wind.

As they exit, "blown outside" by the wind and miming closing the door with difficulty.

SCROOGE. Bah humbug!

CRATCHIT. Pardon?

SCROOGE. I said. Bah humbug!

CRATCHIT. I'm sorry, sir?

SCROOGE. It's French for "get a life." Don't they have better things to do than bother people on a work day?

Scrooge's enthusiastic and fresh-faced nephew enters through the door.

Sound cue: Ding, ding (shop door) and extreme wind.

As he enters through door frame, he is comedically "blown in" from outside, miming difficulty closing the door.

FRED (ACTOR ONE). Merry Christmas, Uncle!

SCROOGE. Humbug!

FRED. Excuse me?

CRATCHIT. It's French.

FRED. Uncle, you're looking well.

SCROOGE. Right, right.

FRED. Jennie and the kids miss you.

SCROOGE. I'm sure they do.

FRED. They keep asking after you.

SCROOGE. I suspect they're all waiting for me to die, so they can collect their inheritance. Well, you can tell them there will be none!

FRED. Please, Uncle, believe it or not, they want nothing from you.

SCROOGE. Everyone wants something. Dig deep enough, and you'll find it.

FRED. And what do you want, Uncle?

SCROOGE. For this Christmas nonsense to evaporate into the air from which it was spun. For the hypocrites who revel in expenditure to be silenced.

FRED. Right. So the same thing you asked for last year?

SCROOGE. What is this but a time for paying bills without money? A time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer.

FRED. Don't get all steamed up, Uncle.

SCROOGE. Who's "steamed up"? I merely wish to eradicate this useless holiday from the calendar. If I could work my will, 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.

Beat.

FRED. Soooo...I guess you don't want this sweater Jennie knit for you?

He holds it up. It's a comedically ugly Christmas sweater.

SCROOGE. No, thank you.

FRED. Well, I hope you'll finally join us for Christmas dinner.

SCROOGE. I will not.

FRED. But my wife and I would love to have you over. You've scarcely met her.

SCROOGE. Why did you get married?

FRED. Because I fell in love.

SCROOGE. Love! The only thing more ridiculous than a merry Christmas.

FRED. But Christmas is a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem content to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow travelers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys, you know? It's a shame life can't be that way all year round, but I'm grateful for these few weeks. The holidays truly do bring out the best in us, don't ya think?

Beat.

Uncle?

SCROOGE. Hmmm? Oh. Sorry. I fell asleep with my eyes open. Good day, Frederick.

FRED. But Uncle—

SCROOGE. I said good *day*, Frederick!

FRED. All righty, then. Feel free to change your mind.

SCROOGE. I won't.

FRED. You might.

SCROOGE. I won't

FRED. But if you do—

SCROOGE. I shan't.

FRED. But if you do, the invite stands. And Bob, merry Christmas to you and the family. I imagine they're fixing up quite a feast.

CRATCHIT. Oh, just a pigeon and some twigs we collected out back. (*Making the best of it.*) Doctor says to eat more fiber!

FRED. Right. Well, fingers crossed we'll get snow for the holiday!

SCROOGE. Ha! Fat chance!

FRED. Would make the children smile. Anyway, merry Christmas, Bob. Merry—Goodbye, Uncle. (*On his way out.*)

Sound cue: Ding, ding (shop door) and extreme wind. Fred exits, "blown outside" by the wind.

Sound cue: Clock ticking.

CRATCHIT. Sir? Might it be acceptable for me to take my leave just a touch early this evening?

SCROOGE. Whhhhhhat?! It's the middle of the day!

CRATCHIT. It's eight P.M., sir. On Christmas Eve?

SCROOGE. What's your point?

CRATCHIT. I was hoping to get home for a little celebration before Tim goes to bed.

SCROOGE. How nice it must be to keep bankers' hours. Here at Scrooge and Marley, we have to be competitive. We cannot afford to slack off. We work until eight forty-five P.M. every day of the year.

CRATCHIT. Mr. Marley used to let me go early on Christmas.

SCROOGE. And see where that got him? The graveyard! Worm food! Dead as a donut. Is that the future you desire, Cratchit?

CRATCHIT. It's the future we all face, Mr. Scrooge, like it or not. But I desire to spend some of the time I have left in this world in the company of the people I love most.

Scrooge stops for a moment.

SCROOGE. I see.

CRATCHIT. If you'd oblige, I'll work extra hours all next week.

SCROOGE. You will?

CRATCHIT. And I'll provide my own ink.

SCROOGE. Is that so?

CRATCHIT. And I don't need any sort of Christmas gift, if you were wondering.

SCROOGE. I wasn't. You'll also want all day tomorrow, I suppose?

CRATCHIT. If it's convenient, sir.

SCROOGE. It's not convenient, and it's not fair. If I was to dock your pay, you'd be upset, wouldn't you? And yet, I'm the bad guy if I don't pay you for not working.

CRATCHIT. It's just...once a year, sir.

SCROOGE. A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December. Very well. You may go, but you *will* work those extra hours at half rate.

CRATCHIT. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. (*Putting on his coat.*)

SCROOGE. And be here early on Boxing Day!

CRATCHIT. Of course, sir. (*Handing him a small gift wrapped in newspaper.*) For you, sir.

SCROOGE. What is this?

CRATCHIT. Oh, just a cup and ball game. Tiny Tim fashioned it himself out of some damp cardboard and a dead fern.

SCROOGE. Somewhat lopsided.

CRATCHIT. Think of it as a token of our appreciation.

SCROOGE. A gift is nothing more than an invitation for gratitude, and I have none to offer.

CRATCHIT. I'm...sorry to hear that, sir.
Merry—Good night, sir.

SCROOGE. Good night, Cratchit.

Sound cue: Gust of extreme wind.

Cratchit exits, "blown outside" by the wind.

ACTOR ONE. Scrooge stayed exactly forty-five minutes.

ACTOR TWO. But of course, there were no customers on Christmas Eve.

ACTOR THREE. Everyone in town was at home.

ACTOR TWO. Behind amber-lit windows.

ACTOR ONE. Enjoying each other's company...

ACTOR TWO. Cinnamon hot cocoa...

ACTOR FOUR. And the music of the season.

Sound cue: Festive Dickensian fiddle music (sixteen bars).

Actors dance and perhaps play fiddle and accordion.

ACTOR THREE. On his way home, Scrooge encountered the only people left on the streets of [your town] that night. A local caroling group, the Sons of Pitches.

Sound cue: Long whoosh.

Actors One through Four magically become the Sons of Pitches, perhaps by using a "face in the hole board" with a comedic image of carolers. They sing at 2x speed in irritatingly shrill voices.

SONS OF PITCHES.

GOOD KING WENCESLAS LOOKED OUT
ON THE FEAST OF STEPHEN
WHEN THE SNOW LAY ROUND ABOUT
DEEP AND CRISP AND EVEN
BRIGHTLY SHONE THE MOON THAT NIGHT
THOUGH THE FROST WAS CRUEL
WHEN A POOR MAN CAME IN SIGHT
GATH'RING WINTER FUEL

ACTOR ONE. Merry Christmas, Mr. Scrooge!

SCROOGE. Humbug! You should all be apprehended for noise pollution. I suspect you'll successfully kill whatever vegetation this frigid weather does not.

ACTOR TWO. Everyone's a critic.

ACTOR ONE. We'd rather perform inside, where there's heat.

ACTOR THREE. But there isn't a theatre in all of [your town].

SCROOGE. Theatre! Ha! Who'd want a theatre in their town?

ACTOR ONE. Sir, a theatre is a temple. A shrine. A haven for lost souls to find connection, amusement, and emotional intelligence.

SCROOGE. Theatre is for degenerates! Why, everyone knows that

theatrical audiences are comprised of thieves, drunkards, and worst of all, children! No theatre shall ever have my custom. The people of [your town] should consider themselves fortunate to be free of such a venue. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have matters of consequence to attend to. Clear, you wastrels.

Sound cue: Whoosh.

ACTOR THREE. (*To audience.*) Scrooge did not have any matter of consequence to attend to that Christmas Eve.

ACTOR TWO. He did not have anyone waiting for him at home.

ACTOR ONE. He did not have anywhere to go.

ACTOR THREE. And he did not have anything to do.

ACTOR TWO. Unless you count dinner.

ACTOR FOUR. His was a hard-boiled egg he purchased on sale at Ye Olde 7-Eleven.

Sound cue: Scary Dickensian fiddle music (underscore).

ACTOR ONE. Armed with the questionable egg, he headed home to his austere living quarters.

ACTOR THREE. Just a few blocks from here, actually.

ACTOR TWO. Down [nearby street] a bit, past the [nearby landmark].

ACTOR ONE. You've seen the house.

ACTOR TWO. A gloomy suite of rooms in a small overgrown yard.

ACTOR THREE. He lived alone.

ACTOR ONE. His only company, the day's receipts. As he approached his crumbling home...

Sound cue: Music changes to wind, which stays under this entire scene.

ACTOR TWO. A cold fog hung in the air.

Actors One and Two spray fog in a can at his face. He winces.

ACTOR ONE. At the rusty old gate out front...

Sound cue: Gate opening, creak, leaf crunching sounds.

ACTOR FOUR. Scrooge could hardly see his way to the door.

Sound cue: Wind.

The play doesn't end here...

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