

Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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A Christmas Carol

By
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From the Story by
Charles Dickens

A Christmas Carol was originally produced by Lakeside Arts, UK, in 2013

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Andrew

Who also plays **Ebenezer Scrooge, Young Scrooge**

James

Who also plays **Bob Cratchit and his Entire Family, The Ghost of Christmas Past, The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, Cheeky Cockney Chappy**

Vicky

Who also plays **Jacob Marley, Ali Baba, A Genie, A Parrot, Fezziwig, Dick Wilkins, An Extraordinary Number of Guests at the Fezziwigs' Christmas Party, Scrooge's Sweetheart, The Ghost of Christmas Present, The Other Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come**

*The living room of a charming country property. A Christmas tree.
Through French windows we see deep snow on the ground.*

Andrew, Vicky and James enter. They each carry a small suitcase or rucksack. **Vicky** also has a large number of carrier bags containing presents.

James Here we are – our home for Christmas! It’s just as I remember. Look, she’s still got our school photos up.

Vicky Good old Aunty Val.

Andrew It’s cold. And damp.

James Andrew...

Andrew And it always was.

Vicky Mr Miserable! I’m going to put the presents under the tree!

She begins to unpack the carrier bags and arrange the presents at the foot of the tree.

Andrew James, take me home.

James Andrew – we all agreed to spend Christmas together again somewhere special. Here.

Andrew I want to go back home.

James And it’s really kind of Aunty Val to say we could use the cottage.

Andrew I still want to go back home.

James Besides, the car is well and truly stuck in that snow drift. We’re going to need to get a tractor to pull it out.

Andrew I said you shouldn’t have driven down the track.

James Yes, you did. Sorry. But we wanted to be close to the cottage, didn’t we? So we wouldn’t get cold bringing the bags in.

Andrew We still got cold bringing the bags in.

James Yes. Never mind. We'll soon warm up.

Vicky That's the presents all done. I'll put the lights on and then Christmas can start. Everyone... one, two, three –

As she turns the tree lights on there is an enormous crackle and fizz and the cottage is plunged into darkness.

Oh.

James Don't worry. The Christmas tree lights will have tripped a fuse. I'll go and find the fuse box and get the electricity back on. Er... out here, I guess. Vicky, could you have a look –

Vicky Of course.

James Andrew, are you going to help find the fuse box or not?

Andrew No. I'm going to sit on the sofa and sulk.

Vicky Andrew, that isn't fair.

Andrew I don't care.

James Oh, you could you phone Aunty Val and ask her where the fuse box is.

Andrew I suppose I could.

James and Vicky disappear in different directions.

Andrew slumps on the sofa.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out his phone. By the light suddenly coming from the screen we see his face. He is in a foul mood. He waves the phone this way and that, looking for a signal. No luck. He stands up. No luck. He tries standing on the sofa and holding the phone up to the ceiling. Still no luck. With a sigh he slumps back on to the sofa.

Andrew There's no signal here. *[More to himself than anyone else.]* What a way to spend Christmas...

A twinkle of Christmas magic. The house is in some way alive.

James *[Entering.]*Sorry, Andrew, the fuse box isn't immediately obvious. Maybe Vicky has found it. Vicky, any luck?

Vicky *[A muffled voice from somewhere indefinable.]* Not yet.

James Have you tried phoning?

Andrew There's no signal.

James Okay...

Andrew It's Christmas Eve, James. Christmas Eve!

James Yes it is. Exciting, isn't it?

Andrew I knew spending Christmas in this cottage was a stupid idea.

James Andrew, don't spoil it...

Andrew Spoil it? Where's all the food she promised? She said she'd make sure the cottage came with everything we needed. Including Christmas food.

James It does.

Andrew So where is it?

James I haven't seen it.

Andrew What?!

James It is very dark.

Andrew What?!

James Maybe she forgot...

Andrew She forgot?!

James You know Aunty Val. Don't worry though. We're not going to starve. I've got half a sandwich left from the journey.

Andrew Half a sandwich? We might as well starve. Merry Christmas everyone.

James It's turkey and stuffing. With cranberry. There's a bag of Wotsits.

Andrew Deck the halls with boughs of holly...

James And we haven't quite finished all the Fanta.

Andrew This is just typical. I should never let you organise anything.

Vicky *[From within a cupboard.]* James! Andrew! All is not lost!

Vicky *suddenly straightens up and hits her head on the underside of the cupboard.*

Ow!

James Vicky! Are you alright?

Vicky Yes, fine.

James Have you found the fuse box?

Vicky No.

Andrew Brilliant. So we've still got to spend Christmas Eve sitting in the dark.

Vicky Absolutely not. I've found a candle.

James Well done you.

Andrew A candle. Crack open the champagne. Oh no, sorry, no champagne. Crack open the Fanta and we'll all have a swig.

Vicky Are you being a real Mr Miserable again?

Andrew Stop it! I'm not a real Mr Miserable.

A significant lack of response from Vicky and James.

I'm not! Thank goodness there's a telly... Maybe there's a Bond film on. It is Christmas after all.

He goes over to the TV and tries to turn it on.

Vicky

Andrew...

Andrew

I'm trying to turn the telly on.

Vicky

Andrew...

Andrew

Please, just let me turn the telly on so I can pretend I'm not here.

Vicky

Andrew...

Andrew

What?

James

You can't turn the telly on if there's no electricity.

*With an exasperated cry **Andrew** throws himself back on to the sofa.*

Silence.

James

Would anyone like a Wotsit?

Silence. Andrew?

Silence.

Come on, cheer up. It's not the end of the world.

Andrew

Really? No television?

James

We'll just have to do something else.

Andrew

What?

James

We'll make our own entertainment. Like they did in the Victorian times. Before they had television.

Andrew

The Dark Ages...

James

Let's play a game.

Andrew

Please...

James I spy with my little eye, something beginning with –

Andrew It's pitch black. We can't spy anything.

James True... how about Yes and No? I'll think of something and you've got to ask me questions to see if you can guess what it is, but I can only answer Yes and No. Alright... alright... I'm thinking of something. Come on, ask away.

Andrew A bear.

James Yes! How did you know?

Andrew You always do a bear.

James Okay. How about a sing song? A Christmas carol?

***James** sings the opening bars of God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen.*

Andrew Stop! Stop! Enough. This is torture.

James Tell stories?

Andrew Give it a rest.

James Yes. Okay. Sorry.

Silence.

Vicky We could, you know.

Andrew Could what?

Vicky Tell stories.

Andrew Don't be stupid.

Vicky I'm being serious.

Andrew I don't want a bedtime story from my big sister.

Vicky Ghost stories.

Andrew Vicky, no.

Vicky But it's perfect. Here we are, stuck in the middle of nowhere, with no phone signal, no way of reaching the outside world, and all the lights have gone out. It's almost like we're in a ghost story ourselves.

Andrew James, I'm ready for those Wotsits now.

Vicky James, you'll tell a ghost story with me, won't you?

James Great idea!

Andrew That's not fair. You know I get easily spooked.

Vicky Still? At your age? Ghosts aren't real, you know.

Andrew It's still not fair.

Vicky So, imagine it. Our story is set once upon a time, over one hundred years ago, in Victorian London. It's Christmas Eve. It's cold, bleak, biting weather. The fog is so thick that you can't see the houses on the opposite side of the street. In the distance, we can hear the sound of a barrel organ playing.

A sprinkle of Christmas magic.

In the distance, we hear the sound of a barrel organ playing.

Andrew That's funny. I'm sure I can hear it.

James How can you hear it? There's no one else around for miles.

Vicky You're imagining it.

Andrew I'm not.

Vicky Yes you are.

Andrew No, I'm not.

Vicky You can hear it?

Andrew Yes.

Vicky Then you must be imagining it, because it's certainly not there.

Andrew, you're working in your office, counting your money. James, you're in the next office, copying out letters. Andrew is your boss. And he's mean. He's a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone; a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, clutching, covetous old Mr Miserable; hard and sharp as flint, secret and self-contained, ugly as an oyster –

Andrew Hang on. What are you saying?

Vicky It's just a story, Andrew.

James Is he really that mean?

Vicky Worse.

James I wouldn't like to ask him for extra holiday this Christmas.

Vicky You should try it.

James Okay. Sir?

Andrew What?

James May I have extra holiday this Christmas? To spend with my family? You don't even need to pay me.

Andrew Unpaid! Are you mad?

James Far from it.

Andrew No you can't.

Vicky That's mean.

Andrew You told me I had to be mean, so I'm being mean. I'm playing along with this stupid story. Don't complain if I do what you tell me.

James But it's Christmas!

Andrew Christmas? Bah! As far as I can tell, this Christmas is about sitting miserably in the cold and dark, with half a turkey sandwich and a packet of Wotsits. Oh, and some lukewarm Fanta.

James What about peace on earth, good will to all men, and all that? Thinking about others less fortunate than yourself.

Andrew A load of rubbish.Nonsense. Humbug. Let's be honest. Christmas is about thinking only of yourself, stuffing your face and getting loads of presents. Oh, and good telly. But we won't be watching any of that, will we?

James Andrew...

Andrew *[Warming to his theme.]* You know, the Victorians had the right idea. One hundred years ago we stuck the poor in prisons and workhouses and if they were full they just had to sleep on the streets.

James You can't say that!

Vicky Andrew, that's awful.

Andrew Yes, yes, I know. Sorry. Sorry. I'm just in a really bad mood. This is hardly what any of us expected, is it?

Vicky No, it isn't.

James Sorry.

Vicky But we don't have to take it out on each other, do we?

Andrew No. Sorry.

Pause.

James So, how about this ghost story? What happens next?

Vicky The boss leaves his office and goes back to his house, all on his own. It'sso dark that he has to feel his way along the walls to find his own front door. And then, when he gets to the door...

A twinkle of Christmas magic.

Andrew suddenly shouts out in surprise.

Andrew

Vicky! Look!

The front door is suddenly glowing, and, very distinctly, a face has appeared in it.

Vicky

Andrew, what? I'm trying to tell a story here.

Andrew

But... but...

Vicky

You've completely ruined it by shouting out like that.

Andrew

But Vicky...

Vicky

What?

Andrew

The door. Look!

Vicky turns to look, but the door is back to how it has always been.

Vicky

What about it?

Andrew

It was glowing, and then I saw a face in it. A ghostly face, grinning at me.

Vicky

Don't be stupid. Doors don't glow.

Andrew

That one did.

Vicky

And they don't have faces.

Andrew

That one did.

Vicky

Especially not faces that grin.

Andrew

But that one did.

Vicky

James, did you see anything?

James

No, I was listening to the story.

Andrew But I definitely saw it.

Vicky You imagined it.

Andrew I wasn't imagining.

Vicky You must have been.

Andrew I tell you, I wasn't.

Vicky Well, the face isn't there now, so you must have imagined it.

Andrew I couldn't have imagined anything so real. I'm not that clever.

Vicky The imagination is a powerful thing. If you imagine something hard enough it can come real.

Andrew Humbug.

Vicky Andrew, are you getting a bit spooked out by the story? Do you want me to stop? Are you a little bit scared?

Andrew Of course not. Carry on.

Vicky Okay. And then, when he gets to the door, he opens it and goes up, all alone, to his bedroom.

Andrew James, can I borrow your torch please?

James Of course. Why?

Andrew I'm sure I saw a face. I just want to, you know, check.

James gives Andrew his torch. Andrew checks the living room. By the light of the torch we learn more about it and its contents. The room is filled with all sorts of knickknacks and ephemera. But there are definitely no ghosts hiding anywhere in the room.

The door. Have you locked the door?

James We are in the middle of nowhere. There's no one else around.

Andrew Just in case, you know. Give me the keys. No, actually, you lock it. I don't want to, you know...

James locks the door.

Andrew spots a communication bell rope hanging on one wall.

What's that?

James The rope from a communication bell.

Andrew What?

James In the olden days the owner would have used it if they needed to attract the servants' attention. When you pull it a bell rings in the kitchen and the servants know that the owner wants something. Loads of old houses have them.

Vicky There's one of them in our story. It moves all on its own when the ghost comes in.

Andrew All on its own?

Vicky Yes.

Andrew But that's impossible.

Vicky Not for a ghost.

Andrew But you said that ghosts don't exist.

Vicky No, they don't.

James Besides, it's just for decoration. It doesn't actually work.

A sprinkle of Christmas magic.

Andrew But it's moving now!

Sure enough the bell rope is moving, apparently all of its own accord. From somewhere far away in the house we hear a bell ringing.

James Well, at least we'll be able to work out where the kitchen is. I bet the food has been left in there.

Vicky I'll come with you.

They make to leave.

Andrew No way! No way are you two going off into this house.

James But the food –

Andrew The house might be haunted.

James Ghosts don't exist.

Andrew I'm not being left here on my own.

James Why not?

Andrew Well, what if a ghost –

*The ghost of 'Jacob Marley' enters. It is **Vicky** wearing a hastily improvised costume, holding a torch under her chin for spooky effect.*

Aargh! A ghost! What... what... what do you want with me?

'Marley' Much.

***Andrew** clocks the voice.*

Andrew Who are you?

'Marley' Ask me who I was.

Andrew Who you were?! Why don't you take a seat?

The ghost of 'Jacob Marley' sits down.

Andrew Ha! A real ghost wouldn't be able to sit down. You'd fall straight through the chair.

'Marley' Don't you believe that I'm a ghost?

Andrew No, I don't. You're Vicky.

'Marley' No! I am the ghost of Jacob Marley!

Andrew Jacob Mar – Hang on a second. I know what's going on here. You're telling the story of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, aren't you?

Vicky Yep.

Andrew I knew I recognised it from somewhere. Dad read it to us every Christmas.

Vicky Yep.

Andrew And you've got me being Ebenezer Scrooge, haven't you? The mean, miserable old grump in the story.

Vicky Yep.

Andrew And James was pretending to be Scrooge's clerk, Bob Cratchit.

Vicky Yep.

Andrew But what about the bell rope?

Vicky and James seem not to hear his question.

Bah! I knew what was going on all along.

James No you didn't. You believed it, and were scared.

Andrew Of course I didn't believe it. And I certainly wasn't scared.

Vicky Then you won't be scared to carry on with the story, will you?

Andrew No.No. Of course not.

Beat.

I just don't want to.

James See, you are scared!

Andrew No, I'm not!

Vicky Then ask me why I'm here.

Andrew I don't want to.

Vicky You're scared.

Andrew No, I'm not. Why are you here?

Vicky As Scrooge.

Andrew As Scrooge?

James He's scared.

Andrew No, I'm not.

'Scrooge' Why are you here?

'Marley' Ebenezer Scrooge, I have been here beside you since the day I died.

'Scrooge' Here beside me?!

Vicky Now you've got to ask me why I'm wearing this chain.

Andrew But it's a paper chain.

Vicky Yes, I brought it to decorate the cottage. It's Christmas.

Andrew Jacob Marley doesn't wear a paper chain in the story.

Vicky No, in the story it's a really long iron chain, covered in padlocks and safes and money bags.

Andrew So, why aren't you wearing one of those?

Vicky I left mine at home. So, come on, ask me. 'Why are you wearing that chain?'

Andrew Okay. Why are you wearing that chain?

Vicky As Scrooge.

Andrew As Scrooge?

James See, he is scared.

Andrew No, I'm not.

'Scrooge' Why are you wearing that chain?

'Marley' I have to wear it. Each link is one of the selfish acts I did whilst I was still alive.

'Scrooge' It is a very long chain.

'Marley' I was very selfish. You should see the chain that you are wearing.

Vicky Now ask me why I'm here.

Andrew Why are you here?

Vicky As Scrooge.

Andrew As Scrooge?

James He's definitely scared.

Andrew No, I'm not.

'Scrooge' Why are you here?

'Marley' To warn you. You still have a chance – a chance to change and escape my fate. And, if you do change, as reward I will be set free and finally find peace. If you don't, we will both be in misery foreternity.

'Scrooge' I don't want to be in misery for all eternity! What do I have to do?

'Marley' You will be haunted by three ghosts.

'Scrooge' Actually, I think I'd rather not. Eternity isn't that long. It's not like it's forever.

'Marley' Oh little man! How could you know? Save yourself! And set me free!

'Scrooge' Do I have to see more ghosts?

'Marley' Without their visits you cannot hope to escape my fate.

'Scrooge' Maybe they could come all at once, so I could get it over and done with quickly?

Vicky Andrew, I don't think you're taking this seriously.

Andrew I am, Vicky. I just thought it would be a good shortcut to the end.

'Marley' There is no shortcut to the end. Remember me!

Andrew Don't worry. I'm not going to forget this in a hurry.

'Marley' Save yourself! And set me free!

*The ghost of **'Jacob Marley'** vanishes as mysteriously as it first appeared. As it vanishes...*

Save yourself! And set me free!

'Scrooge' Humbug!

***'Scrooge'** turns around to find an impossibly bright light shining directly in his face. It is **'The Ghost of Christmas Past'**.*

Aargh! Are you the Spirit whose coming was foretold to me?

'Christmas Past' I am.

'Scrooge' Who, or what are you?

'Christmas Past' I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

'Scrooge' Long past?

'Christmas Past' Your past.

'Scrooge' So you're the ghost of all the Christmases I've already had?

'Christmas Past' Absolutely.

'Scrooge' Excuse me, you are very bright. For a ghost.

James It's my camping lantern. I bought it in B&Q. 3.5 million candle power. I'd forgotten I had it in the boot of the car. Do you like it?

Andrew No, I don't like it. Can you turn it off? It's hurting my eyes.

'Christmas Past' Turn it off! Would you turn off the light I can shed on your past?

Andrew Or at least turn it in a different direction.

James Yes. Okay. Sorry.

Andrew Thank you.

'Scrooge' Why are you here, Ghost of Christmas Past?

'Christmas Past' To save you. [*Laying his hand upon 'Scrooge's heart.'*] Bear but a touch of my hand here, and walk with me!

A sprinkle of Christmas magic.

Vicky And as these words are spoken, Scrooge suddenly finds himself in the house in which he was a child.

'Scrooge' I know this room. I remember it well.

'Christmas Past' It is your father's library. Your lip is trembling. And what is that upon your cheek?

Andrew A bit of mayonnaise from the turkey sandwich. Definitely not a tear though.

Andrew goes to the framed photo of himself as a schoolboy.

'Scrooge' Who is this boy, sitting on his own, neglected by his family and friends? And at Christmas of all times.

'Christmas Past' I think you know him better than any of us.

'Scrooge' Is it me?

'Christmas Past' Yes.

'Scrooge' It's me, all those years ago. Hello! Hello, Ebenezer! It's me... er...

you...me... when you're... I'm... you're an old man! Ebenezer, do you see? Hello?

'Christmas Past' He is from the past. He cannot see or hear you.

'Scrooge' What am I doing in that chair?

'Christmas Past' What were you always doing?

'Scrooge' Reading. What else does a boy with no friends do?

'Christmas Past' Now, look...

'Scrooge' I remember this Christmas, the moment I first saw Ali Baba. I was reading all alone and he appeared, just like that. The friend I had been waiting for.

*The figure of **Ali Baba** appears.*

And look, here is the Genie from Aladdin, rising in a column of smoke from the lamp.

*We see the **Genie**.*

And there's the parrot from Treasure Island. 'Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!'

*We see a **Parrot**.*

I had no friends so I dreamed them up. How did I see these things?

'Christmas Past' You imagined them.

'Scrooge' I couldn't have imagined anything so real. I wasn't that clever.

'Christmas Past' The imagination is a powerful thing. If you imagine something hard enough it comes real.

'Scrooge' Humbug.

'Christmas Past' Now look. Look here...

The penetrating light turns on to a coffee table.

Andrew Tell me what I see.

Vicky And just as suddenly as it arrived, the house where Scrooge grew up has disappeared. Now Scrooge is standing inside a warehouse, just as familiar to the old skinflint as his former home had been.

'Christmas Past' Do you know it now?

Andrew Remind me.

'Christmas Past' Why, this is old Fezziwig's warehouse, where you were an apprentice, and learned everything you needed to know about business.

***Vicky** walks a Wotsit on to the coffee table as **Fezziwig**.*

Vicky And here's old Fezziwig himself, bless his heart!

*She walks a second Wotsit on to the table as **Dick Wilkins**.*

And here is your first true friend, Dick Wilkins.

'Fezziwig' Yo ho there! Dick!

'Dick' Merry Christmas, Mr Fezziwig.

'Fezziwig' Where is young Ebenezer, Dick?

'Dick' To be sure, I don't know, Mr Fezziwig. I'll call him. Ebenezer! Ebenezer!! Ebenezer!!!

'Scrooge' Why am I not coming?

James I think you need to do something about that, Andrew.

Andrew What?

James You'll need to get another Wotsit.

Andrew What's that?

James No, Wotsit.

Andrew This is stupid.

James Don't be a spoilsport, Andrew. Please just get another Wotsit.

Andrew Okay.

***Andrew** takes a Wotsit from the bag and walks it on to the table as the 'Young Scrooge'.*

'Young Scrooge' Mr Fezziwig. Dick. Did you call?

'Fezziwig' Ah, there you are, Ebenezer. Still out there all on your own? No more work tonight, Ebenezer. It's time to party. Let's dance!

And dance they do. A riot of bright orange, cheese flavoured, maize-based snacks.

'Scrooge' What occasions those Christmases were! How happy I was!

Vicky And not a television in sight...

Andrew Only because it hadn't been invented yet. It's the olden days. If telly had been invented then the Wotsits would have sat down on the sofa with a tin of Quality Street and –

The Ghost of 'Jacob Marley' appears again.

'Marley' Ebenezer!

'Scrooge' Marley! You again!

'Marley' Listen to what you are being told. Think about it. Please. Save yourself. And set me free.

'Jacob Marley' vanishes.

'Christmas Past' My visit is almost over. Quick! Ask the question that is on your lips.

Andrew Ebenezer Scrooge used to love Christmas. He used to love life. He used to have an imagination. He even had a friend. How did he get to hate so much?

'Christmas Past' He found a new love.

Scrooge's 'Sweetheart' enters.

'Sweetheart' Ebenezer?

'Scrooge' Will you finally marry me, my dear?

'Sweetheart' Ebenezer, you know that we can never be together.

'Scrooge' Why?

'Sweetheart' You have another love.

'Scrooge' I swear that I don't.

'Sweetheart' You have. The love of money. You love money so much that you can no longer love me.

'Scrooge' No. It's not true.

'Sweetheart' Ebenezer, it is true, and if you look deep into your hollow heart you will also know it to be true.

'Scrooge' No.

'Sweetheart' You may be sad now, but soon that will pass. When you come to think of your true love. Money. May you be happy in the life you have chosen.

'Scrooge' No! Don't go! Please!

His 'Sweetheart' vanishes.

Spirit! Why do you show me these things?

'Christmas Past' You cannot blame me for what you see. These are shadows of the things that have been. You chose these Christmases for yourself.

'Scrooge' Take me back. I want to go home.

James turns off his camping lantern. The 'Ghost of Christmas Past' has disappeared.