

Tiny Tim's Christmas Carol

By
Matthew Thompson

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STORY OF THE PLAY

A father tells his young daughter a story of Ebenezer Scrooge on his terrifying and exhilarating journey to discover the true meaning of Christmas. But we do not realize until the end that the characters in this adaptation are more real than ever before. The covetous old miser who finds his heart turns out to be the little girl's Great-Uncle Scrooge, and her father is Tiny Tim, an even kinder, more insightful soul as an adult than he was as a child. This unique adaptation, infused with popular Christmas carols, is sure to make your audience feel alive with holiday spirit.

Premiere Performances

Tiny Tim's Christmas Carol was originally produced by San Diego Playwrights Collective. The show opened November 17, 2012. It was directed by Franklin Landotron.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(All characters are listed here for the purpose of a large cast. Smaller casts can double nearly all of the characters with the exception of Ebenezer Scrooge.)

NARRATOR...A kindly father.
REBECCA...His young daughter.
EBENEZER SCROOGE
BOB CRATCHIT
NEPHEW FRED
CHARITY WORKER #1
CHARITY WORKER #2
MRS. DILBER
MARLEY'S GHOST
GHOST of CHRISTMAS PAST...A young boy.
VERY YOUNG SCROOGE
YOUNG SCROOGE
FAN
FEZZIWIG
GHOST of CHRISTMAS PRESENT
MRS. CRATCHIT
PETER CRATCHIT
MARTHA CRATCHIT
BELINDA CRATCHIT
TINY TIM
TOPPER
JOHN
ELIZABETH
GHOST of CHRISTMAS FUTURE
BELLE
BUSINESS MEN #1, #2, and #3
ENSEMBLE #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, and #6
BOY ON THE STREET

MUSIC can be used wherever appropriate, especially for scene changes. Some carols are suggested within the text.

SETTINGS: 1870s, London, England. Much of the action, however, takes place in the early 1840s.

The counting house of Scrooge and Marley has a small potbellied stove CS. The entrance door is USR. Two counting stools and desks are present. SL is Scrooge's desk, a bit ornate and closer to the stove. A solitary and considerably shorter candle burns on Bob Cratchit's desk SL which is situated quite far from the warm stove.

The Narrator and Rebecca have a special area offset from the counting house. Off to the side is a pile of many oversized books by Charles Dickens. On top is a copy of "A Christmas Carol."

Scrooge's door knocker can be achieved by making the door out of nylon or polyester and having the actor playing Marley press his face against the material. It appears as though the fabric of the door is stretching.

Scrooge's bedroom is upstage with a four-poster bed, chair and side table. A large transparent drape covers the doors that open to the balcony. The lights of a fireplace DS illuminate the room.

The school room has an old school bench sitting center stage.

The old warehouse may look very similar to Scrooge's accounting office.

The Cratchit home has a front door, a dinner table with two long benches sitting CS, and a fireplace on one wall.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: The SOUND of wind is heard. We are in the counting house of Scrooge and Marley. The NARRATOR and REBECCA enter hand in hand, dressed in Victorian English attire. They cross down into a special area offset from the counting house. In their time it is Christmas Day, 1871. They have just come from a funeral, but they are not too sad.)

REBECCA: Father?

NARRATOR: Yes, Rebecca?

REBECCA: I think that Christmas is the best time of the whole year!

NARRATOR: And why is that?

REBECCA: Because it is just the most satisfying! The sense of giving. It's like when Mommy and you give me presents and we go ice skating and when you just hold me in your arms, Daddy. And everyone is so grateful.

NARRATOR: You know, not everyone was always so grateful.

REBECCA: Mr. Scrooge was. He was the kindest, most wonderful man I ever met, besides you, of course.

NARRATOR: Well, it may shock you to learn that Mr. Scrooge was not always like that.

REBECCA: Everyone liked him.

NARRATOR: Yes, but it couldn't have been more ironic than for Mr. Scrooge to pass away on this very special day.

REBECCA: What does ironic mean?

NARRATOR: It means a coincidence.

REBECCA: Oh. *(REBECCA sits in thought for a moment.)*

NARRATOR: Are you feeling all right, my dear?

REBECCA: I was just thinking. Why did he have to die?

NARRATOR: We all pass on, my dear. But it's how we live our lives that define us both here and afterwards.

REBECCA: Then what do we have here, while we still live?

NARRATOR: Glorious beauty.

REBECCA: Am I beautiful?

NARRATOR: *(Smiling and holding HER in his arms.)* Yes, you are, my love.

REBECCA: I think I'm beautiful.

NARRATOR: The world is growing faster and faster. And sometimes it makes life too easy I think.

REBECCA: Easy in what way?

NARRATOR: It's easy for us to forget what things were like, when life was... just a little slower.

REBECCA: Tell me a story. When life was...just a little slower.

NARRATOR: Alright. Let's do that. You pick the story.

REBECCA: Um.... That one. *(SHE points to a book entitled "A Christmas Carol.")*

NARRATOR: Are you sure?

REBECCA: Yes.

NARRATOR: Good choice.

(HE holds the book for a moment and looks to REBECCA who smiles. As he opens the book the LIGHTS change and there are FXs of a thunderstorm. We are in the counting office of Scrooge and Marley. Full LIGHTS up as SCROOGE and CRATCHIT are at their desks.)

REBECCA: Where are we, Father?

NARRATOR: We are in the old counting house of Mr. Jacob Marley and Ebenezer Scrooge. In wealth, the two men were equal, but in life the two men were very different.

REBECCA: Is that the Mr. Marley fellow you have told me about?

NARRATOR: Yes.

REBECCA: Tell the story, Father.

NARRATOR: There are books of which the backs and covers are by far the best parts. But this is a story of the meat of man and aspiring apparitions. So...let us begin.

(We hear the SFX of a ticking clock. FX: Smoke fills the stage as lightning and thunder flash and boom. During the storm, the ENSEMBLE enter with umbrellas humming "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen." They hum this slowly twice.)

(With a tight formation THEY lower their umbrellas as they form a black screen. A projection is cast upon the umbrellas of Jacob Marley's gravestone. As each ensemble member speaks, they pop their head up and pull their umbrellas back behind them. When they are finished with their lines they place the umbrella back in position as part of the "screen." The NARRATOR looks at the book and begins to mouth the words of the ensemble as they speak as if he is reading the book aloud. REBECCA looks onto the scene at hand. After some time the isolated LIGHTS on the Narrator and Rebecca slowly fade out.)

ENSEMBLE #1: He was dead to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that.

ENSEMBLE #2: The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner.

ENSEMBLE #3: Scrooge signed it: and Scrooge's name was good upon change, for anything he chose to put his hand to. Ebenezer Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee.

ENSEMBLE #4: And his sole friend.

ENSEMBLE #5: Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the mournful event, but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnized it with an undoubted bargain.

ALL: Scrooge!

ENSEMBLE #1: A squeezing!

ENSEMBLE #2: Wrenching!

ENSEMBLE #3: Grasping!

ENSEMBLE #4: Scraping!

ENSEMBLE #1 and #2: Clutching!

ENSEMBLE #3 and #4: Covetous!

ALL: Old sinner!

ENSEMBLE #5: Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster.

ENSEMBLE #6: The cold within him froze his old features -

ENSEMBLE #1: Nipped his pointed nose -

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ENSEMBLE #2: Shriveled his cheek -

ENSEMBLE #3: Stiffened his gait.

ENSEMBLE #4: Made his eyes red -

ENSEMBLE #5: His thin lips blue and spoke out shrewdly in
his grating voice -

SCROOGE: (*Voice over.*) Bah! Humbug!

ENSEMBLE #3: He carried his own low temperature always
about with him; he iced his office in the dog days.

ENSEMBLE #4: External heat and cold had little influence
on Scrooge.

ENSEMBLE #5: No warmth could warm.

ENSEMBLE #2: No wintry weather chilled him.

ENSEMBLE #3: No wind that blew was bitterer than he.

ENSEMBLE #6: No falling snow was more intent upon its
purpose.

ENSEMBLE #2: No pelting rain less open to entreaty.

ENSEMBLE #1: Foul weather didn't know where to have
him.

ALL: Once upon a time...

ENSEMBLE #1: Of all the good days in the year...

ENSEMBLE #2 and #4: On Christmas Eve...

ENSEMBLE #3: Old...

ALL: Scrooge...

ENSEMBLE #2: ...Sat busy in his counting-house.

ENSEMBLE #5: Nature lived hard by, and was brewing on a
large scale.

ENSEMBLE #6: Over the years the fire that had at once
been at the center of Scrooge's heart...

ENSEMBLE #2: Had grown oh so dim.

ENSEMBLE #1: But the slight slip of the old man's eyes
were open.

ENTIRE ENSEMBLE: They were always open.

*(The ENSEMBLE peel away, humming "Away in a Manger"
to reveal SCROOGE sitting at his counting desk with a lit
candle. He is hunched over scribbling in his ledger. Alone,
CRATCHIT hums "Away in a Manger"...until Scrooge looks
up from his writing and gives Cratchit a stare.)*

(CRATCHIT stops humming and returns to his work. SCROOGE then turns back to his ledger, counting and writing. Cratchit stands up. Scrooge gives him yet another look; Cratchit sits back down at his desk. Scrooge goes back to his work. Cratchit loiters for a moment, longing to stand near the fire. He gets up, thinks about crossing over to the fire and instead grabs his pea coat.)

SCROOGE: *(Stops, but not looking up.)* The hour is not yet upon us.

CRATCHIT: No sir. I was...just getting my coat.

SCROOGE: *(Going back to his paperwork.)* Hmm.

CRATCHIT: It's quite cold.

SCROOGE: *(Pausing, and looking up.)* It's colder on the streets than by the warmth of the fire.

CRATCHIT: Sir...you have the fire.

SCROOGE: So I do. But you have bricks, mortar, and a pen.

CRATCHIT: Sir?

SCROOGE: As the season draws close, think of your situation. Are not you at the advantage? Isn't that what you should be *thankful* for?

CRATCHIT: *(A ray of hope.)* Yes, of course, sir. Thank you, sir.

SCROOGE: *(Going back to his counting.)* Hmm.

(FRED enters.)

SCROOGE: Close the door. You'll extinguish the fire!

FRED: A Merry Christmas, Uncle! God save you!

SCROOGE: Bah, humbug!

FRED: Christmas a humbug, Uncle? You don't mean that, I am 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: Come, then, Uncle. What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough.

SCROOGE: Bah, humbug!

FRED: Don't be cross, Uncle.

CRATCHIT: He's not cross. He's got a fire.

SCROOGE: What's that?

CRATCHIT: Nothing, sir.

(SCROOGE is buried in his accounting. FRED slowly takes Scrooge's coat that is hanging near the door and is attempting to place it over Cratchit in order to keep him warm. CRATCHIT sees what Fred is trying to do and he silently tries to stop him. A small bit of business. Just before the coat touches Cratchit, Scrooge speaks.)

SCROOGE: *(Without looking up.)* Did you purchase that coat at Mr. Longstaff's?

CRATCHIT: No, sir.

SCROOGE: Because I did.

CRATCHIT: Yes, sir.

(FRED just stands there with the coat. Beat. SCROOGE stops his accounting, and without looking up, walks straight over to Fred, takes the coat out of his hand, hangs it back up and sits back down to his accounting.)

FRED: Uncle, this is a time of good cheer and giving.

SCROOGE: *(Bitter.)* Giving? Bah! *(To himself.)* What else can I be, when I live in such a world of fools as this? *(To the others.)* 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; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you?

FRED: *(Pleading.)* Uncle, please.

SCROOGE: Nephew, please. Keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine.

FRED: Keep it? But you don't keep it.

SCROOGE: Let me leave it alone, then. Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!

FRED: There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time as 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 by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, Uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it.

(CRATCHIT applauds his enthusiasm. SCROOGE gives him a look. Cratchit stops and goes back to his accounting.)

SCROOGE: You're quite a powerful speaker. I wonder you don't go into Parliament.

FRED: Come! Dine with us tomorrow.

SCROOGE: *(Pauses, thinks.)* Why?

FRED: Well, the food is delicious, the children would like to see you and -

SCROOGE: Why, did you get married?

FRED: *(With a smile and calm.)* Because I fell in love.

SCROOGE: Fell in love? *(Chuckles.)* That's the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a Merry Christmas.

FRED: I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?

SCROOGE: Good afternoon!

FRED: I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel, to which I have been a party. But I have made the trial in homage to the holiday, and I'll keep my humor to the last. So, a Merry Christmas, Uncle!

SCROOGE: Good afternoon, Nephew.

FRED: And a Happy New Year to you-

SCROOGE: *(Losing his patience as he mocks him.)* And a Happy New Year! Bah!

(LIGHTS rise on the NARRATOR and REBECCA. SCROOGE returns to his accounting. FRED looks at his uncle with sadness and then puts his hand on CRATCHIT'S shoulder as the two men smile. With one last look at his uncle, Fred exits.)

NARRATOR: And with that, his nephew left the room without a smile, without an angry word, nothing but hope. With the mocking flurry towards his nephew, the old miser did not immediately notice the two very kind and gentle individuals.

CHARITY WORKER #1: *(Clearing his throat.)* Hmm, hmm hmmm.

SCROOGE: *(Stops his work.)* Yes?

CHARITY WORKER #2: Scrooge and Marley's?

SCROOGE: I see London has given you a proper reading education.

CHARITY #1: Have we the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE: But I see that your propensity for history is somewhat lacking.

CHARITY #1: Sir?

SCROOGE: Mr. Marley...has been dead these seven years.

CHARITY #2: Our condolences, sir. We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner.

(CHARITY #2 hands SCROOGE a list of credentials.)

SCROOGE: *(Looking at them for an instant.)* I see. *(HE hands the credentials back to CHARITY WORKER #1 and goes back to his accounting.)*

CHARITY #1: At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is 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, sir.

SCROOGE: Are there no prisons?

CHARITY #2: Plenty of prisons.

SCROOGE: And the union workhouses. Are they still in operation?

CHARITY #1: I wish I could say they were not.

SCROOGE: I'm very glad to hear it.

CHARITY #2: Mr. Scrooge, a few of us are endeavoring to raise a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink and means of warmth.

CHARITY #1: Obviously, we choose this time because it is a time, of all others, when want is keenly felt and abundance rejoices. So, at this time we ask that you open your heart and find what is inside.

CHARITY #2: So, what shall I put you down for?

SCROOGE: Nothing.

(Beat. The two CHARITY WORKERS look at each other.)

CHARITY #1: *(Thinking that he understands.)* Oh! You wish to be anonymous!

SCROOGE: I wish to be left alone!

CHARITY #2: But, sir.

SCROOGE: Since you ask me what I wish, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to support the establishments I have mentioned - they cost enough; and those who are badly off must go there.

CHARITY #2: Many can't go there; and many would rather die.

SCROOGE: If they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.

CHARITY #1: Do you understand what you are saying, Mr. Scrooge?

SCROOGE: *(Interrupting.)* I understand that it is not my business. It's enough for one man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon!

(As the CHARITY WORKERS begin to walk out, CRATCHIT stops them and gives them a coin.)

CHARITY #1: *(To CRATCHIT.)* God bless you.
CRATCHIT: Merry Christmas.

(CHARITY WORKERS exit.)

SCROOGE: *(Without looking up from his work.)* So, is that what you do with the raise I give you?
CRATCHIT: Sir... You've never given me a raise.
SCROOGE: *(Goes back to his accounting.)* Hmmmm.

(The CHORUS sings "God Bless You Merry, Gentlemen." The singing can be heard offstage, just outside the office. The LIGHTS in Scrooge and Marley's office slowly grow dim as a special light illuminates NARRATOR and REBECCA. After a single verse the NARRATOR speaks over the singing.)

REBECCA: *That* Mr. Scrooge didn't seem to like people very much.
NARRATOR: Sometimes people are just misunderstood.
REBECCA: What does he not understand?
NARRATOR: The power of giving and selflessness.
REBECCA: He looks very lonely.
NARRATOR: Yes, I would imagine so.
REBECCA: What happened next?

(Reading the book.)

NARRATOR: In the main street at the corner of the court, some laborers were repairing the gas pipes, and had lighted a great fire in a brazier, round which a party of ragged men and boys were gathered, warming their hands and winking their eyes before the blaze in rapture.
REBECCA: Why didn't they just go home?
NARRATOR: They didn't have a home to go to. They were sad because the streets are their home.
REBECCA: Was everyone sad?
NARRATOR: No. Not everyone.

(We hear the SFX of a bustling London street. As the NARRATOR reads, the ENSEMBLE cross the stage, miming conversations.)

NARRATOR: *(Turning to the book again.)* The brightness of the shops where holly sprigs and berries crackled in the lamp heat of the windows made pale faces ruddy as they passed. Poulterers' and grocers' trades became a splendid joke; a glorious pageant, with which it was next to impossible to believe that such dull principles as bargain and sale had anything to do. The Lord Mayor, in the stronghold of the mighty Mansion House, gave orders to his fifty cooks and butlers to keep Christmas as a Lord Mayor's household should; and even the little tailor, whom he had fined five shillings on the previous Monday for being drunk and bloodthirsty in the streets, stirred up tomorrow's pudding in his garret, while his lean wife and the baby sallied out to buy the beef. And all the while sat Bob Cratchit upon his stool, readying for the hour to strike.

(The LIGHTS cross fade back to Scrooge and Marley. SFX: The town clock strikes five. LIGHTS on the NARRATOR and REBECCA fade out and they exit. CRATCHIT immediately stands up. SCROOGE gives him a look, as he goes back to his work.)

CRATCHIT: It's five o'clock, sir.

SCROOGE: Not according to my clock.

CRATCHIT: The town clock is never wrong.

SCROOGE: Are you calling me a liar?

CRATCHIT: No, sir. But I might have hoped that you would find it in your heart to let me off work a little bit early.

(SCROOGE does not look up, until he finishes his writing. A long pause.)

SCROOGE: Why?

CRATCHIT: *(With a smile on his face.)* Well, sir, isn't it obvious?

End of Freeview

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