

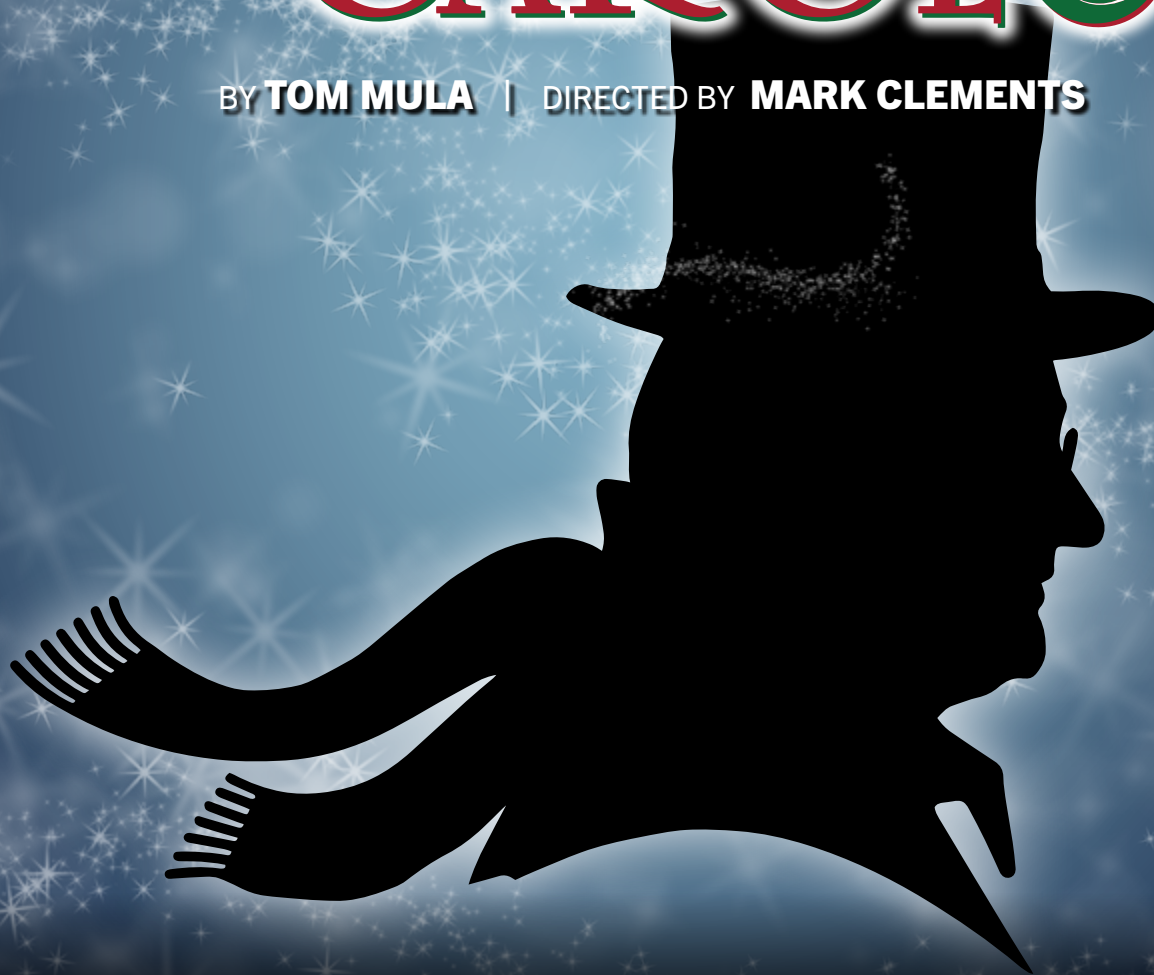
DECEMBER 1 - 24, 2020 | QUADRACCI POWERHOUSE

JAY FRANKE AND DAVID HERRO PRESENT

PLAY
GUIDE

JACOB MARLEY'S
CHRISTMAS
CAROL 45

BY **TOM MULA** | DIRECTED BY **MARK CLEMENTS**



MILWAUKEE
REP

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Synopsis



Marley in the Afterlife

Our story begins with Jacob Marley in a counting house and the classic beginning of *A Christmas Carol*:
“Marley was dead to begin with.”

This counting house is not the one audiences may be familiar with as the business place of Marley and his partner Scrooge, but the counting house in the afterlife, where people’s deeds are tallied and their fates decided.

The Record Keeper at the counting house tells Marley that he has not fulfilled his contract in life and Marley is covered in the chains of the burdens of his earthly actions. Marley tries to object, but the Record Keeper transforms into a powerful celestial being, flinging Marley out into the dark to learn his lesson.

Marley awakens in hell, with singing ringing in his ears. A miniature version of himself flies out of his ear, The Bogle, his supervisor and helpmate on his journey through the afterlife. Bogle shows Marley some of the horrors of hell and then transports him to London. In London, they see the helping angels that surround each person and Bogle informs Marley that all of his angels gave up on him. As they look at London from above, they see that Death walks with each person every day. Bogle then reveals to Marley that he can apply for a transfer and Marley jumps at the opportunity.

The two companions return to the counting house and Marley agrees to a new assignment before getting all of the details. He is now tasked

with making Scrooge, his former business partner, have a “total and complete change of heart.” This is a tall task considering Scrooge is a more miserable human being than Marley was in life and they only have 24 hours to complete the assignment.

Saving Scrooge

Marley and Bogle arrive at Scrooge’s counting house just as he is berating Bob Cratchit about his request for a day off for Christmas. Marley is struggling with ideas for Scrooge’s redemption until Bogle drops multiple hints about “spirits.” Marley appears to Scrooge in his home that evening, hamming it up and playing the spooky spirit. Unfortunately, Scrooge is cruel and questions Marley, crushing Marley’s confidence in his plan.

Marley and Bogle devise a plan to take Scrooge back to his past, just as audiences remember from the traditional story of *A Christmas Carol*. As Marley and Bogle pursue their plan, the story takes a different turn, and redemption and the eternal souls of both Scrooge and Marley are on the line.

Characters

Jacob Marley

A stingy and miserable businessman experiencing the consequences of his actions in the afterlife.

Record Keeper

The administrator of the afterlife who tabulates the deeds of humans as they arrive and assigns them to their fates.

Bogle

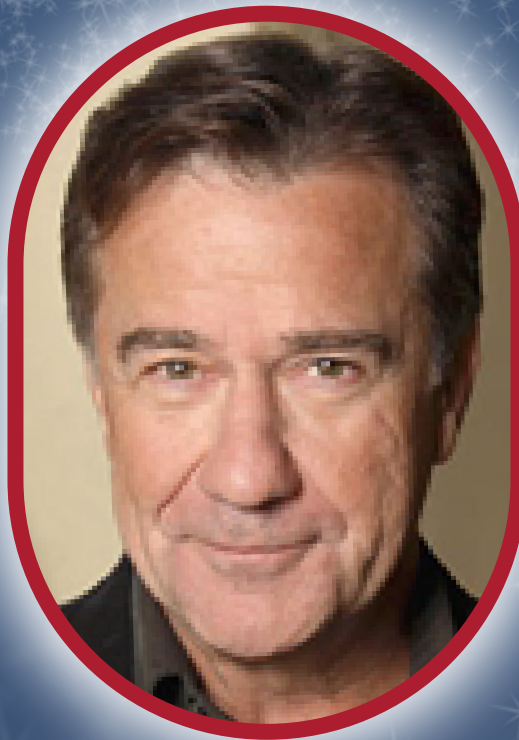
A demon/helper in the afterlife. Miniature version of Marley who guides him during his journey.

A Damned Woman

A woman whose vanity and greed in life is mirrored in her burdens in the afterlife.

Cratchit

Scrooge's hard-working and put-upon clerk; a family man who does what he must do to provide for the people he loves.



Lee E. Ernst

Scrooge

A nasty, miserly, horrible person whose redemption seems unlikely as his spirit is so dark.

Christmas Past

An incarnation of Dickens' classic Artful Dodger, a young and charming street child.

Young Marley

A sad and lonely boy who wants nothing more than to be loved and cared for by his father.

Christmas Present

In line with the traditional depiction of Christmas Present, he is jolly and larger than life, full of the joy of Christmas Spirit.

Christmas Future

A shrouded, silent spirit whose darkness reveals the horrors of a life with an unchanged heart.

The Life and Works of Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens was born on February 7, 1812 in Portsmouth, England to John and Elizabeth Dickens. Dickens' father worked as a clerk at the Navy Pay Office, but landed himself in debtors' prison when Dickens was only twelve. This left young Dickens to provide for his family, working in Warren's Blacking Factory. The experiences in the factory haunted him for the rest of his life and influenced his later written work.

In 1829, Dickens became a reporter at Doctors' Common Court in Parliament. By 1832, he was a successful debate reporter in the House of Commons. He then became a newspaper reporter. The following year, his first short story appeared and was followed soon thereafter by several other stories and sketches.

Dickens met Catherine Hogarth in 1835 and married her in 1836. He published the first series of *Sketches by Boz* in the same year. In November 1837, Dickens published the first of his serialized work, *The Pickwick Papers*. *The Pickwick Papers'* monthly publications were greatly successful, and Dickens embarked on his career as a full-time novelist.

Dickens began quickly producing written work with *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and several other books being published in just a few years. In 1842, he visited Canada and the United States; there he advocated for international copyright laws and the abolition of slavery. While Dickens found many things about the United States unfavorable, he toured the U.S. again with his works towards the end of his life.

In 1843, Dickens published *A Christmas Carol* as part of a Christmas book series. It was an instant classic and sold 6,000 copies in less than a week. Between travels, writing, and the births of his ten children, Dickens had much to occupy his time, but in 1858, he began touring public readings of his works. In the same year, he separated from his wife to live with Ellen Ternan, an actress working in his theatrical company.

In the last decade of his life, Dickens embarked on several reading tours and continued to write. Despite health complications, he continued to travel until he collapsed from a stroke in 1869. Dickens' final readings took place in London in 1870. Dickens died June 9, 1870 after suffering another stroke. His final novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, remains unfinished.



Charles Dickens. Photo Credit: Getty Images.

The Enduring Legacy of *A Christmas Carol*

A Christmas Carol met great success upon its publication in 1843, and its enduring legacy has extended long past Dickens' lifetime. *A Christmas Carol* has shaped our views of the Christmas holiday by giving us memorable characters and profound, heartfelt stories that radiate the meaning of the holiday season. Less than a year after its release as a novella, multiple theater producers turned the story into a play, and in 1853 Dickens toured public readings of the piece.

Continuing as a Christmas classic for 160 years, *A Christmas Carol* has since been adapted into multiple mediums ranging from films to television show episodes, comics, and other literary adaptations. Adaptations of this classic tale number in the hundreds or perhaps thousands. The themes of goodwill, charity, and the power of the Christmas spirit have made *A Christmas Carol* an appealing story for many different audiences and interpretations.

Select Film Adaptations

Scrooge, or Marley's Ghost (1901)
The Right to Be Happy (1916)
A Christmas Carol (1938)
Scrooge (1951)
Scrooge (1970 musical)
Mickey's Christmas Carol (1983)
Scrooged (1988)
The Muppet Christmas Carol (1992)
Disney's A Christmas Carol (2009)

Michael Caine and his famous co-stars, *A Muppet Christmas Carol*, 1992.
Photo Credit: Walt Disney Co.

Select Television Adaptations

Dozens of television shows have done episodes that are based on the story of *A Christmas Carol* such as *Mr. Belvedere*, *A Different World*, *Dr. Who*, *The Simpsons*, *The Jetsons*, *The Odd Couple*, *Sanford and Son*, and many more.

Mr. Magoo's Christmas Carol (1962)
A Flintstones Christmas Carol (1994)
An American Christmas Carol (1979)
Ms. Scrooge (1997)
A Carol Christmas (2003)
A Christmas Carol (2019)

Andy Serkis in *A Christmas Carol*, 2019.
Photo Credit: Robert Viglasky, FX.

On Stage

Theaters around the world present adaptations of *A Christmas Carol* on their stages each year. A few interesting adaptations:

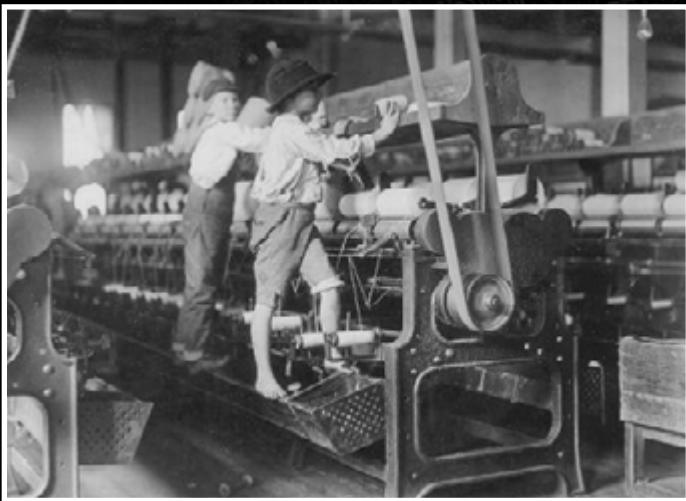
The Gospel According to Scrooge (Historic State Theater)
The Scrooge Diary (touring)
A Christmas Carol (one-man show starring Patrick Stewart)
Scrooge: The Musical (UK)

A Christmas Carol: The Musical (Broadway)
Scrooge in Love! (San Francisco)
An Actor's Carol (California)
The Passion of Scrooge (opera)

Social Issues in Victorian England

The Victorian era is named for Queen Victoria, England's second longest reigning monarch, who ruled from 1837 to 1901. Regarded as a great leader, Queen Victoria worked to improve the lives of the poor, expand education, and secure England's place as an economic and industrial superpower. Even though Victoria was a strong ruler, many of her subjects led difficult lives, as poverty, poor working conditions, and disease were commonplace.

During this era, Britain underwent a period of rapid urbanization, with the urban population exceeding the rural population by 1851. Much of this change was due to Britain's Industrial Revolution, resulting in many working class members finding jobs in factories. Unfortunately, workers in the factories suffered from poor working conditions ranging from a sixty-four hour work week, meager salaries, dangerous work environments, child labor, and no repercussions for abuses.



Child textile workers. Photo Credit: Victorian-era.org

Cities were not prepared for this amount of growth, resulting in limited housing options and inadequate living conditions. London was particularly overcrowded, and many people turned to charity for assistance with housing, food, and daily needs. The poorest members of society such as orphans, disabled, and elderly people were sent to workhouses if they could not provide shelter and

food for themselves. Conditions in the workhouses were difficult, and children were often separated from their parents. Public sanitation was insufficient, making waterborne diseases like cholera common. Lack of proper medical information and pollution of the Thames River led to the spread of disease.



A poor Victorian family. Photo Credit: Youtube.

Much of the working class did not have access to educational advancement, as schooling was only for wealthy families. Many poor children worked in factories, as Victorian families were often large with many mouths to feed. For those who could afford an education, it was often with a boarding school for boys and in-home governesses for girls. Boarding schools were strict, and teachers disciplined students with a firm hand in order to maintain order and establish authority. Dickens criticized many of these social problems in his works. From the portrayal of the lives of the working class in *Hard Times*, to the poor Cratchit family in *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens drew attention to the problems of the lower classes with his stories. As a popular and prolific author, Dickens' pen gave voice to those without much power of their own.

Victorian slums. Photo Credit: [Wellcome Trust](https://www.wellcome-trust.org/), [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/).

Victorian Holiday Traditions

The Victorian era was a time when many of the “classic” Christmas traditions emerged in British and American culture. The emerging wealth and growing middle class from the rise of the Industrial Revolution led to more freedom to celebrate the holidays. Many people were now able to take off work on Christmas and the following Boxing Day, leading to a growth in the importance of Christmas in English culture.

Gift Giving

At the beginning of Victoria’s reign, toys and other gifts were mostly reserved for the wealthy, but with the advent of mass production, presents were more available to a wider audience. The poor filled their children’s Christmas stockings (which became popular around 1870) with apples, oranges, and nuts.



Victorian Christmas gifts. Photo Credit: Camden Watch Company blog.

Santa Claus

In England, Father Christmas was originally part of a midwinter celebration of the return of spring. In the later 1800s, Father Christmas merged with the Dutch figure of Sinter Klass, and became known as Santa Claus, complete with the gift giving, reindeer, and sleigh.



Father Christmas. Photo Credit: <https://www.historic-uk.com/>

Christmas Crackers

Christmas crackers, which are a standard British holiday tradition, but less popular in the U.S., also arrived during this period. Candymaker Tom Smith found that his holiday sweets were even more popular when wrapped in fancy paper and accompanied with small prizes, paper hats, and the signature bang! The popping of Christmas crackers is a beloved treat at British Christmas dinner tables.



Christmas card depicting children pulling a Christmas cracker.
Photo Credit: Victoria and Albert Museum.

Christmas Trees

Christmas trees became popular in England through the traditions of Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert. Albert's German tradition of the Christmas tree came with him when the two married and the example set by the royals trickled down to the masses.



The royal family with their Christmas tree from *Godey's Lady's Book*, 1850. Photo Credit: Wikipedia.

Christmas Cards

In 1840 the "Penny Post" was created in England, allowing people to send a letter or card anywhere in Britain for the cost of a penny stamp. Sir Harold Cole took advantage of this in 1843 when he had 1,000 Christmas postcards printed for sale in his shop in London. Later in the century, the advent of a halfpenny postage rate made sending cards at Christmas time even more popular and easy.



19th century Christmas card published by C. Goodall & Son. Photo Credit: Victoria and Albert Museum.



Story Theater Style

Rehearsal for early *Story Theatre* production. Photo Credit: ViolaSpolin.org.

Jacob Marley's Christmas Carol follows a long tradition of one-person shows here at Milwaukee Rep, but also uses a theatrical style known as "story theater."

Story theater originated with an eponymous play by Paul Sills and collaborators that premiered on Broadway during the 1970-1971 season. Sills devised the play and its subsequent "sequels" using techniques developed by his mother, Viola Spolin, considered a pioneer in the world of theatrical improvisation. In developing *Story Theatre*, Sills and his collaborators took fairy tales, folktales, and fables and brought them to life using improvisation techniques. During the devising process, they created a unique theatrical style with its own conventions that has been utilized in many ways in the ensuing fifty years.

Conventions of Story Theater

- **Simple props are used in multiple ways.**
- **Narration is important**, but is often said in third person by the characters themselves, ie:
MARLEY
Marley felt a bit dizzy, felt a change in his eyes, and as he blinked, hard, to clear his vision, the world before him doubled, tripled in population.
- **Actors play multiple roles.**
- **Scenery is simple:** often cubes, chairs, or benches function as multiple locations.
- **Base costumes are simple.** Actors change characters by adding pieces such as hats, cloaks, or scarves.
- **Cast members produce sound effects** using their own voices, bodies, or instruments.
- **Pantomime is used** often to portray props and places that are not indicated with physical objects.
- **Actors (when there is more than one cast member) remain onstage** and create scenery with their bodies, move any basic props, and create the ambience of the show.

A Christmas Carol: **A Milwaukee Rep Tradition**

**Milwaukee Rep has been delighting audiences in our community
with an annual production of *A Christmas Carol* for 45 years.
Take a look back at this Milwaukee tradition.**



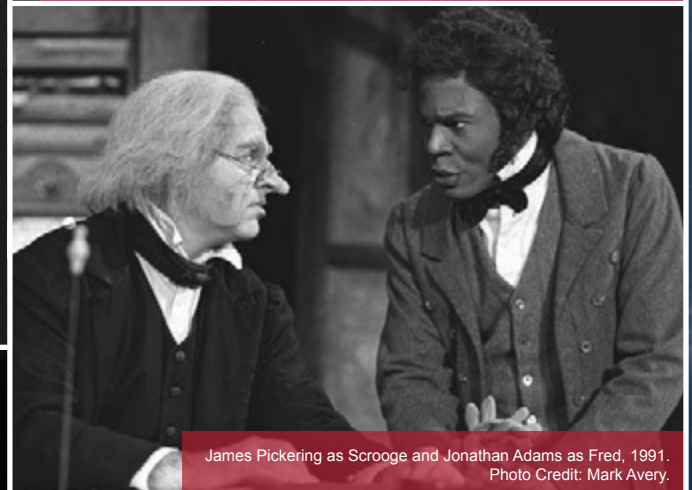
Ensemble members dancing at Fezziwig's party, 1977. Photo Credit: Mark Avery.



L. Peter Callender as the Ghost of Christmas Present, 1985. Photo Credit: Mark Avery.



Richard Halverson as Mr. Throttle and George Anagnostopoulos as Boy Scrooge, 1988. Photo Credit: Mark Avery.



James Pickering as Scrooge and Jonathan Adams as Fred, 1991.
Photo Credit: Mark Avery.



Jonathan Smoots as Scrooge and Jonathan Wainwright (in background) as Bob Cratchit, 2015. Photo Credit: Michael Brosilow.



Cast perform closing of the play, 2016. Photo Credit: Michael Brosilow.



VISITING MILWAUKEE REP

Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Patty and Jay Baker Theater Complex is located in the Associated Bank River Center downtown at the corner of Wells and Water Streets. The building was formerly the home of the Electric Railway and Light Company.

The Ticket Office is visible on the left upon entering the Wells Street doors. The Quadracci Powerhouse is located on the Mezzanine and can be accessed via escalator or elevator.

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Advance the art of theater with productions that inspire individuals and create community dialogue.

Provide a richer theater experience by hosting Rep-in-Depth, TalkBacks and creating PlayGuides to better inform our audiences about our productions.

Educate over 20,000 students at 200+ schools in the greater Milwaukee area with Rep Immersion Day experiences, student matinees, workshops, tours and by making connections with their school curriculum through classroom programs such as Reading Residencies.

Maintain our commitment to audiences with special needs through our Access Services that include American Sign Language interpreted productions, captioned theater, infrared listening systems and script synopses to ensure that theater at Milwaukee Rep is accessible to all.

Educate the next generation of theater professionals with our EPR Program which gives newly degreed artists a chance to hone their skills at Milwaukee Rep as they begin to pursue their theatrical careers. We value our supporters and partnerships and hope that you will help us to expand the ways Milwaukee Rep has a positive impact on theater and on our Milwaukee community.

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