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MILWAUKEE

**November 27–December 24, 2012**

Wells Fargo proudly presents The Rep's production of

# A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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## A CHRISTMAS CAROL STUDY GUIDE

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**Milwaukee Repertory Theater**  
108 E. Wells Street  
Milwaukee, WI • 53202

Wells Fargo proudly presents  
The Rep's production of

# A CHRISTMAS CAROL

By Charles Dickens

Adapted by Joseph Hanreddy and Edward Morgan

Directed by Aaron Posner

**November 27–December 24**

Pabst Theater



### MARK'S TAKE:

"A Christmas Carol is an integral part of our season each year, and we are so fortunate to be able to perform it in the beautiful Pabst Theater. It warms my heart to see so many families attend this iconic holiday production, and to hear their stories of what it has meant to them over the years. It really has become Wisconsin's favorite holiday tradition."

**-Mark Clements, Artistic Director**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Page 3</b>	The Life and Work of Charles Dickens
<b>Page 4</b>	Synopsis
<b>Page 6</b>	Social Issues in Victorian England
<b>Page 7</b>	Themes
<b>Page 8</b>	Winter Holidays Around The World
<b>Page 9</b>	The Enduring Legacy Of A Christmas Carol
<b>Page 10</b>	Making the Rep Production
<b>Page 11</b>	The Pabst
<b>Page 12</b>	Visiting The Rep



# The Life and Work of Charles Dickens

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

In 1829, Dickens became a reporter at Doctor's Commons Courts, and by 1832, he was a successful reporter of debates in the House of Commons. He then became a newspaper reporter. In the following year, his first short story appeared and was followed very soon thereafter by several other stories and sketches.



Charles Dickens

## CHARLES DICKENS' Most Famous Writings

*The Pickwick Papers*, 1836-37

*Oliver Twist*, 1837-39

*Nicholas Nickleby*, 1838-39

*A Christmas Carol*, 1843

*David Copperfield*, 1849-50

*A Tale of Two Cities*, 1859

*Great Expectations*, 1860-61

*The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, 1870

He met Catherine Hogarth in 1835, marrying her in 1836. He published the first series of *Sketches by Boz* in that year and then began publishing the first of his serialized novels, *The Pickwick Papers*, which appeared in monthly parts through November of 1837. *The Pickwick Papers* met great success, and Dickens embarked on a career as a full-time novelist.

During this time, Dickens produced works at a rapid pace, publishing *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and several other books in a period of just a few years. In 1842, he visited Canada and the United States, where he advocated for international copyright laws and the abolition of slavery. While Dickens found many things about the United States unfavorable, he toured his works to the U.S. again towards the end of his life.

Published in 1843 as part of a series of Christmas books, *A Christmas Carol* became an instant classic and sold 6,000 copies in less than a week. Between travels, writing, and the births of his ten children, Charles Dickens had much to occupy his time, but in 1858, he began touring public readings of his works. In that year he also separated from his wife and took up with an actress, Ellen Ternan, whom he had worked with in his theatrical company.

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



A selection of Dickens' novels

# SYNOPSIS



Scrooge and Marley's Ghost

## Christmas Eve

The play begins with Charles Dickens' original words: "Marley was dead: to begin with." In Scrooge's counting house, where the sign "Scrooge and Marley" hangs outside, Ebenezer Scrooge works in his cold, dim office on Christmas Eve with his clerk Bob Cratchit. Two philanthropists visit Scrooge, asking him to donate money to charity. Scrooge denies them any contributions, pointing out that he already pays taxes for prisons and workhouses. Fred, Scrooge's nephew, arrives to invite Scrooge to his home for Christmas dinner. Rudely declining the invitation, Scrooge insists that Fred leave and take his Christmas joy with him. Scrooge resentfully grants Bob Cratchit Christmas Day off, and heads home.

Scrooge arrives home and the knocker on his front door transforms into the face of his deceased business partner, Jacob Marley. Startled, Scrooge does not trust what he sees. Later, Jacob Marley's ghost appears to Scrooge in his bedroom. Draped in shackles and chains of greed, Jacob Marley warns Scrooge that three spirits will visit him before the night is over and that Scrooge must listen to them if he hopes to escape the fate that Marley endures.



Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Past

## Christmas Past

As the clock strikes midnight, the Ghost of Christmas Past appears before Scrooge. The ghost transports Scrooge to the Christmases of his past. First they travel to Scrooge's childhood, where he sees his beloved sister, Fan, coming to take a young Scrooge home for Christmas after being alone at boarding school. Next, Scrooge sees himself as a young man at a company Christmas party with his old employer, Mr. Fezziwig, and remembers when he asked Belle to marry him even though they would live a hard life with little money. This moment warms Scrooge's heart until he relives the decision he made to leave behind a community of family and warmth in the Fezziwigs in order to make more money. Before returning home, the Ghost of Christmas Past shows Scrooge himself as a young man letting his fiancée, Belle, slip away because he came to value money more than her. Scrooge is heartbroken as Christmas Past returns him to his bedroom.



## Christmas Present

Back in bed, Scrooge awakens to the Ghost of Christmas Present. The ghost whisks Scrooge to the Cratchits' household as the family gathers for their humble Christmas dinner. The ghost tells Scrooge that Tiny Tim, Bob Cratchit's sick son, will die if nothing changes. The news troubles Scrooge and he demands to know what can be done to spare Tiny Tim. The ghost will not answer. Bob Cratchit proposes a toast in honor of Scrooge, saying that Scrooge is alone with no cheer in life, and therefore less fortunate than the impoverished Cratchit family. Cratchit's kindness moves Scrooge. The Ghost of Christmas Present then takes Scrooge to his nephew's house where friends and family play games and make fun of Scrooge for his cold attitude. Their time together fading, Christmas Present reminds Scrooge of society's troubles, showing him two figures: want and ignorance.



Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Present

## Christmas Future

The Ghost of Christmas Future appears and Scrooge and the ghost visit two businessmen discussing an old man's death. Scrooge watches and questions the ghost about what he sees, but the ghost does not respond. Instead, he shows people pawing off the property of the deceased man. Scrooge realizes the dead man is himself. Finally, the Ghost of Christmas Future shows Scrooge the funeral of Tiny Tim. Scrooge feels helpless, and begs for a second chance. Without a word, the ghost leaves.



Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Future

## Christmas Day

Scrooge awakens invigorated with a newfound Christmas spirit. Surprising everyone with Christmas cheer, Scrooge purchases a prize turkey for the Cratchit family and tells his nephew he would like to join him for Christmas dinner. The next morning at work, Scrooge gives Bob Cratchit a raise and promises to help the Cratchit family. Filled with newfound spirit, Scrooge donates money to the poor, and vows to do so every Christmas. Scrooge regains his humanity and pledges to keep his giving spirit throughout the rest of his life.



Scrooge and Bob Cratchit

# SOCIAL ISSUES IN VICTORIAN ENGLAND



Queen Victoria, 1887



*A Court for King Cholera*, political cartoon by John Leech, 1852



Illustration from *Hard Times*, 1854

The Victorian era is named for Queen Victoria, England's longest reigning monarch, who ruled from 1837 to 1901. Regarded as a great monarch, Queen Victoria worked to improve the life 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 the industrialization of Britain's economy, leading to work for many in factories. Unfortunately, workers in the factories suffered from poor working conditions ranging from a sixty-four hour work week, meagre salaries, dangerous work environments, child labor, and no repercussions for abuses.

Cities were not prepared for this amount of growth, so housing was scarce and living conditions were inadequate. London was particularly overcrowded, and many people turned to charity for assistance with housing, food, and daily needs. Public sanitation lagged behind other areas that had been modernized, so water-borne diseases like cholera were common. Lack of proper medical information and pollution of the Thames River led to the spread of disease.

Much of the working class did not have access to educational advancement, as schooling was only for those with money. Many poor children were sent to work in factories, as Victorian families were often large with many mouths to feed. For those who could afford schooling, it often took the form of boarding schools for boys and in-home governesses for girls. Boarding schools were strict, and teachers treated students with a very firm hand in order to ensure academic achievement.

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 novels and stories. As a popular and prolific author, Dickens' pen gave voice to those without much power of their own.



A Victorian family making matchboxes

## Memory and the Past

Through the ghosts' magic, Scrooge is able to access his past memories, as well as current scenes from the lives of those around him. Through this bit of Christmas magic, he is better able to understand his own life and choices. In the end, reliving his memories and reclaiming his past help him to create a better future.

**"I have told you, these are but shadows of things that have been. They are what they are, do not blame me."**

- Ghost of Christmas Past

### Questions

- Which memories are most difficult for Scrooge to relive? Why?
- The audience does not get the whole story of Scrooge's family or his relationship with Belle. What do you think happened with these people in Scrooge's past?
- Do you think it is important for us reflect on our pasts? Why is it sometimes difficult to do so?

**"Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in they must lead; but if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. And should my course change, then might my end be different!?"**

- Scrooge

## Forgiveness and Redemption

In the play, Scrooge transforms from a money-pinching miser into a generous, loving person. After his experiences with the ghosts, Scrooge realizes that he can change his future by caring for and understanding others. This, however, requires forgiveness from those Scrooge has wronged.

### Questions

- Why is Scrooge given a second chance to choose a different path for his life? Do you think Scrooge deserved another chance?
- Why do you think characters like Fred and the Cratchits are willing to forgive Scrooge?
- How can forgiveness impact others in our lives?

## Greed and Generosity

Early in the play, Scrooge refuses to donate money to the poor and is wholly focused on his own wealth. He is selfish and uncaring towards others, even his own family. At the end of the play, he becomes a more generous man and gives of his wealth and his heart, understanding the true meaning of Christmas.

### Questions

- When and why does Scrooge allow greed to overtake his life? What events in his past led to that change?
- Throughout his visits with the ghosts, Scrooge begins to feel remorse for being greedy. How does this self-realization change Scrooge as a person?
- Scrooge makes an impact in his community at the end of the play. What can you do to make a change in your own community?

**"I wish to be left alone. I don't make myself merry at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry. My taxes help to support the establishments I have mentioned: they cost enough, and those who are badly off must go there."**

- Scrooge



# WINTER HOLIDAYS AROUND THE WORLD



Children light the Hanukkah *menorah*

Christmas is not the only holiday people celebrate during the winter months. There are many different festivals and holidays that celebrate the season. While some traditions such as St. Lucia Day (Sweden), Las Posadas (Mexico), and St. Nicholas Day (Europe) are extensions of the Christmas celebration, holidays in the wintertime are as varied as the cultures and peoples of our world.

**Hanukkah** is the Jewish “festival of light” which lasts eight days and nights. Families light a special candleholder called a menorah, eat special foods, give gifts or money to children, contribute to charity and play special games.



A Diwali celebration in Pakistan

**Diwali** is a five-day festival celebrated in India and other countries, celebrating the beginning of winter and the end of the harvest season. During the festival, families light clay oil lamps, watch fireworks, create beautiful patterns on their floors with colored sand or powder (rangoli), and share time with family.



A family lights the Kwanzaa *kinara*

**Bodhi Day** is a Buddhist celebration of the enlightenment of Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha). People observe the holiday through meditation, readings, and sometimes the eating of special foods.

**Kwanzaa** is a week-long African-American and Pan-African holiday derived from an ancient African harvest festival. Families decorate their homes with fruits and vegetables, wear special clothing, light candles on a special candleholder called a kinara, and spend time with family celebrating African culture.

**Winter Solstice** is the shortest day of the year and in many parts of the world, there are celebrations ranging from parades to bonfires to candlelight rituals and a variety of other events. Solstice celebrations have endured since ancient times; many of the other holidays that are celebrated during this time originated from celebrations of this day.



A Chinese New Year parade

**New Year's Celebrations** are an important part of many cultures around the world. Whether one is celebrating by watching the ball drop in Times Square, enjoying a Chinese New Year parade, or savoring soba noodles in Japan, the New Year is a time when families and friends come together to celebrate the past and hope for good fortune in the year ahead.



# A CHRISTMAS CAROL'S ENDURING LEGACY

*A Christmas Carol* met great success upon its publishing in 1843 and its enduring legacy has extended long past Dickens' lifetime. Continuing as a Christmas classic for 160 years, *A Christmas Carol* has shaped our views of the Christmas holiday. Less than a year after its release as a novella, the story was turned into a stage play by multiple theater producers, and in 1853, Dickens began to tour public readings of the piece.

*A Christmas Carol* has had many different adaptations over the years, from films to stage plays to television show episodes to comics to other literary versions. The themes of goodwill, charity, and the power of the Christmas spirit have made *A Christmas Carol* an appealing story for many different mediums.

## Film Adaptations

*Scrooge, or, Marley's Ghost*  
(1901)

*A Christmas Carol*  
(1935, 1938, 1984)

*Scrooge*  
(1951, 1970: musical adaptation)  
*An American Christmas Carol*  
(1979)

*Mickey's Christmas Carol*  
(1983)

*Scrooged*  
(1988)

*The Muppet Christmas Carol*  
(1992)

*Disney's A Christmas Carol*  
(2009)



*Scrooge*, 1970

## Television Shows Featuring *A Christmas Carol* Themed Episodes

*Mister Magoo's Christmas Carol*  
(1962)

*Bewitched*  
(1967)

*The Odd Couple*  
(1970)

*Sanford and Son*  
(1975)

*Six Million Dollar Man*  
(1976)

*WKRP in Cincinnati*  
(1980)

*Family Ties*  
(1982)

*Highway to Heaven*  
(1984)

*The Jetsons*  
(1985)

*Quantum Leap*  
(1990)

*A Flintstones' Christmas Carol*  
(1994)

*Doctor Who*  
(2010)



*An American Christmas Carol*, 1979.



*The Muppet Christmas Carol*, 1992.



*A Flintstones' Christmas Carol*, 1994



*Disney's A Christmas Carol*, 2009.



"A Christmas Carol," *Doctor Who*, 2010.

# MAKING THE REP PRODUCTION

The Rep's prop shop constructed the goose and turkey featured in the Christmas feasts from scratch.

The magic candle in Scrooge's bedroom uses six bulbs to create two different flames. It also contains two computer chips and is operated by a two-channel remote-controlled dimmer.

The cast of *A Christmas Carol* completes over 150 costume changes during each performance.

The costume shop staff does over 100 costume and wig fittings for the cast of *A Christmas Carol* to prepare for the show.

The Cast of *A Christmas Carol*. Photo by Michael Brosilow



# THE PABST

**Over 150 sound cues and 24 wireless microphones are used to create the sound in *A Christmas Carol*.**

**The children's cast comes from all over the Milwaukee area and is selected from auditions at The Rep.**

**This production marks the 38th annual staging of *A Christmas Carol* at Milwaukee Rep!**

**Over twenty children are part of the children's cast of this production.**

*A Christmas Carol* is performed in the historic Pabst Theater, a City of Milwaukee Landmark, a State of Wisconsin Historical Site, and a National Historic Landmark. Built in 1895 by Captain Frederick Pabst and designed by Otto Strack, the Pabst Theater has long been a central part of the Milwaukee arts scene. The theater evokes a time when Milwaukee was known as "Deutsche Athen," or the German Athens, reflecting the era in which Milwaukee was a center of German cultural life in America.

When it was built, The Pabst was a leader in innovation for the theaters of its time, and many other playhouses used it as a technological example. In addition to advanced fireproofing techniques, the theater boasted the first steel permanent counterweight fly system in Milwaukee, the first all electrical lighting system in the country, and better views of the stage than many other theaters of the day.

In 1989, The Pabst Theater was connected to the Milwaukee Center, which houses The Rep's offices and theaters. The Pabst continues to serve as a busy concert and performing arts venue.



Interior of the Pabst Theater

# VISITING THE REP



Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Patty and Jay Baker Theater Complex is located in the Milwaukee 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 to the left upon entering the Wells Street doors. A *Christmas Carol* will be held in the Pabst Theater, to the right of The Rep's ticket office.

## THEATER ETIQUETTE

Attending the theater will be a positive experience for everyone if you observe a few simple courtesies:

- Turn off and put away all electronic devices prior to entering the theater.
- Taking photographs and video recording in the theater is prohibited.
- Do not place your feet on the seat in front of you.
- The actors onstage can see and hear the audience just as well as the audience can see and hear them. Please refrain from talking or moving around during the performance as it can be distracting to the actors, as well as to other audience members.
- Feel free to respond to the action of the play through appropriate laughter and applause. The actors enjoy this type of communication from the audience!
- Have fun! Attending theater should be an enjoyable experience.

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## MILWAUKEE REP EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

The Education Department offers backstage tours, pre- and post-show workshops, and classroom residencies.

### Contact Us:

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