

Walnut Street Theatre Education
Department presents



A Christmas Carol

Adapted by Bill Van Horn

Music by Michael Borton—Lyrics by Bill Van Horn

Our story begins on Christmas Eve in the London office of Ebenezer Scrooge—a miserly old businessman. Scrooge is visited by solicitors who ask him for a donation for the poor. He declares that the only place for the poor is prison or death and continues counting his money. Even a visit from his cheerful nephew cannot improve his disposition. Only after some persuasion, does Scrooge begrudgingly give Bob Cratchit, his loyal employee, Christmas day off to spend time with his family and ailing son, Tiny Tim. Scrooge's response to the Christmas holiday is "Bah, Humbug!"

On Christmas Eve, Scrooge is visited by the ghost of Jacob Marley, his former business partner. Marley cautions Scrooge that without a change of heart, his actions will condemn him to wear heavy chains for all eternity. He warns that three spirits will visit Scrooge throughout the night. The Ghost of Christmas Past is the first visitor, taking Scrooge back to his schooldays and to Christmases of merriment and kindness. The Ghost of Christmas Present arrives next to show Scrooge the celebrations going on without him. The last visitor of the night is the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come who offers a glimpse of the world after Scrooge's death: no one will care that he is dead, his maid will steal the very blankets from his deathbed, and Tiny Tim, Bob Cratchit's youngest son, will succumb to his illness.



Moved by what he saw in his dreams, Ebenezer Scrooge awakens on Christmas morning filled with all the charity, good cheer and merriment of the season. He sends a prize turkey to Bob Cratchit's home and joins his nephew to celebrate the holiday.

Biography: *Charles Dickens*

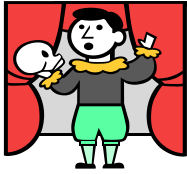
Charles John Dickens was born on February 7, 1812 in Landport, England, the second of eight children. In his early childhood, the family moved to London because they were short of money. Charles's father was continually living beyond his means and, in 1824, was imprisoned for debt. At the age of 12, Charles was taken out of school and put to work in a boot-blackening factory earning six shillings a week to help support the family who had left London, leaving Charles on his own. Charles considered this period to be the most terrible time in his life and would later write that he wondered "how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age." This childhood poverty and feelings of abandonment were a heavy influence on Dickens' later views on social reform and the world he would create through his fiction.



After six months, Charles' father was released from prison and sent Charles to Wellington House Academy. Charles enjoyed writing, but disliked school, so at the age of fifteen he left the Academy and became a free-lance reporter at Doctor's Commons Courts. For several years he alternated reporting, exploring the London streets, and reading avidly in London's libraries.

In 1836, Dickens began writing an amusing monthly newsletter called *The Pickwick Papers*, which soon became extremely popular. *The Pickwick Papers* brought him both wealth and immediate fame, which lasted throughout his whole life. Dickens went on to write 15 major novels and countless short stories and articles throughout his life before he died on July 9, 1870. He is buried in Westminster Abbey.

From the Stage to the Classroom



Discussion Questions...

Before the Show

1. Discuss what it means to see “live theatre” with the students. Remind students of the responsibilities of being a good audience. It is important to remember that the actors can see and hear the audience.
2. Discuss the following vocabulary words and their meanings.

ACTOR
CHARACTER
SETTING
PROPS
DIRECTOR
DIALOGUE
LYRICS

GREED
SOCIAL CLASS
HOLIDAY SPIRIT
REDEMPTION
CHARITY
VICTORIAN ENGLAND
INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION



After the Show

1. How did the actors use their voices and bodies to portray the characters in the show? How did they portray a sense of time and place?
2. Discuss what it means to be in a different “social class” than someone else. How are people treated differently depending on whether they are rich or poor?
3. What things do you value more than money and possessions?
4. What are the attitudes of the different ghosts who visit Scrooge? What do they represent?
5. What lesson does Scrooge learn in the end? How is his personality and behavior different from when you saw him in the beginning of the show?

Classroom Activities...



Before the Show

1. Read parts of *A Christmas Carol* aloud to your class. Set up a scene and encourage students to act it out. For example, one student can play Scrooge while another plays one of the ghosts who has come to tell him something important.
2. Discuss common Christmas carols, including Good King Wenceslas, Deck the Halls, God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen, etc. What stories do these carols tell? What do they say about the time period in which they were written? Divide your class into small groups. Let them choose their favorite carol and write a skit (or story) to go along with it. After they’ve written the short skit, they can act it out in front of the class.

After the Show

1. Have each student create a “life box” for one character from the show. A life box is a container of carefully chosen items that represent a particular character in a play. The box must contain things the character might use daily or have as a keepsake. *For example, for Scrooge, students might choose a bag of coins because he was rich and miserly.* A line from the play or book should be cited to justify each item. The students bring in the finished projects and present them to the class.
2. Ask your students to write a letter to Dickens, critiquing our performance. They should include comments about the actor’s performance, staging, props, costumes, etc. Would Dickens have liked our version of his story? Describe to him how it was different and what remained the same.



You're Invited! ...to Scrooge's New Year's Celebration!!



Have your students create their very own sequel to Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Ebenezer Scrooge is planning a New Year's party to celebrate his new outlook on life. In groups of 4-6, have your students write a five minute skit about what happens at his party. A few things to think about before writing the skit are:

- Who are the party guests? (Try to use characters from *A Christmas Carol*)
- Do any ghosts visit on this night?
- Has Scrooge really learned his lesson or will he revert to his old ways?
- What are everyone's New Year's resolutions?
- How has Scrooge decorated for the party? What food is there? What is there to do at the party (i.e. dancing, singing, party games, etc.)

After they have written their skit, have each group perform it for the class!

Dickens' London

Imagine yourself in the London of the early 19th century. Victorian London is the largest, most spectacular city in the world. While Britain is experiencing the Industrial Revolution, its capital is both reaping the benefits and suffering the consequences. The homes of the upper and middle class exist in close proximity to areas of unbelievable poverty and filth. The city's thousands of chimney pots are belching coal smoke, resulting in soot which seems to settle everywhere. In many parts of the city raw sewage flows in gutters that empty into the Thames. Street vendors hawking their wares add to the cacophony of street noises. Pick-pockets, drunks, beggars, and vagabonds of every description add to the colorful multitude.

Inside, the problem is not much better. Personal cleanliness is not a big priority, nor is clean laundry. In close, crowded rooms the smell of unwashed bodies is stifling. It is unbearably hot by the fire, numbingly cold away from it.

Until the second half of the 19th century, London residents were still drinking water from the very same portions of the Thames that the open sewers were discharging into. In addition to regular outbreaks of Cholera, the stench of the Thames actually caused Parliament to recess — a time now known as The Great Stink of 1858.

Imagine a thousand horse-drawn vehicles an hour passing through your neighborhood throughout the day. In addition, cattle were driven through the streets until the mid 19th century. All of this added up to an incredible amount of manure which had to be removed from the streets. Fortunately, education, technology, and social reform have improved living conditions in many urban areas.



A Christmas Carol

Student Activity Page

Dickens Glossary

The words below are common to Dickens' books. They paint a picture of what life was like in nineteenth century England. Match the words on the left with their correct definitions on the right.

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| A. gammon | _____ Privately funded lodgings for the poor, as opposed to the |
| B. Constable | _____ workhouse, which was publicly funded. |
| C. almshouse | _____ Shoe or boot polish. |
| D. milliner | _____ A British policeman appointed by the parish to keep the |
| E. blacking | _____ peace. |
| F. sepulchral | _____ A misleading or deceptive comment: nonsense. |
| G. kith | _____ Friends, neighbors, or relatives. |
| | _____ Maker of women's hats. |
| | _____ Relating to the grave. |



Dickens Glossary Answer Key

- C. **Almshouse:** Privately funded lodgings for the poor, as opposed to the workhouse, which was publicly funded.
- E **Blacking:** Shoe or boot polish.
- H **Constable:** A British policeman appointed by the parish to keep the peace.
- A **Gammon:** A misleading or deceptive comment: nonsense.
- G **Kith:** Friends, neighbors, or relatives.
- D **Milliner:** Maker of women's hats.

WEB RESOURCES



Charles Dickens' Works Online:

www.underthesun.cc/Classics/Dickens/

Charles Dickens: An Overview:

www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/index.html

A Christmas Carol:

<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/christmascarol/>

About the Director

BILL VAN HORN (Director) Recently at Walnut Street Theatre: *Mary Poppins*, *Elf*, *The Music Man*, *Proof*, *Fiddler*, *Curtains*, *The Prince*, created and starred in *O Captain, My Captain: Whitman's Lincoln*. Recently elsewhere: *Gypsy* (Fulton Theatre); *Henry IV*, pt. 1, *Tartuffe*, *King Lear* (TAM); *The Merry Widow* (Dicapo). Directing at Walnut: *A Life in the Theatre*, *The Fantasticks*, *The Odd Couple*, *The Prince*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Around the World in 80 Days*, and *Forrest: A Riot of Dreams*. Directing elsewhere: *Henry V*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Glass Menagerie* (TAM); *The Good Person of Setzuan* (Blackfriars Traveling Theatre). Film: voice of *Jascha Heifetz*, *God's Fiddler* (2012). Bill is also a member of the acting company and associate artistic director at Theatre at Monmouth in Maine. Bill is a proud member of AEA.

The Artistic Staff

Directed by *Bill Van Horn*
Musical Director *Christopher Burcheri*
Choreographer *Ellie Mooney*
Lyrics and Book by *Bill Van Horn*
Music by *Michael Borton*

Walnut Street Theatre Education Department Staff

Director of Education *Thomas Quinn*
Assistant Director of Education *Ashley Kerns*
Education Programs Associate *Patrick Shane*
Education Production Associate *Amanda Gallup*
Education Apprentice *Angie Confredo*
Acting Apprentices *Jared Calhoun*
..... *Devon Fields*
..... *Donovan Lockett*
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WALNUT STREET THEATRE



Walnut Street Theatre has the unique distinction of being the oldest, continuously operating theatre in the English-speaking world, having served Philadelphia audiences for over 200 years!

Today, under the direction of Producing Artistic Director Bernard Havard, Walnut Street Theatre is in its 33rd season as a self-producing, non-profit theatre company. Walnut Street Theatre continues to entertain and enlighten diverse audiences with high quality theatrical programming. With more than 50,000 subscribers, the Walnut is also the most subscribed theatre company in the world!

Last season, 180,000 children and adults were impacted by the Walnut's Education Programs- including our theatre school with classes for kids and adults, Camp Walnut, Our Touring Outreach Program to local schools and our artist in residency programs.

The Walnut Street Theatre Educational Programs gratefully acknowledge support from the following:

Aqua America * Cardone Family Foundation * Louis N. Cassett Foundation * Connelly Foundation * The Peter & Audrey Denton Fund * Dow Chemical Company * eBay Foundation Corporate Advised Fund at Silicon Valley Community Foundation * William Goldman Foundation * Hamilton Family Foundation * Hassel Foundation * Haverford Trust Company * Hellendall Family Foundation * Herman Goldner Company * Syde Hurdus Foundation * William Penn Foundation * Virginia and Harvey Kimmel Arts Education Fund of the Philadelphia Foundation * Lincoln Financial Group Foundation * National Corporate Theatre Fund * PECO * TD Charitable Foundation * Truist * United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey and Greater Portland * Universal Health Services * Vulcan Spring & Mfg. Co.



Walnut Street Theatre Educational Opportunities!

2015-2016
SEASON

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BRING A SHOW TO YOUR SCHOOL!

Oskar and the Big Bully Battle (Bullying) Grades K-6
Only 13 (Choices) Grades 6-9
Freedom Riders (Diversity) Grades 6-9
The Berenstain Bears Hospital Friends (Family & Good Health) Grades pre K-3
The Adventures of Nick Nutrition and his Dog Fiber (Nutrition) Grades K-6

Open a dialogue with students about issues
that affect them!

Call 215-574-3559, ext. 584

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WALNUT STREET THEATRE!

Shrek the Musical Jr. (September/October)
Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (December)
Zombie in Love (January/February)
Freckle Face Strawberry the Musical (April)
Miss Nelson Has a Field Day (June)

Tickets just \$10-\$16

Read the books, then see the stories LIVE!

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AND ADULTS

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WHEN WE PLAY, LEARNING HAPPENS!