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## **Family Plays**

# CAROL \* A CHRISTMAS

Drama by **Jerome McDonough**



# CAROL \* A CHRISTMAS

*Carol\* A Christmas* is an ensemble play. The only constant role is Carol herself. All other performers become various characters who interact with her. Ensemble members may play one or several featured roles, depending on cast size.

**Drama. By Jerome McDonough.** *Cast: 10 to 27 actors, flexible.* The “Scrooge” in this unusual adaptation of Charles Dickens’ plot is a high-school girl named Carol. Rather than money, Carol’s greed is for good grades. She wants to be accepted . . . not by her peers, boyfriends, or her parents, but by the college of her choice. For the sake of a high grade-point average, she is willing to give up friends, fun, charitable work and school activities. Then she has a dream—a visit by three spirits who show her the happy little girl she used to be, the dreary unpleasant person she is now, and the unhappy, friendless woman she is about to become. The play doesn’t say, “Don’t study!” It says that study (or by inference, any other compulsive obsession) is dangerous if it is not tempered by common sense, sociability and compassion. *Bare stage. Two chairs are the only set pieces. Costumes for ensemble: blue jeans, soft-soled shoes and a red or green top for the individual characters. Only Carol does not wear red or green. However, she may accessorize with these colors for the final scene. Approximate running time: 20 to 25 minutes. Code: CK4.*

## Family Plays

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Carol \* A Christmas

# Carol \* A Christmas

by

**JEROME McDONOUGH**

**A Play in One Act**

**Family Plays**

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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*Dedication*

To Terry Pevehouse  
Thanks for the thought

And to the members of the three original casts:

Lindy Archibald, Shawn Burleson, Michelle Clark, Keith Covey,  
Christina Cruz, Jimmy De La Paz, Devin Duvak, Nicky Escoto,  
Kathina Fain, Buddy Gomez, Rodger Grady, Tina Grady,  
Anthony Griego, Athena Griego, Shasta Griffith, Brandy Griffith,  
Mary Guzman, Tami Hearon, Kelly Hill, Michael Hughes,  
DeDee Michelle Lee, Daisha Lee, Denise Lincycomb, Cyndi Long,  
Becky LuVaul, Branden Mann, Tiffani McAvoy, Michelle McPherson,  
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Robbie Pillow, Jonathan Ramirez, Kade Roberts, Bobby Rodriguez,  
Anthony Rodriguez, Garrett Rutherford, Thomas Ryder,  
'Becca San Miguel, Tracy Sherman, Kristi Sims, Jeff Tamplen,  
Sandy Tate, Jamie Weakley, and Chaz Williams.

And, of course, to the literary genius, Charles Dickens.  
Nice to work with you again, C. D.

## CAROL \* A Christmas

### *Cast of Characters* *(in order of appearance)*

**Brian**, a Senior student interested in Carol  
**Carol**, a self-centered, overly ambitious Senior  
**Sharon**,\* a Student Council member  
**Anne**,\* another Student Council member  
**Darla**,\* another Student Council member  
**Tina**,\* a very withdrawn student  
**Mother**, Carol's mother  
**Father**, Carol's father  
**Marley Jacobs**,\* the prior year's valedictorian  
**Pat Past**,\*an obnoxious TV game show host  
**Holly**, a decorative game show hostess  
**Mrs. Lau**,\* Carol's fifth grade teacher  
**Young Carol**, Carol as a fifth grader  
**Darren**, a Sophomore who formerly cared for Carol  
**Presento**,\* an "in-depth" TV journalist/show host  
**Announcer**,\* Presento's on-camera announcer  
**Mrs. Teague**,\* a high school teacher  
**Mrs. Whitworth**,\* another high school teacher  
**Nick**, Brian's friend  
**Valerie**, a pretty girl  
**Few Jure**,\* commander of the starship something-or-other  
**Rotty**,\* mechanics officer on the starship  
**Executive 1**,\* an upwardly mobile striver  
**Executive 2**,\* another upwardly mobile striver  
**Executive 3**,\*another upwardly mobile, but confused, striver  
*\*Parts which are not gender-specific. Adjust names as needed.*

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### *Place*

A contemporary high school

### *Time*

The present—a week before Christmas



## ABOUT THE PLAY

**CAROL \* A *Christmas*** is an ensemble play. The only constant role is Carol herself. All other performers become various characters who interact with her. Ensemble members may play one or several featured roles, depending on cast size. The original casts varied from 10 to 27 players.

Action takes place in front of a wall formed by the outward-facing cast members—the Living Cyclorama. Performers move in and out of scenes from this location.

The ensemble costume is blue jeans, soft-soled shoes, and a red or green or red and green top. Individual character is suggested by costume bits added to this outfit and stored near the Living Cyclorama when not being worn. Carol alone does not wear red or green. She may accessorize with these colors for the final scene, however.

The setting is an open space variously suggesting the school commons, a library, Carol's home, a television studio, and Carol's room. Two chairs are the only set pieces.

**PRODUCTION NOTES***Properties*

All props may be mimed. If real props are used, the following will be needed:  
 School books and accessories—Carol, Tina, other students  
 Bag—Mother  
 Books—Ensemble (as book stacks in library)  
 Microphone—Presento  
 Greeting card—Mother  
 Communicator—Few Jure

*Suggested Costume Accessories*

BRIAN—light jacket  
 SHARON—school sweater  
 ANNE—sweater  
 DARLA—jacket  
 TINA—a faded denim jacket  
 MOTHER—woman's top or decorative scarf  
 FATHER—winter coat  
 MARLEY JACOBS—college shirt or sweat shirt  
 PAT PAST—gaudy sport coat  
 HOLLY—jewelry, high heels  
 MRS. LAU—woman's sweater  
 YOUNG CAROL—T-shirt or girl's top  
 DARREN—school shirt  
 PRESENTO—quality sport coat  
 ANNOUNCER—quality sport coat  
 MRS. TEAGUE—woman's top  
 MRS. WHITWORTH—woman's sweater  
 NICK—bright shirt  
 VALERIE—fashionable top  
 FEW JURE—Trekkie or military-style top  
 ROTTY—Trekkie or lower-ranked military-style top  
 EXECUTIVE 1—suit coat and/or tie  
 EXECUTIVE 2—suit coat and/or tie  
 EXECUTIVE 3—suit coat and/or tie

The nature and pacing of the play is such that even the above minimal costuming is not absolutely necessary. Many, perhaps most, roles work adequately played solely in the Christmasy ensemble costume.

*Music*

Opening, closing, and scene-transition music is a valuable addition to this play. The local cassette/CD dealer can suggest an appropriate up-tempo, young-sounding Christmas selection for your use. Any of several contemporary instrumental ensembles have excellent recordings available.

*(see Cast, next page)*

*The Cast*

Cast the play so that performers do not wind up portraying radically different characters in subsequent scenes, if possible.

The Living Cyclorama should stay balanced to Left and Right. Ensemble members can adjust as characters move in and out.

Try to be certain that all ensemble members have at least one named role—nobody wants to be nobody.

Finally, find the joy of youth and the joy of Christmas—they are the same.

—*Jerome McDonough*

# CAROL \* A Christmas

by Jerome McDonough

*[AT RISE: The stage is empty except for two chairs, Center. An upbeat, rock-influenced arrangement of a Christmas song comes up. The stage fills with YOUNG PEOPLE, all busily visiting and moving along as if in a high school commons area. They form several knots of friends scattered about the upstage areas behind the action.]*

*CAROL enters, paying attention to no one, and moves directly to the chairs. She sits, opens her books, and begins to study. BRIAN looks at her from Stage Right. He walks toward her while others in his group mime urging him not to]*

BRIAN. Hi. *[CAROL looks up, but merely scowls and looks back down]* Okay if I sit here?

CAROL. *[Sarcastically]* It's a public school. They let anybody sit any place.

BRIAN. Thanks. *[Introducing himself]* Brian Christopher.

CAROL. *[An unpleasant sound]* Hmm.

BRIAN. *[Looking at her papers]* Physics, huh? I was pretty good at that—the last school I went to.

CAROL. How exciting.

BRIAN. Need any help?

CAROL. *[Her patience at an end]* Look, I don't know where you went to school, but their standards are obviously lower than ours. The last person with the intelligence to help me was Marley Jacobs. She graduated last May—Valedictorian—then moved on to a decent non-public college where you have to know something to get in and you can choose who sits with you.

BRIAN. *[Reacting to the cuts by pressing on]* So—you don't want any help?

CAROL. You're smarter than you look.

BRIAN. Listen. I'm having a Christmas party this Friday. Why don't you . . . ?

CAROL. *[Interrupting]* I rarely date and then only human beings. I don't have time for anybody's Christmas party, let alone the complete bore yours is bound to be. Now, I have work to do.

BRIAN. Mind if I ask you again?

CAROL. Yes.

BRIAN. Okay. I'll be back.

*[He returns to the crowd as she grumbles and goes back to her work. Three STUDENTS break from another area, speaking:]*

SHARON. Saturday morning, okay? And bring canned food. And money for the Children's Home Drive.

ANNE. Lots of it. We're WAY behind last year.

DARLA. *[To Carol]* Carol, all the seniors are meeting Saturday to get food baskets ready for the Christmas drive and—

CAROL. Not ALL the seniors.

SHARON. Come on, Carol. If everybody pitches in, we'll be done in no time.

CAROL. Then plan on staying longer.

ANNE. *[To Darla]* I don't know why you even asked her. She never helps with anything.

CAROL. Try not to forget that.

DARLA. *[As the three GIRLS exit]* I thought she might have a little Christmas spirit.

ANNE. She does. As little as you can get.

*[As they are walking away, a very shy girl, TINA, moves to the other chair. Soundlessly, she sits opposite Carol. CAROL pays no attention as TINA takes a book and starts to look at it. After a count or two, though, TINA closes the book and just stares into space. CAROL looks up and gives her a disapproving look]*

TINA. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to disturb you. Sorry. *[CAROL just makes an unpleasant sound and returns to work. A school BELL rings and all start to move off to go to their classes. As CAROL is walking off, TINA speaks quietly toward her]* Carol . . .

*[But CAROL does not hear or chooses not to. TINA moves sadly off as the chairs are moved to Down Left, cheated toward Center (to suggest a small couch) and the ENSEMBLE MEMBERS form the Living Cyclorama. MOTHER moves to Down Right, speaking, calling to FATHER, who stands Up Left]*

MOTHER. *[Miming putting things in a bag]* They told me Mother needed something and I didn't write it down. Do you remember what it was?

FATHER. *[Entering]* Not a clue.

MOTHER. Maybe it was nightgowns. You'd swear they eat those things, so many turn up missing. Did you get her some candy?

FATHER. Yes.

MOTHER. She looks forward to that.

FATHER. *[Looking off Left]* Is that you, Carol?

CAROL. *[Entering]* Yes.

FATHER. You're sure you won't change your mind and go with us?

CAROL. You have to be joking.

FATHER. We can get you back in time for school in the morning.

CAROL. No.

FATHER. *[Exiting]* Okay, then.

MOTHER. She'd love to see you, Carol.

CAROL. She wouldn't know if she did.

MOTHER. Yes, she would. Sometimes it's like she's just going to start talking to us again. Like nothing ever happened.

CAROL. She doesn't know what is going on, Mother. Nothing registers. I don't see why you even bother.

MOTHER. Part of it is for her. Part is for me.

CAROL. You do my part, too.

MOTHER. *[Giving up]* All right, Carol. The number is by your phone. We'll be back sometime tomorrow morning.

CAROL. Got it.

*[MOTHER exits and the ENSEMBLE breaks to become several rows which lead upstage from Center in each direction, suggesting the book stacks in a library. A girl, MARLEY JACOBS, is moving in the rows, looking for a book. CAROL enters opposite and also starts looking. Their paths cross near Center. Their greeting is not one of friends united. It is simply recognition]*

MARLEY JACOBS. Carol. I should have known I'd run into you at the library.

CAROL. When did you get in from college, Marley?

MARLEY JACOBS. This afternoon.

CAROL. It must be great, escaping this Mickey Mouse high school stuff.

MARLEY JACOBS. I kind of miss it.

CAROL. You're kidding.

MARLEY JACOBS. It's been a tough semester.

CAROL. For you?

MARLEY JACOBS. I don't mean academically. The grades are okay. But that's not all there is.

CAROL. It is for me. A top school, a straight-A academic record, and a career with a big future. That's the master plan. You'll have to make room for me up there next year.

MARLEY JACOBS. I may not go back next year if things don't get better.

CAROL. What are you talking about?

MARLEY JACOBS. You're all alone up there.

CAROL. Hurray.

MARLEY JACOBS. I used to feel the same way. Back here I'd hit the books and hit the house and hit the sack and start over again in the morning. I took everything around me for granted. Up at college, the pressure's higher. I feel really isolated. I need somebody to talk to.

CAROL. Deliver me from people to talk to. They have nothing to say.

MARLEY JACOBS. They don't have to say anything. They just have to be there to share with you. I never made any friends here. I don't know how.

CAROL. We were friends.

MARLEY JACOBS. We were the correct answers on each other's college entrance exams. We were never friends. We were—mutually beneficial.

CAROL. It's enough for me.

MARLEY JACOBS. It won't be. Take some time now, Carol. Believe me, there's more to life.

CAROL. *[Sarcastically]* I'll make those my words to live by.

MARLEY JACOBS. Think it over, Carol.

CAROL. I'm thinking, Marley. Now you try it.

*[The ENSEMBLE breaks and becomes the Living Cyclorama again. CAROL moves to Down Left, where the chairs/couch suggest her bedroom. She mimes reaching to turn on a television, Left Center, but changes her mind]*

CAROL. No, no. Too much to do. Maybe some TV on the weekend. *[Speaking as if to Marley]* Is that soon enough, Marley? *[Sits on the chairs/couch. Back to speaking to herself, dismissing Marley's*

*words*] Take some time. Take enough time and you don't get into Yale. Take enough time and somebody else gets into Yale. No, Marley. There's no time to take time.

*[CAROL settles on the couch, book in hand. She studies intently for several counts and then the book drifts down and her head nods. The SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PAST (PAT PAST), an obnoxious TV Game Show host, shrieks, waking CAROL. The ENSEMBLE sits enthusiastically, facing the action, becoming the studio audience]*

SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PAST (PAT PAST). Hi, America! And hi, Carol Ebben. Guess what, girl! It's your turn to play—THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS PAST! *[The AUDIENCE goes wild]*

CAROL. The Spirit of Christmas Past? What is this, some kind of "A Christmas Carol" rip-off?

PAT PAST. Well, after all, it IS almost—Christmas,—Carol! *[The ENSEMBLE goes berserk over his wonderful joke]*

CAROL. *[Hating the joke and the circumstances]* This isn't happening.

PAT PAST. During this half hour, it will be your job to see if you can recognize—events from—your past! Doesn't that sound like fun?

CAROL. I'd rather have my teeth drilled.

PAT PAST. That's the spirit! No, wait! I'M the spirit, aren't I? *[AUDIENCE falls apart]* Tell her where she's headed first, Holly.

HOLLY. *[A stunning girl announcer]* Okay, Pat. Carol, you and a friend, if you had one, are going to— *[pausing for effect]* your fifth grade classroom! *[Ooohs and ahhhhhs from the studio AUDIENCE. MRS. LAU turns in from the Cyclorama. Another ensemble member becomes YOUNG CAROL (or CAROL may speak the lines herself)]*

MRS. LAU. I won't use up your recess time, Carol, but I just had to compliment you. I've never seen such fine work from a fifth grader.

YOUNG CAROL. Thank you, Mrs. Lau.

MRS. LAU. You have a wonderful mind to share with the world.

CAROL. What do you mean?

MRS. LAU. You'll understand in time. Go on to recess now.

YOUNG CAROL. I think I'll stay in. I have some work to do.

MRS. LAU. There's plenty of time for that. Recess is important, too. Go play.