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Dramatic Publishing



THE CHRISTMAS CAROL

BY JULIAN LEE



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

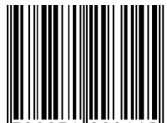
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The Christmas Carol

Drama. From Charles Dickens. Dramatized by Julian Lee.

Cast: 25 characters, more or less as desired. More and more people are turning to this version because it is extremely simple to present. It's easier than any version we know, and yet it keeps all the thrill and Christmas joy of the original. Bare stage w/ props.

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The Christmas Carol

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THE CHRISTMAS CAROL

Dramatized By

JULIAN LEE

From the Story by

CHARLES DICKENS



The Dramatic Publishing Company

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(A CHRISTMAS CAROL)

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The Christmas Carol

C H A R A C T E R S

EBENEZER SCROOGE
FRED, SCROOGE'S NEPHEW
BOB CRATCHIT
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET-TO-COME
MARLEY'S GHOST
EBENEZER
DICK
FEZZIWIG
MRS. FEZZIWIG
DANCERS
TINY TIM
MRS. CRATCHIT
BELINDA CRATCHIT
ANOTHER CRATCHIT GIRL
TWO CRATCHIT BOYS
FAN
SCROOGE AS A LITTLE BOY
MRS. FRED
MRS. DILBER
OLD JOE
A BOY

S Y N O P S I S

SCENE ONE. *Scrooge's office. The day before Christmas, late afternoon.*

SCENE TWO. *Scrooge's living-room. That night.*

SCENE THREE. *A school room. Years ago.*

SCENE FOUR. *Fezziwig's office. Years ago.*

SCENE FIVE. *Bob Cratchit's home. The present, Christmas day.*

SCENE SIX. *Old Joe's shop. The future.*

SCENE SEVEN. *Fred's home. Christmas day.*

COSTUMES

SCROOGE: Scene I. Old-fashioned business suit; Scene II-VI. Dressing gown; Scene VII. Business suit.

FRED: Business suit throughout.

BOB CRATCHIT: Seedy business suit.

THE THREE GHOSTS OF CHRISTMAS: Long robes, preferably black, and cowls to match. Choir robes and peaked caps could be used.

GHOST OF MARLEY: Business suit. Chains on his wrists and ankles. Ghostly pallor for make-up. It would give a very ghostly effect if his suit were made of pale gray cambric, his make-up were white with a touch of blue in it, and his hair were grayed with aluminum powder. However, such elaboration is not imperative.

SCROOGE AS A LITTLE BOY: School boy's dress, preferably old-fashioned—knee breeches, short jacket, light hose and buckled shoes.

FAN: School girl's dress, preferably old-fashioned—bodice waist, full skirt, light hose, shoes with ankle ties.

FEZZIWIGS: Knee breeches, white hose, low shoes with buckles, long coat, white wig, spectacles.

MRS. FEZZIWIG: White hair, bright colored, old-fashioned brocaded gown.

EBENEZER: Ordinary business suit.

DICK: Ordinary business suit.

FIDDLER: Long coat, white wig.

DANCERS: Ordinary costumes, or old-fashioned picturesque dress.

MRS. CRATCHIT: Ordinary dress. An attempt to "deck out" a worn dress with ribbons, lace, etc.

BELINDA CRATCHIT: Ordinary dress. As her mother, an attempt to "deck out" a worn dress with finery.

CRATCHIT BOYS: Ordinary school boy costumes.

OLD JOE: Shabby dress, dark and ill-fitting.

MRS. DILBER: Scene I. Servant's dress; Scene VI. Servant's dress with shawl over it.

MRS. FRED: Party dress.

GUESTS: Party dress.

TINY TIM: Little short, tight-fitting breeches, and a light blouse.

PROPERTIES

Desk, eight straight chairs, one arm chair, one stool, one higher chair for Tiny Tim, boxes and barrels, sign, "Fezziwig and Company," ledger, pen, ink, etc., to dress desk, table cloth, dishes, dish with pudding, punch bowl, partly full, glasses, tiny table, candle, chains, gong to strike hours, records to imitate singing of carols and sound of chimes off-stage, coat rack, siren whistle if available, school boy's books, fiddle and bow (not to be played), crutch, piles of old clothes, card tables.

FURNITURE AND PROPERTIES USED IN EACH SCENE

SCENE ONE: Desk and arm chair for Scrooge, another straight chair, a coat rack with coat and hat for Scrooge, and

muffler and cap for Bob. Ledger on desk, pen and ink, etc.

SCENE TWO: Empty stage, dark. Scrooge's arm chair down L. beyond the curtain line, facing up R., and a tiny table by the down stage arm of the chair, to hold a candle. Candle and dressing gown for Mrs. Dilber. Chains for Marley. Chains off stage to be rattled. Siren whistles for ghostly cries, if they can be secured.

SCENE THREE: Stage lighter again. Desk up R. now, with a high stool near it for the little boy. School boy's books piled on it. Gong to strike hours.

SCENE FOUR: Boxes and barrels, sign "Fezziwig and Company," desk, chair, stool for Fiddler.

SCENE FIVE: Table (desk may be used) covered with cloth, chairs drawn around it, dishes on table, and some food; little pudding which Mrs. Cratchit brings in. Crutch for Tiny Tim. Gong to strike hours.

SCENE SIX: Desk, covered with piles of old clothes; old clothes hung on walls if hooks are available, old clothes piled on floor; coins for Old Joe, bundle for Mrs. Dilber, containing blanket, shirt, and curtains. Gong to strike hours. Chimes.

SCENE SEVEN: Crutch for Tiny Tim. Card tables and chairs, punch bowl and glasses, grape juice to drink as a toast. Chimes.

LIGHTS

If possible, the footlights should be pale green or pale blue, and the borders white and amber. If a spot light is accessible, it should be quite bright, and turned on the scenes of Scrooge's dreams.

SCENE ONE: Borders and foots full up.

SCENE TWO: Borders out foots out until entrance of Mrs. Dilber, and then up very slightly. They stay this way through the play.

SCENE THREE: Dim footlights at opening of scene. Spot or borders at rise of curtain.

SCENE FOUR: See scene three.

SCENE FIVE: See scene three.

SCENE SIX: Dim footlights at opening of scene. Spot or borders at rise of curtain. Spot or footlights up bright at end of scene.

SCENE SEVEN: All lights on full.

CHARACTERS IN EACH SCENE

SCENE ONE: Scrooge, Fred, Bob.

SCENE TWO: Scrooge, Mrs. Dilber, Ghost of Marley.

SCENE THREE: Scrooge, Ghost of Christmas Past, Little Boy, His Sister.

SCENE FOUR: Scrooge, Ghost of Christmas Past, Fezziwig, Mrs. Fezziwig, Ebenezer, Dick, Fiddler, Dancers.

SCENE FIVE: Scrooge, Ghosts of Christmas Present, Bob, Mrs. Cratchit, Belinda, Her Sister, Two Little Brothers, Tiny Tim.

SCENE SIX: Scrooge, Ghost of Christmas Yet-to-Come, Old Joe, Mrs. Dilber, a Boy.

SCENE SEVEN: Scrooge, Fred, Mrs. Fred, Guests, Tiny Tim.

The Christmas Carol

Scene One

SCENE: SCROOGE'S office. A door up L. C. leading to the corridor, and another door, down R., leads to the interior. A window in the L. wall, well up stage, and a coat rack with two coats and a hat and a long muffler on it, in the corner up R. A bare table piled with books stands a little R. C., and SCROOGE'S chair is behind it, so that he faces down stage.

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: SCROOGE is at his desk, scowling over figures in a great ledger book. A sound of Christmas carols comes as though from a distance, through the window up L. SCROOGE looks up, snorts, and bends over his figures again. The carol continues, growing louder. He looks up again, frowns, and then calls.]

SCROOGE. Bob! [*Louder.*] Bob! [*Louder.*] Bob Cratchit!

BOB [*entering hurriedly at the door down R.*]. Yes, sir!

SCROOGE [*turning in his chair and nodding toward the window, up L.*]. What's all that howling and yowling about?

BOB. The waits are singing carols, sir.

SCROOGE. Then send them away! Send them away!. [*Bends over his book again.*]

BOB [*looks out the window and down, and then turns, and crosses C.*]. They do it everywhere this time of year, sir. People throw them pennies.

SCROOGE. Pennies! Pennies indeed! I'm throwing away no pennies! Do you understand? No pennies! Tell them to get out or they'll be arrested!

BOB. Yes, sir. [*He goes out up L. C.*]

SCROOGE [*bending over his work again*]. Waits! Bah! Carols!
Bah! Pennies! Bah!

[*FRED enters cheerily up L. C.*]

FRED [*pausing in the doorway*]. A Merry Christmas, Uncle!

SCROOGE [*without looking up*]. Bah! Humbug!

FRED [*taking a step or two down c.*]. Christmas a humbug,
Uncle?

SCROOGE. Yes, humbug! Merry Christmas! Bah! What right
have you to be merry? You're poor enough!

FRED [*sits on SCROOGE'S desk, L., and laughs*]. Come, then,
what right have you to be dismal? You're rich enough!

SCROOGE. Bah! Humbug! Get off my desk!

FRED [*rises, still smiling, and strolls down c. and turns*].
Don't be cross, Uncle.

SCROOGE. What else can I be, living in such a world of fools
as this? Merry Christmas! Bah! Merry Christmas! If I
had my way, every idiot who goes about shouting "Merry
Christmas" should be boiled with his own pudding and
buried with a stake of holly through his heart. Merry
Christmas! Humbug!

[*The song of the waits has died away.*]

FRED [*stopping and looking at SCROOGE, a little shocked by
this last tirade*]. Uncle!

SCROOGE [*rising, crossing c. and standing face to face with
FRED*]. Nephew, keep Christmas your own way, and let me
keep it in my own way!

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

SCROOGE [*turning back to his desk*]. Let me leave it alone,
then. Much good it will ever do you. [*Sits, hunching over
his ledger again.*] Much good it has ever done you.

[*BOB enters up L. C., and stands quietly at the door.*]

FRED. No good, Uncle? You think Christmas has done me no

good? [*Turns, strolls down L., and then turns, and looking off a little down R., he speaks.*] I've always thought of Christmas time as a good time, a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time, the only time I know of when men and women seem to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they were really fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures, bound on other journeys. [*Crosses R. to the L. of SCROOGE'S desk, and leans on it, smiling.*] And, therefore, Uncle, even though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, [*Turns, crosses L. again, and turns to SCROOGE with a smile.*] and I say, God bless it!

[*BOB, from where he is standing in the doorway, claps his hands.*]

SCROOGE [*turning on BOB*]. Oh, so you like that speech, do you? You think it's fine? Let me hear another sound from you, and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your job. [*He scowls at BOB till he withers, shrinks, bows his head, crosses down R., and backs out the door down R., closing it after him. Then SCROOGE turns on his nephew again.*] Quite a speech! Quite a speech! You're a powerful speaker, sir. I am surprised that you're not in Parliament.

[*FRED, a little angry, turns abruptly down stage, and stands there, frowning. SCROOGE bends over his book with a snort. Then, smiling again, FRED turns impulsively, crosses back up L. of SCROOGE, and puts his hand on his uncle's shoulder.*]

FRED. Don't be angry, Uncle. Come and dine with us tomorrow.

SCROOGE [*shrugging FRED'S hand away*]. No! I'll see you hanged first.

FRED [*a little nettled, coming down L. of desk, and leaning on it to confront SCROOGE*]. Why not?

SCROOGE. Why did you get married?

FRED. Why? [*Straightening.*] Why, because I fell in love.

SCROOGE [*mocking him*]. Because you fell in love! Bah!

[*Bends over his ledger.*] Good afternoon!

FRED. I'm sorry, Uncle. We've never had any reason to quarrel.

I wish you didn't feel this way. I came here in honor of Christmas Day, to ask you to say it. [*A little pause.*] Merry Christmas, Uncle!

SCROOGE [*without looking up*]. Good afternoon!

FRED [*crosses to the door up L. C., and turns*]. And a Happy New Year!

SCROOGE. Good afternoon.

[*FRED turns back to the door, and is about to go out when BOB enters down R. and crosses near him.*]

FRED [*gaily, clapping BOB on the shoulder*]. Merry Christmas, Bob Cratchit!

BOB [*smiling*]. Merry Christmas, sir!

FRED [*his hand on the door*]. And a Happy New Year!

[*SCROOGE looks up sourly and sits scowling at BOB.*]

BOB. And a Happy New Year to you!

[*FRED goes out up L., whistling. BOB looks after him, smiling, and then turns, sees SCROOGE scowling at him, and starts guiltily, his smile fading.*]

SCROOGE. Oh, so you're another one, are you? Fifteen shillings a week and a wife and family, talking about a Merry Christmas.

BOB. It's a happy season, sir.

SCROOGE. Happy season! Bah! Humbug! [*Rises, and goes to the rack up R., takes down his coat and jerks into it.*] I suppose you'll expect to have all day tomorrow, eh? [*Slams on his hat.*]

BOB. If quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE. If quite convenient! It's not convenient!

BOB. Christmas comes but once a year, sir.

SCROOGE. Bah! Is that any reason why I should pay for a day's work when no day's work is done? I suppose if I should stop half a crown from your wages you'd consider yourself ill used? [*He crosses to the door up L., still muttering.*]

BOB. May I have the day, sir?

SCROOGE [*sharply*]. What? What's that?

BOB [*frightened*]. May I have the day, sir?

SCROOGE. What do you want of the day? To make merry, I suppose? What have you to make merry about? Bah!

BOB. Tiny Tim is counting on it, sir.

SCROOGE. Bah! [*Turns back to the door.*] See that you're here all the earlier the next morning. Understand?

BOB. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

SCROOGE [*turning back again, sharply*]. Make this office tidy before you leave. Do you hear?

BOB. Yes, sir.

SCROOGE. Merry Christmas! Humbug!

[*Muttering under his breath, he goes out up L. BOB looks after SCROOGE, shakes his head, sighs, turns to the desk and straightens it. Then he goes to the rack where his coat hangs, up R., is about to take the coat down. Instead he pauses, turns back to the desk again, and looks at it to see that everything is in order, straightens another book a little. He turns to his coat again, starts to put it on, then, turning, stops, takes a little package from the pocket of his coat, and smiling, comes down to the desk to open it, lifting out a child's inexpensive toy. He takes a slip of paper, and writes on it, speaking aloud as he does so.*]

BOB. "To Tiny Tim, from father and mother." [*He puts the slip with the toy and re-wraps the package.*] Poor little thing! Poor little lad! [*He stands a moment, then sighs, tries to snap out of his mood, puts on his coat, returns the package to his pocket, puts on his hat, and goes slowly*

to the door. Far away the carols begin again. He shrugs, straightens his shoulders, sets his hat more jauntily, and goes out, humming a carol himself.]

CURTAIN

Scene Two

SCENE: SCROOGE'S home. *The desk, hat racks, etc., have been removed. An arm chair is well down L., beyond the curtain line. A tiny table stands by its down stage arm.*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *The stage is dark and empty. There is a pounding and hammering on the door, up L. C. MRS. DILBER, an old servant woman enters down R., shielding a candle. She has a dark dressing gown over her arm. She looks about her fearfully, and then crosses slowly to the door up L. C., and speaks.]*

SERVANT. Who is it? Who knocks?

SCROOGE [*off stage up L. C.*]. It's Scrooge! Open the door!

Open the door, I say! [*She opens the door and he enters.*]

What do you mean, keeping me out of my own house?

[*He seems to lock the door.*]

SERVANT. I—I—wasn't sure who it was, sir.

SCROOGE. What do you mean by that? Who else would it be?

SERVANT. It's—it's been a strange night, sir. There have been sounds.

SCROOGE. What sort of sounds?

SERVANT. I heard chains clanking, sir. Do you want your dressing gown?

SCROOGE. Yes—here, take my hat. [*He puts his hat and coat over her arm, and dons the dressing gown.*] What chains could be clanking around here, woman?

SERVANT. I do not know, Mr. Scrooge. But I heard sighs, and whispers—and voices, too.

SCROOGE [*starting, and bringing his face close to hers in the*

candle light]. Voices? Whose voice? Answer me! Whose voice?

SERVANT. It sounded like Marley's voice, sir!

SCROOGE. Marley's! [*Whispers.*] Marley's! Then he is— Nonsense, woman, Jacob Marley died seven years ago this Christmas Eve. Died, and left this business all to me. Seven years ago! He couldn't speak! You couldn't hear his voice! He's dead!

SERVANT. I know, sir, I know he's dead—and it sounded like a ghostly voice!

SCROOGE. Ghosts! I don't believe in ghosts!

SERVANT. I know, sir.

SCROOGE. Then what do you mean by mentioning them?

SERVANT. I—I know, sir.

SCROOGE. What do you mean, I say? There are no ghosts!

SERVANT. You are frightened, sir.

SCROOGE. Nonsense! Listen to me, woman, did you ever notice how sometimes the knocker looks like old Marley's head— did you notice that?

SERVANT. No—no—no— [*She turns away, shivering.*]

SCROOGE. Hah! Yes, you have, too! You've noticed it. And he's been dead these seven years! What would make him come like that—wailing, and clanking chains—and appearing places, so that bed posts, and knobs, and knockers look like him, and I hear him wailing in the night,— [*His voice has risen hysterically.*]

SERVANT. Hush, sir! You are beside yourself! Hush!

SCROOGE. Yes—yes—it is foolish—there are no ghosts—no ghosts—no ghosts.— [*He comes down to the arm chair, down L., and sinks in it.*]

SERVANT. I'll—I'll—leave you the candle, sir. Will you be wanting anything else?

SCROOGE [*normally, and rather irascibly*]. No, no, nothing else! Go along.

SERVANT. Yes, sir. [*She sets the candle on a tiny table by the down stage arm of the chair, and goes off down R.*]

SCROOGE [*sits a moment, and then whispers*]. Marley! Marley!
What do you want? Why don't you sleep!

[*As if in answer, the faint wailing and the distant clanking of chains is heard, and the door up L. C. opens.*]

SCROOGE [*half rises in his chair, and then sinks back*]. No!
No! No! It's locked! It won't open!

[*The tall, ghastly pale GHOST of Marley enters, carrying a candle, dragging heavy chains on his arms and ankles. He pauses well up C., and stands. The wailing is heard faintly in the distance.*]

SCROOGE [*in a frightened whisper*]. Marley!

GHOST [*in a ghostly tone, moaning*]. Scrooge, unhappy man,
I have come to you!

SCROOGE. What—what do you want?

GHOST. To save you—to save you—from what I endure! [*A low moaning, which is picked up and dies away in the distance.*] Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

SCROOGE. Why have you come here?

GHOST. I must—my spirit cannot sleep!

SCROOGE. But what did you do? What did you do?

GHOST. Some time in his life a man must move among his fellow men. I did not do so while I lived, and now in death, I am doomed! Oh, woe!

[*Again the low wail is repeated, and dies away in the distance, and far off a ghostly gong clangs, and a wail rises a little louder.*]

SCROOGE. Jacob! Jacob! Do not speak despairingly! Tell me of some hope, some happiness you've found!

GHOST. There is no hope! There is no peace, no rest, no joy—only wandering, wandering, wandering, without rest, without ceasing—always, always, always! Oh, woe!

[*Again the wail is echoed faintly in the distance, and the ghostly gong clangs, and the wail rises and dies down.*]

SCROOGE. But why should you be punished, Jacob? You were an upright man!

GHOST. Oh, woe!

SCROOGE. You were a good business man, Jacob!

GHOST. Oh, woe! Why did I shut my heart to people? Why did I pass by my fellow man? Oh, woe!

[*Again the wailing is heard in the distance.*]

SCROOGE. Won't anything help you, Jacob?

GHOST. You—you—you—can help me if you will! If you'll listen! If you'll redeem my life before you die! Oh, woe!

SCROOGE. What must I do, Jacob?

GHOST. You must save us! Or I shall never rest, never have peace! And you, when you come to be a spirit, shall be forced to wander, too, and be driven from place to place, and know no peace! Oh, woe!

[*Again the wailing is echoed faintly in the distance, and dies away, and the ghostly gong clangs.*]

SCROOGE. What can I do, Jacob?

GHOST. Three spirits will visit you—three wandering spirits.

SCROOGE. No, no, no! Don't send them, Jacob! Don't!

GHOST. Expect the first tonight when the bell tolls one.

SCROOGE. No, no, no! Jacob!

GHOST. Expect the second the next night when the bell tolls one.

SCROOGE. No, no, no! Jacob!

GHOST. Expect the third the next night on the last stroke of midnight! Oh, woe!

[*Again the wailing is repeated in the distance, and he goes off, up L. C., slowly, moaning and dragging his chains. The door closes as though by invisible hands. The wailing rises, and dies away, and the ghostly gong clangs once.*]

SCROOGE [*whispering fearsomely*]. Marley! Marley! Jacob Marley! [*He sinks back in his chair.*]

[*A moment's silence, and the curtains falls on the stage. SCROOGE puts out his candle, and huddles in his chair, muttering "Marley!" He sleeps.*]

Scene Three

AT OPENING OF SCENE: *The gong clangs once, loudly, and the sound dies. The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST enters R., and crosses the stage in front of the curtains, and stands just right of SCROOGE where he sleeps in his chair.*

PAST. Ebenezer Scrooge!

SCROOGE [*half rising in his chair, and whispering*]. Who—who are you? Why have you come?

PAST. I am the Spirit of the Christmas Past.

SCROOGE. The Spirit of Christmas Past! Marley said you would come! What do you want of me? What will you do to me?

PAST. I have come to show you a Christmas past—a Christmas you have forgotten.

SCROOGE. Why have you come?

PAST. To show you your past.

SCROOGE. The past—oh, if I could live it over again—if I could try over again—

PAST. To show you your past. Nothing can change it now—it is written. Were you to live it again, you would not change it—you would not change!

SCROOGE. What of my past would you show me; Spirit?

PAST [*stepping behind SCROOGE'S chair, down L. of it and standing in the shadows*]. Do you remember when you were a lonely little boy away in school—sent there because of a father who was stern and cold and unfeeling? Do you remember that happy Christmas—when your little sister braved his wrath, and came to you with happy news? Do you remember?

[*The curtain rises, showing a little boy, perched high on a stool, studying from a heavy book. He runs his hand over his forehead wearily, and wipes his eyes. The scenes which occur now on the stage may be lighted with the border, or, to best advantage, with a spot.*]

PAST. Do you remember where you were?

SCROOGE. Yes—yes—in Blimber's school!

PAST. Alone, on Christmas eve.

SCROOGE. Yes, all the others had gone.

PAST. All but you.

SCROOGE. They all had families or friends that wanted them—

PAST. Someone who cared on Christmas Eve mattered then, didn't it, Scrooge?

SCROOGE. Two years I was alone there on Christmas—and no one cared—

PAST. No one?

[*A little girl enters up L. C., smiling, and comes down to the little boy. She takes his hands, and pulls him eagerly from the stool.*]

SCROOGE. Yes—yes—there was Fan—she did care—my little sister—Fan.

PAST. Wasn't she the one who dared to plead with your father until he let you leave the lonesome school, and come home?

SCROOGE. Yes—yes—Fan did that for me.

[*The little boy is smiling eagerly now, and asking questions, and the little girl is nodding, and picking up his books, setting his cap straight, tying his muffler. They start off together, happily, and the curtain falls. If a spot light is used, it should go out first, and then the curtain should fall on the dim green light of the footlights.*]

PAST. Little Fan—she was rather kind to you, wasn't she?

SCROOGE. Yes—yes—we were happy—I had forgotten—forgotten so much.