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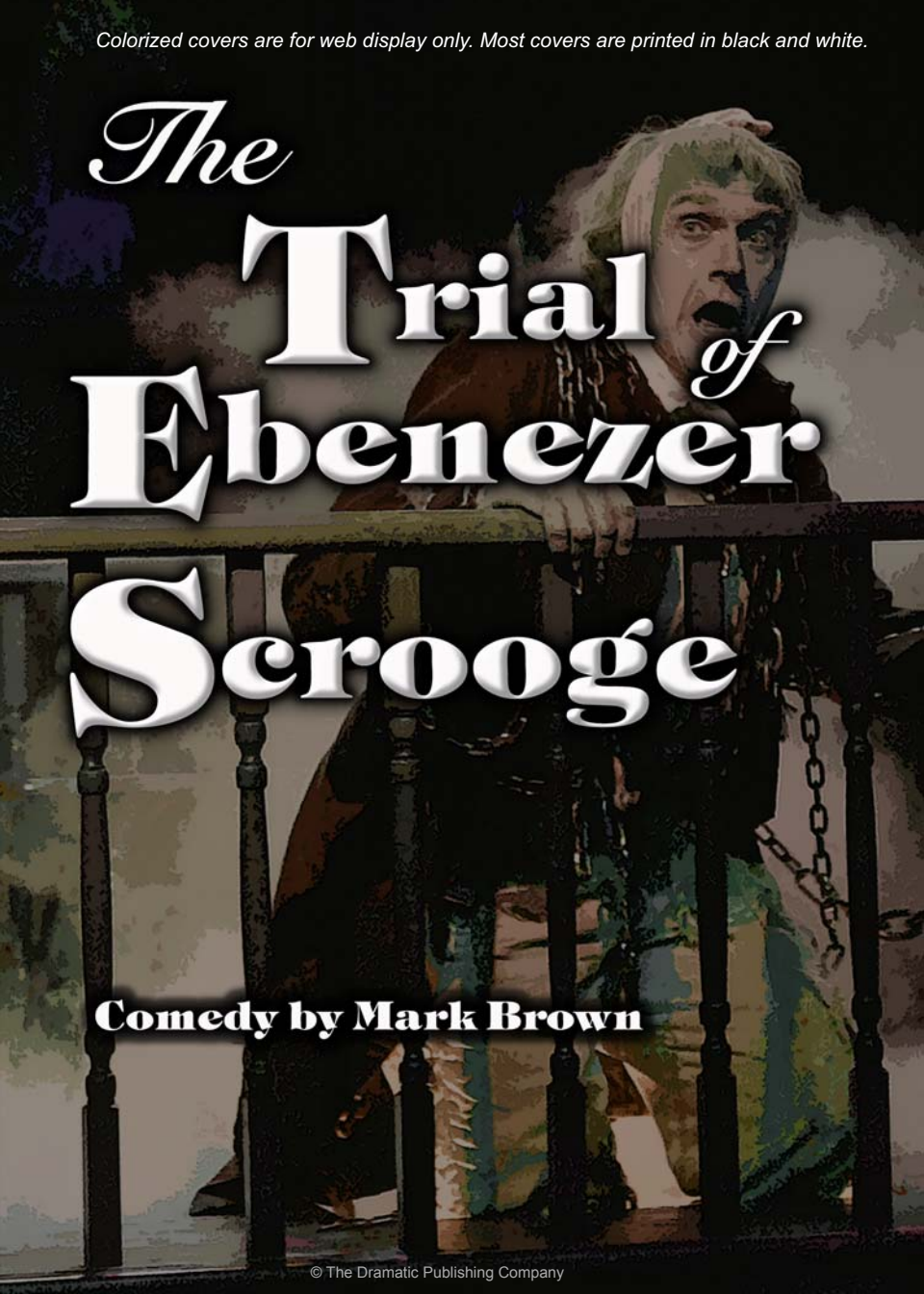
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The
Trial *of*
Ebenezer
Scrooge

Comedy by Mark Brown

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The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge

Mark Brown

Dramatic Publishing

The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge

"A sequel worthy of Dickens' approval."

—The Seattle Times

Comedy. By Mark Brown. Cast: 6m., 2w. or 8m., 5w. The Trial of the Century! A year after his miraculous transformation, Ebenezer Scrooge is back to his old ways, suing Jacob Marley and the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future for breaking and entering, kidnapping, slander, pain and suffering, attempted murder and the intentional infliction of emotional distress. The ghosts employ Solomon Rothschild, England's most charismatic, savvy, and clever barrister. Scrooge, that old penny pincher, represents himself. One by one, Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's nephew Fred, solicitor and philanthropist Sara Anne Wainwright, and the ghosts themselves take the witness stand to give their account of the night in question. But the Spirit of Christmas Future breaks down under heavy questioning and confesses that Jacob Marley forced them to break one of the rules of redemption: Do not use a dead body to scare someone into redemption, for the consequences could prove fatal. Judge Stanchfield Pearson gives his verdict: Jacob Marley and the Spirits of Christmas, guilty! Then, in a staggering turn of events, Scrooge makes the spirits an offer: work every day, not just one day a year, and he'll drop the charges. And then ... a twinkle in Scrooge's eye, a smile, and giddy, joyously delirious laughter. Scrooge confesses that Jacob Marley and the Spirits of Christmas had to go to extraordinary measures to change him, so he had to go to extraordinary measures to change the Spirits of Christmas. The spirit of caring and giving should be every day, not just once a year. *One int. set. Approximate running time: 2 hours.*

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THE TRIAL OF EBENEZER SCROOGE

By
MARK BROWN



Dramatic Publishing

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(THE TRIAL OF EBENEZER SCROOGE)

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Orlando, Florida, on December 3, 2004,
Jim Helsinger, Artistic Director,
Mary Ann Dean, Executive Director.”

THE TRIAL OF EBENEZER SCROOGE was originally produced as a PlayFest Workshop at the Orlando-UCF Shakespeare Festival in Orlando, Florida. It received its world premiere at the Orlando-UCF Shakespeare Festival on December 3, 2004 under the direction of Arlen Bensen.

CAST

Scrooge. Philip Nolen
Jacob Marley/Bob Cratchit. J.D. Sutton
Fred/Christmas Future Timothy Williams
Christmas Past/Fan/Belle. Sarah Hankins
Solomon Rothschild Jeff Marlow
Judge Pearson Ron Schneider
Mrs. Cratchit/Miss Wainwright/Translator . . . Diana Brune
Mr. Connolly, the Bailiff. Seth Maisel

ARTISTIC STAFF

Director. Arlen Bensen
Scenic Designer. Bob Phillips
Lighting Eric T. Haugen
Costume Designer Kristina Tollefson
Sound Design. Britt Sandusky
Stage Manager Stephanie Spriggs
Board Operators. Aaron Scott, Michael Plummer
Dresser Timothy Shane

Original readings and workshop production by the Orlando-UCF Shakespeare Festival, Orlando, Florida.

THE TRIAL OF EBENEZER SCROOGE

A Play in Two Acts
For 6 m., 2w., playing multiple roles*

CHARACTERS
(in order of appearance)

THE BAILIFF (MR. CONNOLLY)
JUDGE STANCHFIELD R. PEARSON
SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD
EBENEZER SCROOGE
BOB CRATCHIT
MRS. CRATCHIT
FRED
SARA WAINWRIGHT
JACOB MARLEY
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST
FAN
BELLE
MRS. DILBER
GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME
THE TRANSLATOR

*See following page for character breakdown.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

ACTOR 1:

The Bailiff (Mr. Connolly)

ACTOR 2:

Judge Stanchfield R. Pearson

ACTOR 3:

Solomon Rothschild

ACTOR 4:

Ebenezer Scrooge

ACTOR 5:

Bob Cratchit

Jacob Marley

ACTOR 6:

Fred

Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

ACTOR 7:

Mrs. Cratchit

Sara Wainwright

Mrs. Dilber

The Translator

ACTOR 8:

Ghost of Christmas Past

Fan

Belle

ACT I

(Lights up on a courtroom. Judge's bench, witness stand, two tables with chairs. Lit sconces hang on the wall. MR. CONNOLLY, the BAILIFF, prepares the room for the trial. He half-sings, half-hums "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen." He takes a big shovelful of coal from the coal box and puts it in the stove. Presently, JUDGE PEARSON, the newly crowned King of Humbug, enters.)

BAILIFF. Good morning, Your Honor.

JUDGE PEARSON. What's good about it?

BAILIFF. It's snowing, it's Christmas Eve, there's joy in the air—

JUDGE PEARSON. It was a rhetorical question.

BAILIFF. Oh... Big trial starts today.

JUDGE PEARSON. I am well aware of that fact.

BAILIFF. The papers are calling it the trial of the century.

JUDGE PEARSON. The papers should concern themselves with news and not sensationalism.

BAILIFF. Everyone in the world will be following this trial.

JUDGE PEARSON. Everyone should find something better to do.

BAILIFF. But—

JUDGE PEARSON. This trial is a waste of time, Mr. Connolly. My time. I do not like to waste my time. And to make matters worse, I will be forced to suffer the sickening sweet courtroom proceedings of Mr. Rothschild.

BAILIFF. The people like him.

JUDGE PEARSON. The people don't have to tolerate him on a daily basis. "Would you please state your full name for the court. Catherine Harrington. Mrs. Harrington, may I call you Catherine?" Mark me, every witness.

BAILIFF. He's just doing his job.

JUDGE PEARSON. As should you. (*The JUDGE opens the door of the coal stove...*) As for Mr. Rothschild, I wish he'd do his job somewhere else. I find him to be an annoyingly doltish irritant in my courtroom. (*...takes the shovel...*)

BAILIFF. I haven't heard who's representing Mr. Scrooge.

JUDGE PEARSON. He's representing himself. (*...removes most of the coals...*)

BAILIFF. Why?

JUDGE PEARSON. Because he's cheap. (*Exits into his chambers.*)

(SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD, from the law firm of Rothschild, Steinberg and Jacobson, enters. Confident, affable and sincere. EBENEZER SCROOGE, mean, angry and bitter, enters. They sit at the two tables.)

BAILIFF. All rise. The Honorable Stanchfield R. Pearson.

(JUDGE PEARSON, clad in a robe and white wig, enters. He takes his seat and raps his gavel.)

JUDGE PEARSON. Be seated. Court is now in session. Entered on this 24th day of December, 1844, by Ebenezer Scrooge, a complaint of attempted murder, kidnaping, breaking and entering, trespassing, stalking, slander, theft, pain and suffering and the intentional infliction of emotional distress against Jacob Marley and the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future. How do your clients plead, Mr. Rothschild?

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Not guilty, Your Honor.

JUDGE PEARSON. Very well. Opening remarks. Mr. Scrooge.

(SCROOGE rises.)

SCROOGE. Bah humbug. *(SCROOGE sits down.)*

JUDGE PEARSON. That's it? That's your opening?

SCROOGE. Yes. That's what I think of Mr. Marley and his hooligan friends. Bah humbug.

JUDGE PEARSON. Mr. Scrooge, perhaps if you reconsidered legal representation—

SCROOGE. I'm capable of representing myself.

JUDGE PEARSON. Very well. Mr. Rothschild.

(ROTHSCHILD rises.)

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Merry Christmas.

SCROOGE. Objection.

JUDGE PEARSON. Mr. Scrooge, you may not object during Mr. Rothschild's opening statement.

SCROOGE. I find the phrase "Merry Christmas" objectionable.

JUDGE PEARSON. As much as you find the phrase “Merry Christmas” objectionable, and as much as I find it ironic that someone of Mr. Rothschild’s upbringing would use such a phrase, you may not legally object to it during the opening remarks. Again, I urge you to reconsider legal—

SCROOGE. I am capable of representing myself.

JUDGE PEARSON. Then it will come as no surprise to someone as knowledgeable as yourself regarding courtroom procedure that it is common courtesy to refer to me as “Your Honor.”

SCROOGE. I am well aware of that courtesy.

(SCROOGE and PEARSON glare at each other.)

JUDGE PEARSON. Sit down, Mr. Scrooge, and not a word from you during Mr. Rothschild’s opening remarks. Mr. Rothschild.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Thank you, Your Honor. Happy holidays. This trial is not about attempted murder. It is not about kidnaping. It is not about slander or theft or trespassing. But I agree with Mr. Scrooge on one point: this trial is about pain and suffering. The pain and suffering of a shut-up heart. The pain and suffering of a lost soul. The pain and suffering endured by Mr. Scrooge because he had lost the Christmas spirit.

One year ago, one year ago this very night, Mr. Scrooge’s closest and only friend went to extraordinary measures to heal that pain and suffering. Jacob Marley, along with the Spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Future, came to Mr. Scrooge and challenged him. They

challenged him to look beyond the darkness of his cold, shriveled soul, to look beyond his vicious and malicious ways, to look beyond his pain and suffering and look into the bosom and the belly of the miraculous and awe-inspiring spirit of Christmas. And do you know what happened? Do you know what happened when Mr. Scrooge took a good hard look into a life brimming with the spirit of Christmas? Mr. Scrooge found his heart. Mr. Scrooge found his soul. Mr. Scrooge found his joy, his happiness and his compassion because Mr. Scrooge found the Christmas spirit. We all saw the change in him. How could we not? His soul had new life. His heart laughed and we laughed with him. He was merciful. He was charitable. He was a pleasure and a joy to be near.

But now the unthinkable has happened. Mr. Scrooge's heart has grown cold again. Mr. Scrooge's soul is shut up again. Mr. Scrooge's life is merciless, malignant and malevolent again because Mr. Scrooge has lost his Christmas spirit again. And if that wasn't enough, as if a fall of man wasn't enough, as if the souring of the wondrous milk of human kindness wasn't enough, Mr. Scrooge now wants to punish those benevolent selfless souls who brought about the miraculous change in him a year ago.

My clients didn't murder Mr. Scrooge. They didn't kidnap him. They didn't harass or harm him. What they did was go to extraordinary measures to heal the pain Mr. Scrooge suffered by helping him find his Christmas spirit. And for that my clients should not be punished.

They should be embraced and loved. Thank you.
(*ROTHSCHILD sits down.*)

JUDGE PEARSON. Mr. Scrooge, you may call your first witness.

SCROOGE. No witnesses at this time.

JUDGE PEARSON. You're joking, right?

SCROOGE. No.

JUDGE PEARSON. Why me? Mr. Rothschild.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. I'd like to call to the stand Mr. Robert Cratchit.

JUDGE PEARSON. Mr. Robert Cratchit.

(*BOB CRATCHIT takes the stand.*)

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Would you please state your full name for the court?

CRATCHIT. Robert Cratchit.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Mr. Cratchit, may I call you Robert?

(*JUDGE PEARSON gives the BAILIFF a look.*)

CRATCHIT. Bob is fine.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Bob, what is your relationship to Mr. Scrooge?

CRATCHIT. I'm a clerk at Scrooge and Marley's.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. And you work for both Mr. Scrooge and Mr. Marley?

CRATCHIT. Only Mr. Scrooge.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Why don't you work for Mr. Marley?

CRATCHIT. Well...Mr. Marley is dead, to begin with.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Dead?

CRATCHIT. Yes, sir.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Was he dead on the night in question?

CRATCHIT. Yes, sir.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. You're positive?

CRATCHIT. There is no doubt whatsoever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker and...

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Go on.

CRATCHIT. Mr. Scrooge.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Mr. Scrooge signed the register of burial?

CRATCHIT. Yes, and his name is good for anything he chooses to put his hand to.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. On the night in question, did Mr. Scrooge know that Mr. Marley was dead?

CRATCHIT. How could he not know? Mr. Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Mr. Scrooge was his sole friend and his sole mourner.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. So on the night in question, Old Marley was as dead as a doornail?

SCROOGE. Objection.

JUDGE PEARSON. Sustained. Mr. Rothschild, you've made your point. There is no doubt that Marley was dead.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Your Honor, this must be distinctly understood or nothing wonderful can come of this trial we're about to undertake. If we were not perfectly convinced that Hamlet's father died before the play began, there would be nothing more remarkable in his taking a stroll at night in an easterly wind upon his own

ramparts, than there would be in any other middle-aged gentleman rashly turning out after dark in a breezy spot to frighten his son's weak mind.

JUDGE PEARSON. Thank you for the literary lesson. You've made your point. Move on.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Bob, in your opinion, what kind of man is Mr. Scrooge?

CRATCHIT. Well... He's...thrifty...

(Rising from her seat in the courtroom is MRS. CRATCHIT. A no-nonsense woman.)

MRS. CRATCHIT. Oh, Bob. He's a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, he is.

JUDGE PEARSON. Order.

MRS. CRATCHIT. A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, clutching, covetous old sinner.

JUDGE PEARSON. Mr. Connolly. Remove her from the courtroom.

(The BAILIFF wrestles with her.)

MRS. CRATCHIT. Hard and sharp as flint from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire.

(And the BAILIFF wins...barely.)

JUDGE PEARSON. Let me hear another word from anyone else and I'll have the lot of you arrested for contempt. Mr. Connolly, lock the door. I'll have no more interruptions. Mr. Rothschild.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Bob, would you agree with your wife's outbursts?

SCROOGE. Objection.

JUDGE PEARSON. Sustained. Mr. Rothschild, you shall not encourage contemptible behavior.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Bob, how long have you worked for Mr. Scrooge?

CRATCHIT. Ten years.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. In those ten years, have you and Mr. Scrooge ever had a drink together after work?

CRATCHIT. No.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Ever had him over for dinner?

CRATCHIT. No.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Have you ever had dinner at his house?

CRATCHIT. Mr. Scrooge is secretive and self-contained and solitary as an oyster.

SCROOGE. Objection.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Establishing character, Your Honor.

JUDGE PEARSON. Be quick about it. Overruled.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Bob, let's talk about the night in question. Christmas Eve. Do you remember where you were on that day?

CRATCHIT. Yes, sir. I was at work.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Of all the good days of the year, on Christmas Eve you were working?

CRATCHIT. Yes, sir. I had to work the whole day.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. Do you recall what the day was like?

CRATCHIT. Yes. I distinctly remember the city clock striking three, but it was quite dark already, and candles were flaring in the neighboring offices like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air. It was extremely foggy and I remember thinking to myself that to see the fog come pouring in, obscuring everything, one might have thought that nature lived hard by, and was brewing on a large scale.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. It was quite cold that day, as I recall.

CRATCHIT. Yes, it was cold, bleak, biting weather.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. But you had the warmth of your office to protect you from the elements.

CRATCHIT. Not quite.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. No? You didn't have a fire blazing inside the successful offices of Scrooge and Marley's?

CRATCHIT. No, sir. External heat and cold have very little influence on Mr. Scrooge. It seems that no warmth warms him, nor wintry wind chills him.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. But surely you had some sort of fire burning?

CRATCHIT. A very small one.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. How small?

CRATCHIT. One coal.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. One coal?

CRATCHIT. Yes, sir.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. That hardly constitutes a fire.

CRATCHIT. Mr. Scrooge's orders.

SOLOMON ROTHSCHILD. On the coldest day of the year, Mr. Scrooge wouldn't allow you to burn more than one coal?