

trinityrep

2020 STUDY GUIDE

# A Christmas Carol *online*





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Brian McEleney as  
The Ghost of Christmas  
Present, with Mauro  
Hantman, 2003

Cover: Joe Wilson, Jr., costume by Amanda Downing Carney, image by Michael Guy

# A Christmas Carol *online*

*Starring* **JOE WILSON, JR.**

**DANIEL DUQUE-ESTRADA  
TAAVON GAMBLE  
REBECCA GIBEL  
STEPHEN THORNE  
RACHAEL WARREN**

*Director of Photography* **ALBERTO GENAO**

*Executive Producers* **TOM PARRISH  
LAURA E. SMITH**

*From the novella by* **CHARLES DICKENS**

*Adapted and Directed by* **CURT COLUMBUS**

*Premiered December 17, 2020*

**DEDICATED** to those whose lives have been lost due to the pandemic; to those whose livelihoods have been impacted, including those who lost their employment at Trinity Rep and throughout the theater industry; and to the healthcare and front line workers risking their lives to see us through to better days.

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## THE PRODUCTION TEAM

*Adapted and Directed* **CURT COLUMBUS**  
*From the novella by* **CHARLES DICKENS**  
*Executive Producers* **TOM PARRISH, LAURA E. SMITH**  
*Director of Photography* **ALBERTO GENAO**  
*Editor* **ALBERTO GENAO**  
*Costume Designer* **AMANDA DOWNING CARNEY**  
*Music Composer* **MICHAEL RICE**  
*Music Composer "The Shepherd's Carol" and "Hey Ho"*  
**RICHARD CUMMING**  
*First Assistant Director* **KRISTEN GIBBS**  
*Choreographer* **TAAVON GAMBLE**  
*Set Decorator* **S. MICHAEL GETZ**  
*"A" Camera Operator* **ALBERTO GENAO**  
*1st Assistant Camera* **MIGUEL MORILLO**  
*2nd Assistant Camera/Translator* **LEANDRO "KUFA" CASTRO**  
*Sound Mixer* **PETER SASHA HUROWITZ**  
*Gaffer* **STEVE McLELLAN**  
*Best Boy* **ZACHARY J. REMSON**  
*Property Master* **S. MICHAEL GETZ**  
*Props* **ALYSSA KARNES**  
*Set Dressers* **ALYSSA KARNES**  
**MICHAEL MCGARTY**  
**IAN STILLMAN**  
*Costume Supervisor* **ERIN MEGHAN DONNELLY**  
*Still Photographers* **AMANDA DOWNING CARNEY**  
**S. MICHAEL GETZ**  
**ANNE L. HARRIGAN**  
**LAURA E. SMITH**  
*Sound Designer* **PETER SASHA HUROWITZ**  
*Illustrator/Animator* **MICHAEL GUY**  
*Health Officer/Lead COVID-19 Compliance Officer*  
**ANNE L. HARRIGAN**  
*COVID-19 Compliance Officer* **LAURA E. SMITH**  
*Health Screening Supervisor* **KELLY McDONALD**

**Screenplay Developmental Workshop Group:** Amanda Downing Carney, Curt Columbus, Daniel Duque-Estrada, Taavon Gamble, Alberto Genao, S. Michael Getz, Kristen Gibbs, Rebecca Gibel, Peter Sasha Hurowitz, Michael McGarty, Steve McLellan, Laura Smith, Ian Stillman, Stephen Thorne, Rachael Warren, Joe Wilson, Jr.

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## THE CAST (in order of appearance)

*Spirit of Christmas* **DANIEL DUQUE-ESTRADA†**  
*Ebenezer Scrooge* **JOE WILSON, JR.†**  
*Herself* **REBECCA GIBEL†**  
*Herself* **RACHAEL WARREN†**  
*Himself* **TAAVON GAMBLE**  
*Fred, Nephew to Scrooge* **RODNEY WITHERSPOON, II**  
*Solicitor for the Poor* **REBECCA GIBEL†**  
*Solicitor for the Poor* **RACHAEL WARREN†**  
*Bob Cratchit* **TAAVON GAMBLE**  
*Jacob Marley* **STEPHEN THORNE†**  
*The Ghost of Christmas Past* **REBECCA GIBEL†**  
*The Ghost of Christmas Present* **DANIEL DUQUE-ESTRADA†**  
*Tophers* **CHRISTOPHER LINDSAY**  
*Lucy* **JESSICA NATALIE SMITH**  
*Sam Cratchit* **ADAM CROWE**  
*Tiny Tim* **EVELYN MAROTE**  
*Ignorance* **LEANDER CARNEY**  
*Want* **TRISTAN CARNEY**  
*Charwoman* **REBECCA GIBEL†**  
*Old Joe* **STEPHEN THORNE†**  
*Mrs. Dilber* **RACHAEL WARREN†**  
*Himself* **DANIEL DUQUE-ESTRADA†**  
*Himself* **STEPHEN THORNE†**  
*Himself* **JOE WILSON, JR.†**

†Trinity Rep Resident Acting Company member

**SPECIAL THANKS** (in alphabetical order) • Brown University • City of Providence, RI • Peter and Ron Cardi • Russell Carey • Joe Carney • Rebecca Downing • Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce • Eugene Lee, Set Designer of *A Tale of Two Cities* • Marta V. Martinez, Artist-in-Residence • Mermaid Masterpieces • Bob Moniz • Ocean State Job Lot • Daniel Perkins, Sensory Friendly Consultant • Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau • Rhode Island Commerce Corporation • Rhode Island Community Food Bank • Rhode Island Film & Television Office • Rhode Island Foundation • Rhode Island Latino Arts • Rhode Island State Council on the Arts • James Rowan, Huron Consulting Group • St. Francis of Assisi Church and Cemetery (Wakefield, Rhode Island), Fr. Henry Bodah, Pastor • Town of South Kingstown, RI • Trinity Rep Health Advisory Committee: Elaine Desmarais, Louis Giancola, Eve Tucker Keenan, David Savitz, David Tomlinson

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No animals were harmed in the making of this production.



# How to Watch *A Christmas Carol* Online

Here are answers to the most frequently asked questions about this production. If your question is not answered, please email [boxoffice@trinityrep.com](mailto:boxoffice@trinityrep.com) or call (401) 351-4242.

## QUICK GUIDE

1. Register at [trinityrep.com/carol](http://trinityrep.com/carol) for your free link to the video and bonus features.
2. Gather your list of props so you can participate at select moments of the show. (See Get Ready to Watch below)
3. Make sure your computer/mobile device/television is set up and, if applicable, are fully charged or plugged in.
4. Enjoy the show.
6. Watch the bonus content.
7. Let us know what you thought and tell your friends by tagging us on social media or sending a card/note to the Education Department at Trinity Rep.
8. Happy holidays!

## TICKETING AND GENERAL INFORMATION

**1. When can I watch the show? How many times can I watch the show?** The 2020 production will be released at 12:00 pm EST (noon) on December 17, 2020 and will be available through 11:59 pm EST on January 10, 2021. Between these dates, the video can be watched at any time, and as many times as you want.

**2. What age is the show appropriate for?** We made this show with all ages in mind. Remember, however, that it is a ghost story. Our Sensory Friendly guide will have specific information about moments that could be alarming for young children or those with sensory processing disorders. When the Sensory Friendly guide is ready, it will be posted on [trinityrep.com/carol](http://trinityrep.com/carol). If you would like to have it emailed to you, send a request to [communications@trinityrep.com](mailto:communications@trinityrep.com).

**3. Will there be captions?** Yes. While watching the video, you can turn on captions in English or Spanish, or leave them off.

## GET READY TO WATCH

**Do I need to do gather anything before I watch?** There will be moments during the show when you can interact with the video, and actors will tell you what to do. To best prepare, gather your props in advance. If you choose to use only a few items, or none at all, that's OK, too! Props include:

1. Pots and pans/wooden spoon
2. A bell
3. Bubbles
4. A party hat or accessory to show your holiday spirit
5. Fezziwig's Punch (see below for our suggested recipe)
6. A candy cane
7. An orange

You do not NEED to have any of these to enjoy the production. If you can't find them — get creative! Use a pencil on a desk or chair leg to make the pots and pans sound. Make your own bubbles using dish soap!

Fezziwig's Non-Alcoholic Punch recipe is equal parts ginger ale and cranberry juice cocktail with a splash of orange juice.

**Do I have to watch the whole show once I start?** No. You can pause and resume it when you're ready — whether that is in a few minutes or a few days. Or rewind and watch your favorite section over and over. If you resume watching during a different viewing session (i.e. you have to click the link again and not just un-pause), the video will start from the beginning.

**Something's not right. I'm having technical difficulties.** Our Box Office is available from Monday–Thursday, noon–4:00 pm EST at [boxoffice@trinityrep.com](mailto:boxoffice@trinityrep.com) or (401) 351-4242. The Box Office (and all of Trinity Rep) will be closed beginning December 24, re-opening on January 4. The Box office will be able to provide general instructions but may not be able to troubleshoot your specific circumstances.

## TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS:

- Does your device have power/full charge?
- If your class is watching on separate devices at the same time, you must register on the school form, not the general public link. If you received this Study Guide via email from Trinity Rep, you registered on the school form.
- Is the date between December 17 and January 10? Those are the only dates the video is available.

## MORE INFO AND BONUS CONTENT

**What other content is available?** Read the Viewers Guide to learn more about the actors, see behind-the-scenes photos, and read more about the making of the show.

**Watch a bonus feature community sing-a-long with some of our favorite holiday songs.** The lyrics for the sing-a-long are also in the Viewers Guide. The bonus feature video and Viewers Guide can be found at [trinityrep.com/carol](http://trinityrep.com/carol) under the heading IMPORTANT LINKS.

**Where can I find Sensory Friendly resources?** The Sensory Friendly guide will be posted to the website at [trinityrep.com/carol](http://trinityrep.com/carol) when it is ready. If you would like a digital copy of the guide when it is ready, email your request to [communications@trinityrep.com](mailto:communications@trinityrep.com).

**For more detailed information on troubleshooting** watching the video online, please visit [TrinityRep.com/FAQ](http://TrinityRep.com/FAQ). 

# Using this Study Guide in Your Classroom

A Letter from School Partnerships Manager Matt Tibbs

Welcome to Trinity Rep and the 56th season of Project Discovery! The education staff at Trinity Rep had a lot of fun preparing this study guide, and we hope that the activities included will help you incorporate the play into your academic study. It is also structured to help you to introduce performance into your classroom through the following elements:

- Community Building in Your Classroom
- Inspiration and Background on the Artist
- Entering and Comprehending Text
- Creating Text for Performance
- Performing in Your Class
- Reflecting on Your Performance

Trinity Rep's Project Discovery student matinees help high school students in the following common core areas (for more information on the National Core Arts Standards, visit <http://nationalartsstandards.org/>):



- Initiate and participate effectively in a ranges of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively (CCS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1)
- Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme (CCSS.RL.9-10.3)
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (CCSS.RL.9-10.4)
- Investigate how cultural perspectives, community ideas, and personal beliefs impact a drama/theatre work (TH: Cn10.1.1.)
- Analyze and compare artistic choices developed from personal experiences in multiple drama/theatre works (TH: Re8.1.1.)
- Respond to what is seen, felt, and heard in a drama/theatre work to develop criteria for artistic choices (TH: Re7.1.1.)
- Evaluate and analyze problems and situations in a drama/ theatre work from an audience perspective (TH: Re9.1.1.)

We know that this year has been difficult, and we hope that sharing this experience with your class will bring everyone a bit of joy. No matter if you are teaching remotely, socially distanced, or hybrid we have included activities and information that should help you incorporate the story into your curriculum.

Enjoy the show!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew J Tibbs".

Matt Tibbs

*Ebenezer Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Past with young Scrooge in the illustrated section of Trinity Rep's 2020 production of A Christmas Carol Online. Art by Michael Guy*

## UNIT ONE: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In October of 1843, when he started to write *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens was threatened by his publishers that they would reduce his salary from 200 pounds to 150 pounds per month. His wife Catherine was expecting their fifth child.

Money had always been a worry for Dickens. He was born into a struggling lower-middle class family. When he was ten, Dickens's father moved the family from Chatham to a smaller house in Camden Town, London. The four-room house at 16 Bayham Street is thought to be the model for the Cratchits' house. The six Cratchit children correspond to the six Dickens children at that time, including Dickens's youngest brother, a sickly boy, known as "Tiny Fred."

Even with the move to London, his family could not afford to send Dickens to school. When he was twelve, his father found work for him in a factory, and he boarded with another family. Soon afterward, his father was imprisoned for debt, and the whole family moved to the Marshalsea debtors' prison except for Charles, who kept working. He felt abandoned and ashamed of this experience for the rest of his life, and although he fictionalized it in his novels, during his life he told the truth to only one person, his friend and biographer, John Forster.

As an adult, Dickens found work first in a law office, and then as a newspaper reporter, covering the proceedings of Parliament. While working as a reporter, Dickens began writing semi-fictional sketches for magazines, eventually publishing them as *Sketches by Boz*. His next work was *The Pickwick Papers*, which was published in a relatively new serial format. Each month, a twelve thousand-word section of the book was sold in a "number," at a shilling each. This made a long book affordable to many more people. After *Pickwick*, all of his subsequent books, until *A Christmas Carol*, were first sold in serial form.

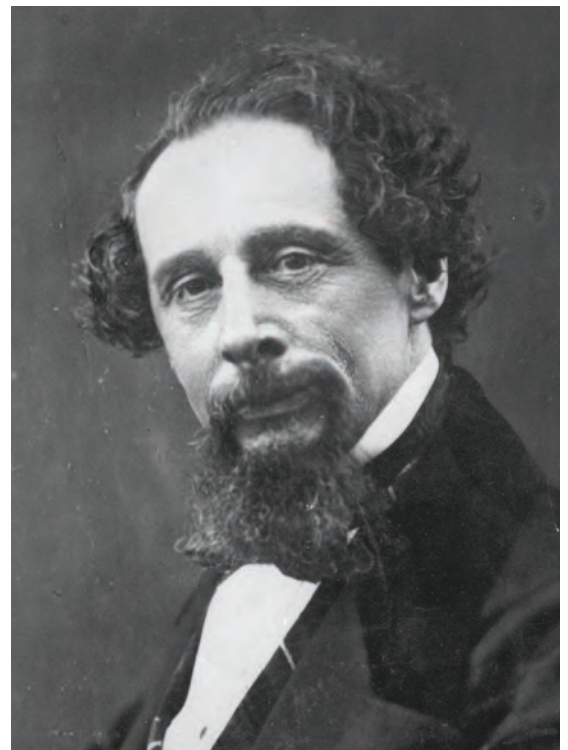
Charles Dickens was an outgoing, playful man who loved games and parties. The act of writing *A Christmas Carol* affected him profoundly. During its composition, he wrote a friend that he "wept and laughed, and wept again, and excited himself in a most extraordinary manner in the composition; and thinking whereof he walked about the black streets

of London fifteen and twenty miles many a night when all the sober folks had gone to bed."

Despite Dickens's frequent criticism of organized religion and religious dogma, he loved celebrating Christmas. Of the Christmas following the publication of *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens wrote in a letter, "Such dinings, such dancings, such conjurings, such blind-man's bluffings, such theatre-goings, such kissings-out of old years and kissings-in of new ones never

took place in these parts before. To keep Chuzzlewit going, and to do this little book, the Carol, in the odd times between two parts of it, was, as you may suppose, pretty tight work. But when it was done I broke out like a madman, and if you could have seen me at a children's party at Macready's the other night going down a country dance with Mrs. M. you would have thought I was a country gentleman of independent property residing on a tip-top farm, with the wind blowing straight in my face every day."

After *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens wrote another "Christmas book," *The Chimes*, for Christmas 1844. Dickens wrote three more Christmas books and many Christmas stories. He edited two magazines, *Household Words*, and *All the Year Round*, which published annual "Christmas numbers" for which he wrote and edited stories. Writing about Christmas and, later, giving readings from the *Carol* were important sources of income for Dickens for the rest of his life, but Dickens may have regretted this relentless association with the holiday. In a letter to his daughter Mamie he wrote that he felt as if he "had murdered a Christmas a number of years ago, and its ghost perpetually haunted me." ■



## About Charles Dickens (1812–70)

Excerpted from  
A Little Book about  
A Christmas Carol by  
Linda Rosewood Hooper





*Above: Rachael Warren as the Ghost of Christmas Present and Jude Sandy as Ebenezer Scrooge in Trinity Rep's most recent production of A Christmas Carol, in 2019.*

## Plot Synopsis

It's a cold, Christmas Eve night and Ebenezer Scrooge, the miserly businessman, continues to work far away from the holiday merriment. Scrooge's nephew, Fred, calls to invite him to Christmas dinner with his family. Scrooge turns him down without even a "Merry Christmas." While continuing to work, Scrooge accidentally answers a visit from two solicitors who are helping to raise money for those in need. They encourage him to support their cause to which he responds that his taxes already go towards prisons and workhouses and that is enough. We then meet Scrooge's assistant, Mr. Bob Cratchit, through an interoffice call, as he requests Christmas Day off from work. Scrooge begrudgingly agrees that he shall have the day, but return all the earlier the next day.

Scrooge leaves his office and as he walks home, he begins to hear the voice of his deceased business partner, Jacob Marley. Scrooge arrives home, scared and startled, and tries to convince himself that the voices were only his imagination. But soon the ghost of Marley appears to warn him that he will be visited by three spirits and that Scrooge must listen to them if he wants to escape the same fate. Even though Scrooge doesn't believe what he sees or hears, later that night the Ghost of Christmas Past

appears. The spirit shows Scrooge images from his childhood and young adulthood, including moments with his sister Fan, his first employer Mrs. Fezziwig, and a painful memory with his fiancée, Belle.

Soon the Ghost of Christmas Present arrives and shows Scrooge Bob Cratchit's tiny home on this Christmas Day. Cratchit is about to enjoy dinner with his husband Sam and their son, Tiny Tim. The spirit tells Scrooge that unless the future changes, Tiny Tim will die. The ghost also shows Scrooge his nephew Fred's house, where the family is playing games and enjoying the holiday even though Scrooge refused to join.

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come finally appears. They don't speak to Scrooge, only showing him a conversation where people discuss the death of a lonely old miser. He begs the spirit to show him someone who is moved with emotion by death, and he finds his own clerk Cratchit at the gravestone of Tiny Tim. The last stop is Scrooge's own tombstone, where he realizes that the lonely man whose death is being celebrated is his own.

Scrooge vows to change his ways. He honors Christmas Day when he wakes up in the morning, spreading generosity and kindness. Never again does Scrooge ignore the value and joys of the holiday spirit. ■



# The Characters

**THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS:** Our friendly guide through this year's virtual version of *A Christmas Carol*

**EBENEZER SCROOGE:** A wealthy moneylender who is known by all as selfish and greedy

**FRED:** Scrooge's cheerful nephew, who believes in celebrating the holiday season and the goodness of others

**SOLICITORS:** Two people who are endeavoring to raise money for those in need

**JACOB MARLEY:** Scrooge's best friend and fellow moneylender, he died seven years before and is now a ghost filled with guilt and remorse

**BOB CRATCHIT:** Scrooge's clerk, a devoted and hardworking family man with little money

**SAM CRATCHIT:** Bob Cratchit's husband, dislikes Scrooge and struggles to make ends meet

**TINY TIM:** The Cratchit's child, who is ill

**LUCY:** Fred's wife

**TOPHER:** A guest at Fred and Lucy's Christmas party

**FAN:** Scrooge's beloved sister who died giving birth to Fred

**MRS. FEZZIWIG:** Scrooge's first employer, a kind and generous woman

**BELLE:** The former fiancée of Scrooge

**OLD JO, CHARWOMAN, LAUNDRESS:**

Poor people of London, selling Scrooge's possessions

**THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST:** A spirit who represents the past years of Scrooge's life, and shows him images of events that have occurred in the past

**THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT:** A jolly spirit of the present day, showing Scrooge what's happening around him right now

**THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME:** A darker spirit who shows Scrooge what will happen in coming years ■



Right: Ed Hall as Scrooge with the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come in 1986.



*Cynthia Strickland as the Ghost of Christmas Past  
and William Damkoehler as Scrooge, directed by  
Curt Columbus in his first season at Trinity Rep, 2006-07*



# A Conversation with the Director Curt Columbus

**Natalie Dreyer:** You directed *A Christmas Carol* before. What do you like about getting to revisit this text?

**Curt Columbus:** So I've directed it twice before, and I've been involved in every production since I've been here, so that's 15 productions. Which is a lot of *A Christmas Carol*. I have to say, Natalie, this year more than any other year, we need this story. We did the workshop in September with the actors, which was a wonderful experience. When we got to the end of our script work and we read the whole script together, everyone was crying because it's like we really need this story. We need to figure out how to have hope in a time when it seems like we're really on the edge of the grave, if you will. So, this story becomes more urgent depending on when you live. Sometimes, it's just a really sweet story about the redemption of one person, and sometimes, *A Christmas Carol* can be about where you are in the world. I think it's the latter right now.

**ND:** You mentioned the workshop process, could you tell us a little bit about how you approached adapting this production to a video format and what have been some of the challenges of directing this online?

**CC:** Adapting the script is something that we do every year. We rework it for the artists who are involved, for the moment we're in, for the way the story is residing with us, for the community groups who might be involved. Adapting wasn't the challenge. The challenge was twofold.

One is how do we make what's great about Trinity Rep's *A Christmas Carol*, which is the connection between the audience and the artist, right? How do we make that resonate in an adaptation. How do we make the new media production something that's interactive? It was Danny Duque-Estrada who on the very first day of the workshop said, "I'm thinking this should be interactive," and my heart sank a little bit. He continued, "I think we need a scavenger hunt list" and I went "Oh! Yes, without question, that's what we need." So the challenge is to make it feel like you're in an interactive event, and then the other challenge is that it's COVID and we can't have actors in a scene together unless they're in a pod living together.

So you will see in our production there are two scenes in the present stage that we just couldn't figure out how to do without enlisting pods. One is the Cratchit scene. So we've got a little pod of Taavon Gamble and his partner Adam, and their niece Evelyn who's playing Tiny Tim.

And then Rodney Witherspoon, Jessica Smith, and Christopher Lindsay who are playing nephew Fred, Lucy, and Topher, as he's called in my version. They are all MFA students who are roommates. The limitations imposed upon us by COVID were much more difficult than adapting



because we had to figure out how to make this event happen even if people can't be in a scene together.

**ND:** You called this an interactive event — so it's not a play, it's not a movie, it's somewhere in between? Could you try to define that a little bit more?

**CC:** Yeah, it's a little hard to define. We're going to invite you to dance at a particular point. We're going to put together a scavenger list and a punch recipe. We're going to make it something that you can gather your family around - so it's interactive in that way. We're going to ask you to be a present tense audience member. We're going to turn some of the images from the Past scene into coloring pages that you can download and use at home. It's

things like that. It's inviting people to participate.

**ND:** What excites you most about directing this year's production of *A Christmas Carol*?

**CC:** It's exciting to do it with such a small cast. We've done this really cool thing with the Ghost of Christmas Past where she is a librarian who reaches into the screen and pulls out a little paper Scrooge. She places him in a children's book and they travel together into his past. I've always loved the notion of drawings coming to life. And it's exciting to be able to do fun things that we wouldn't be able to do on stage.

**ND:** Any new characters?

**CC:** It's not a new character, it's re-envisioned. We've often had a Reader character who is like a narrator that will talk directly to the audience and sometimes it's a group of people. This year we have Danny Duque-Estrada as the Spirit of Christmas. He's going to be talking directly to the audience. So, it's not a new character, but it's new in this environment because I don't think a lot of these new media productions use narrators.

**ND:** You are notorious for being one of the directors who didn't use snow in *A Christmas Carol*. Will there be snow this year?

**CC:** My youthful arrogance and not knowing as much about *A Christmas Carol*, and I didn't use snow my first year. People love their snow. It will depend upon the weather because we won't manufacture it during our outside shots, but I can promise everyone that when we're in the theater there will be snow.

**ND:** What do you hope audiences take away from this production?

**CC:** I hope that people feel less lonely. I think a lot of us are struggling with loneliness. I hope that people will feel that being alive and celebrating the things that make us alive is a really good thing to do when so much seems so wrong right now. And I hope they'll find hope, because I think that's what we all need right now. Just a little bit of hope. ■

# The History of the English Christmas

When Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, English Christmas traditions had been in decline for centuries. Stores and factories remained open on December 25th, and many people were forced to work on Christmas Day.

Christmas was first promoted as a major holiday in England by Pope Gregory in 601 C.E. In his effort to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity, he urged Christian missionaries to adapt the local traditions of pagan winter festivals into a celebration of Christ's birth, which was traditionally placed around December 25. The traditional Christmas celebration that we are familiar with is primarily created from a mixture of pre-Christian elements: Druid Festivals, the Saxon feast called Yule, and the Roman Saturnalia, all of which celebrated the winter solstice and the return of lengthening days.

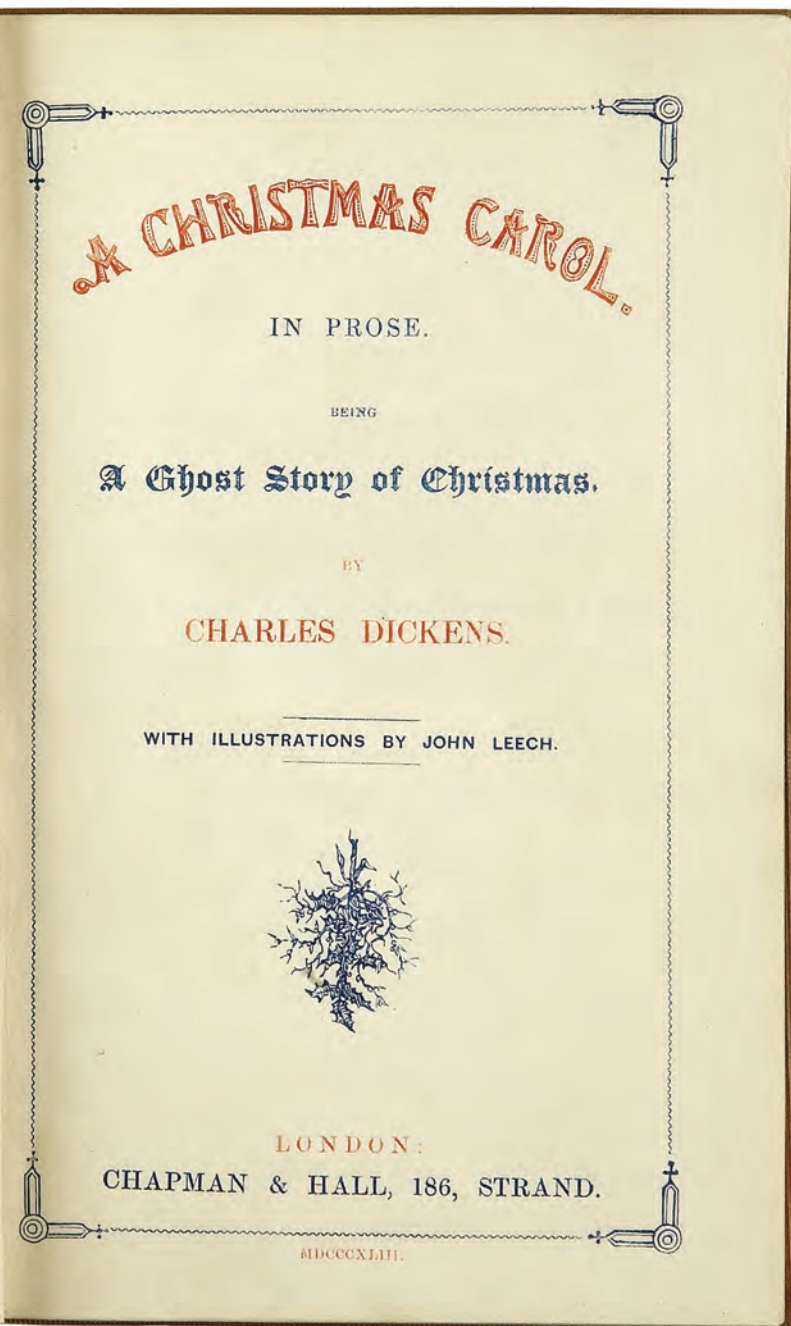
Pope Gregory and his successors did not see a conflict between pagan roots and Christian applications of the hybrid holiday. On the contrary, they hoped that by adapting the Anglo-Saxons' own traditions into the Catholic Church, they would be more likely to accept the religion. At this time, and for the next several centuries, the English lived in rural areas and rarely left the place where they grew up, which made it easier for traditions to be preserved and passed on. "Christmas" was a 12-day festival taking place in the manor of the local lord, and included burning the Yule log, playing traditional games and telling folktales, and feasting on traditional foods. By Shakespeare's time, these Anglo-Saxon traditions had grown into elaborate Christmas revels with evenings of elaborate feasting and theatricals among the wealthy.

All of this came to a halt when the Puritans took control of the English government in 1642. The Puritans felt that Christianity should be purged of pagan elements and restored as closely as possible to the form of worship used by Jesus and the apostles. Not only did Puritan dictator Oliver Cromwell close England's theaters, but, distressed by its pagan roots, his Parliament also outlawed the holiday of Christmas. In 1647, Parliament declared the feast of Christ's birth could not be celebrated with the other holy days and on December 24, 1652, they proclaimed: "No observance shall be had of the five and twentieth day of December, commonly called Christmas Day; nor any solemnity used or exercised in churches upon that day in respect thereof." The Puritans believed that even the estab-



Title pages of the 1843, first edition of *A Christmas Carol*





lished date for Christmas had been based on mere assumption, not biblical evidence, and thus was not worthy of being proclaimed a day of special worship.

When the Puritans were finally overthrown at the end of the 17th century, and the English monarchy reestablished, the Christmas traditions were slow to reappear. War and economic changes had dispersed old communities and created new ones. Many Christmas traditions had been forgotten or survived only in rural areas and among the elderly. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, though, the romantic interest in things past and folk wisdom revived an interest in Christmas traditions. Collections of traditional carols began to be published.

Even before Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol*, a few popular books attempted to record the celebrations of the past, such as *The Book of Christmas* by T.H. Hervey (1837) and *The Keeping of Christmas at Bracebridge Hall* by Washington Irving (1820). But the rapidly changing society of industrial England made it difficult for the old rural traditions to be revived.

Dickens was one of the first of these writers to not only record the old holiday traditions in his story, but also to show his readers a way to adapt them to their modern lives. The Christmas celebrations in *A Christmas Carol* show the old twelve-day manorial feast reworked into a one-day party any family could hold in their own urban home. Instead of gathering together an entire village, Dickens showed his readers Christmas celebrations that brought together the "nuclear family" and close friends. Dickens's story made the Christmas traditions accessible to an urban, industrial society, and evoked the childhood memories of people who had moved to the cities as adults.

With *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens also helped separate the traditional celebration of Christmas from its Christian religious content. Dickens had misgivings about organized religion throughout his life and, while *A Christmas Carol* does contain some references to the Christian Jesus, he avoided using most of the strictly religious symbols of Christmas in his story. This in itself was controversial at the time — some ministers believed that any story of Christmas that did not make specific reference to the birth of Jesus was self-indulgent and un-Christian, and that the ritualistic games and parties in the story were pagan and sinful if they lacked this religious context. But Dickens and others have felt that the story's themes of fellowship and kindness are not exclusive to Christianity. *A Christmas Carol* helped inspire its own tradition (that has lasted to the present day) of Christmas feasting and giving that appeals to Christians and non-Christians alike. ■

*From "The Story of A Christmas Carol" by Tori Haring-Smith  
and A Little Book about A Christmas Carol  
by Linda Rosewood Hooper*

# Christmas Across Cultures

**C**hristmas, as we know it to be, is a Victorian invention stemming from the 1860s. It is seemingly the most celebrated holiday in the world, combining culture, religion, and secular activities over hundreds of years to create what we know as the modern Christmas that exists now. But where do some of these traditions come from and how did they start?



the ceiling. Children hit the piñata until it breaks and they can gather what's inside.

**GREECE** – “Kala Christouyenna!” During the 12 days of Christmas, many people believe kallikantzeri, or goblins, cause mischief and chaos.

**NORWAY** – “Gledelig Jul!” The Yule log comes from the ancient Norse, who would use it to celebrate the return of the sun with their winter solstice. This is part of the reason why gathering around the fire, typically family fireplaces, are central imagery to Christmas. The Yule log’s form has changed in recent Christmases, with the shape being represented in the form of cheese, cakes, and desserts!

**ENGLAND** – “Happy Christmas!” In the 1830s, John Calcott Horsley popularized sending Christmas greeting cards by producing small cards with holiday scenes and prewritten messages within. Mistletoe was considered to have magical powers by Celtic and Teutonic people, and was hung in homes for good luck. During the Victorian era, it was hung in homes for similar reasons, but if someone was found standing alone under the mistletoe, they would have to be kissed by another person in the room (which was not typical behavior in Victorian society). Caroling began in England as well. Choirs would travel on foot to larger homes or castles and sing, hoping to be treated to a meal or compensated for their performance.

**THE UNITED STATES** – “Merry Christmas!” Children hang stockings by their bed or fireplace, hoping for them to be filled with treats or small gifts while they sleep. According to reports from Captain John Smith, eggnog was first made and consumed in Jamestown, Virginia in 1607.

**GERMANY** – “Froehliche Weihnachten!” The German winter solstice always included decorating evergreen trees. The first labeled “Christmas Tree” specifically for the holiday appeared in the late 17th century, and spread after Wolfgang von Goethe included them in his novel *The Suffering of Young Werther*. The first German immigrant decorated trees in Pennsylvania in the 1820’s, and Prince Albert introduced Queen Victoria and England to Christmas Trees upon marrying her and bringing his culture’s tradition.

**MEXICO** – “Feliz Navidad!” A red and green plant brought to America from Mexico in 1828 by an American minister named Joel R. Poinsett. Thought to be in line with the growing holiday, the plant was named “poinsettia” and was seen in greenhouses around Christmas. They became a symbol of the holiday by 1900. Piñatas are filled with snacks, candies, and coins and hung from

**FINLAND** – “Hyvää Joulua!” Families listen to the popular broadcast radio event “Peace of Christmas.” Another custom is to visit the grave sites of family members, friends, and loved ones.

**SWEDEN** – “God Jul!” Many people in Scandinavian countries celebrate St. Lucia Day on December 13th, which is seen as the start of their holiday season. Light is the main theme of the holiday, and though it has changed over the years, many families still choose to operate by candlelight on St. Lucia Day. Community celebrations often include a large bonfire as the night falls.

**UKRAINE** – “Srozhdestvom Kristovym!” A traditional twelve-course meal is prepared on Christmas day. The youngest child in the family watches at the window for the first star in the sky to appear, at which point, the family begins their feast.

**CENTRAL AMERICA** – St. Francis of Assisi created the first manger scene in 1224 in order to explain the birth of Jesus to others. A manger scene is a primary decoration for the holidays in Central American cultures, and spread to South American and European nations.

**AUSTRALIA** – As Christmas is a part of Australia’s summer season, many Christmases are spent at the beach or outdoors barbecuing together, often with family and friends.

**Discussion Questions:** Were there any traditions you didn’t know the origins of or had assumed it was somewhere else? Do you practice any of these traditions in your home? Do you have different traditions? If so, where did they start? What are other holidays and traditions that are practiced with those? ■

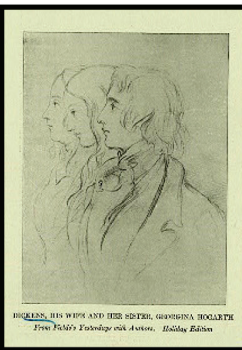


# Historical Context

## Events in Dickens' Life, Great Britain & Around the World

The timeline below details important events in Charles Dickens' life as well as happenings around the world. As you look over the timeline consider how Dickens' life related to what was happening elsewhere.

Dickens with his wife and sister. Image from the Historical and Public Figures: A General Portrait File to the 1920s, courtesy of Photographic Services and Permissions, The New York Public Library.





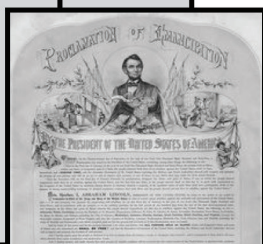


DICKENS, HIS WIFE AND HIS SISTER, GEORGINA HOGLATH. From Peter's Knowledge with Artistic, Hattie Edlin

Catherine Hogarth. Image from the Historical and Public Figures: A General Portrait File to the 1920s courtesy of Photographic Services and Permissions, The New York Public Library.



This timeline was originally published in Goodman Theatre Education & Engagement's Study Guide for A Christmas Carol. It is reprinted here with permission.

		<p>Flag of Bolivia</p> 
<p><b>1812</b> Dickens born at Landsport, Portsmouth on Feb. 7.</p>	<p><b>1814</b> Congress of Vienna, a year-long meeting to determine the future of Europe, convenes.</p>	<p><b>1809 and 1811</b> Bolivia and Venezuela declare independence from Spain, beginning wars against that country.</p>
<p><b>1822</b> Dickens and his family move to London. Due to limited finances, he can no longer attend school.</p>	<p>Propaganda for the abolishment of slavery in Britain. Image from the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, courtesy of Photographic Services and Permissions, The New York Public Library.</p>	<p>Flag of Venezuela</p> 
<p><b>1824</b> Dickens' father is arrested for debt; he begins working at Warren's Blacking warehouse. Dickens resumes schooling after his father is released from prison.</p>	<p><b>1833</b> Slavery is abolished in the British Empire.</p> 	
<p><b>1833</b> Dickens meets Catherine Hogarth, daughter of a <i>Morning Chronicle</i> music critic. Dickens works at the <i>Morning Chronicle</i> from 1833 to 1836.</p>	<p><b>1834</b> The Poor Law Amendment Act in Britain raises money by creating harsher conditions for the poor.</p>	<p>Image from The Picture Collection of the New York Public Library, courtesy of Photographic Services and Permissions, The New York Public Library.</p> 
<p><b>1836</b> Dickens and Hogarth marry on April 2.</p>		
<p><b>1842</b> Dickens and his wife go on a six-month American tour. His account of the trip, <i>American Notes</i>, criticized slavery and angered many Americans.</p>	<p><b>1842</b> British East India Company defeats the Qing Dynasty in the First Opium War, forcing China to tolerate smuggling of opium from British India into China.</p>	
<p><b>1853</b> Dickens gives his first staged reading of <i>A Christmas Carol</i> before 2,000 people at a benefit for the Birmingham and Midland Institute, a pioneer of adult scientific and technical education.</p>	<p><b>1848</b> Seneca Falls Convention for women's rights organized in New York; Manifesto of the Communist Party published in Germany.</p>	
<p><b>1869</b> Exhaustion and illness force Dickens to return home from an English tour of <i>A Christmas Carol</i>, after delivering 74 of a planned 100 readings.</p>	<p><b>1864</b> Taiping Civil War in China ends; death toll is an estimated 20 million civilians and soldiers.</p>	<p><b>1861</b> The American Civil War begins; following the Crimean War, the Emperor of Russia abolishes serfdom, or "enforced labor."</p>
<p><b>1869</b> On June 9, after a day of work on his novel in progress, <i>The Mystery of Edwin Drood</i>, Dickens dies. He had presented a total of 444 readings of <i>A Christmas Carol</i> in Great Britain and the United States.</p>	<p><b>1865</b> American Civil War ends; death toll is an estimated 620,000 soldiers and undetermined number of civilians; Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution abolishes slavery in the United States.</p>	<p>The Proclamation of Emancipation. Image from the Africana &amp; Black History collection, courtesy of Photographic Services and Permissions, The New York Public Library.</p> 

# Writing for Change

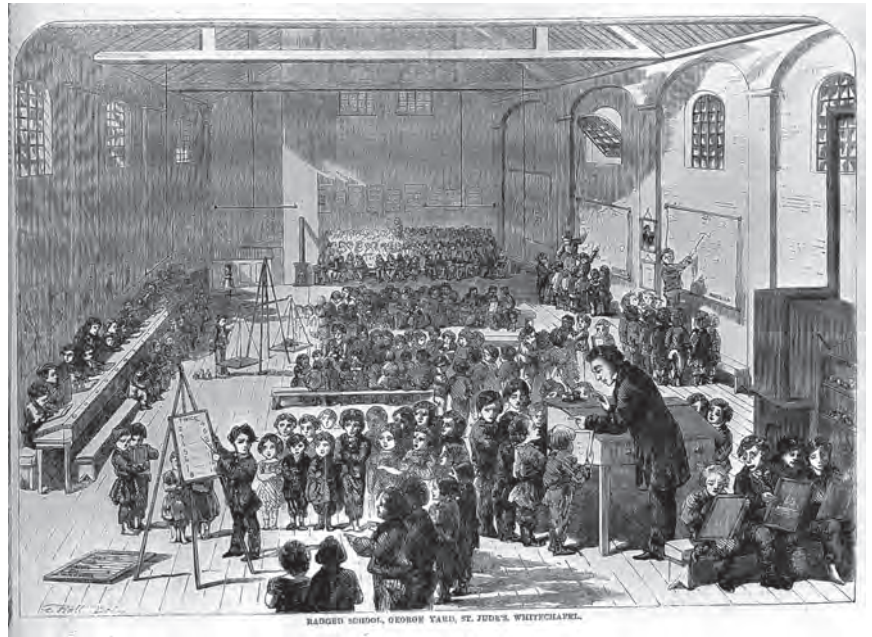
## Dickens' Inspiration for *A Christmas Carol*

Notes from Goodman Theatre's 1997 Playbill for *A Christmas Carol*

When he sat down to write *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, Dickens was already one of the foremost literary figures and social crusaders of his time, but little did he imagine that his ghostly Christmas tale would assure his future financial security, restore the then dying tradition of celebrating Christmas, and give life to characters that have endured over 150 years. After visiting several of London's charity "Ragged Schools" for poor children, Dickens decided to write an article condemning the treatment of the poor and their lack of access to education. The working poor who crowded the factories and mines were often forced to choose between work in abysmal conditions for very little money or begging on street corners. Victorian society looked on this without concern, content to think that these conditions were a necessary evil for the advancement of the state.

Fortunately for us, Dickens never finished the article. Instead, he wrote an uplifting tale of holiday cheer and an old miser's redemption. *A Christmas Carol* was written in a feverish six weeks. Dickens was so sure of the story's potential for success that he paid all publication costs himself, insisting on an elaborate format with gilt edges, colored end papers, and four hand-colored plates by *Punch*\* artist John Leech. He priced the manuscript at a modest five shillings to make it accessible to a wider audience. Dickens' faith in his story was not misplaced. Six thousand copies of the first edition were sold on the day of publication. ■

\**Punch* was a British weekly magazine of humor and satire published from 1841 to 1992 and 1996 to 2002.



### What's a Ragged School?

In Victorian London, "Ragged Schools" were educational facilities set up by charities (often religiously affiliated) to provide education, food, clothing and lodging for poor children. The schools received no government support, however, and therefore were in poor condition. Additionally, only one out of every three children attended school during Dickens' life—an estimated 100,000 poor children in Victorian London never even attended a Ragged School.

*"On Thursday night, I went to the Ragged School; and an awful sight it is... I have very seldom seen, in all the strange and dreadful things I have seen in London and elsewhere, anything so shocking as the dire neglect of soul and body exhibited in these children. [...] in the prodigious misery and ignorance of the swarming masses of mankind in England, the seeds of its certain ruin are sown. I never saw that Truth so staring out in hopeless characters as it does from the walls of this place."*

—CHARLES DICKENS, FROM A LETTER TO MISS BURDETT COUTTS, SEPT. 16, 1843

Above: Child welfare: Ragged School, Whitechapel, 19th Century. Courtesy Wellcome Collection, London.

These articles were originally published in Goodman Theatre Education & Engagement's Study Guide for *A Christmas Carol*. It is reprinted here with permission.



# Workhouses, Prisons, and The Surplus Population

These are three concepts that may seem foreign to modern audiences. During the time of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* England was in the middle of one of the largest population increases that history had ever seen. During the 19th century, London became the world's most populous city. London's population grew from 1 million in 1800 to over 2 million by the time *A Christmas Carol* was published, and to 6.5 million by the end of the 19th century. London's population grew partly due to urbanization, as people fled the countryside to work in factories. While the factory conditions were often harsh, millions of Britons found them preferable to the backbreaking agricultural labor and monotony of rural life.

The idea of a "surplus population" predates Dickens's novel, harking back to antiquity and,



Excerpts taken from "A Christmas Carol and the Politics of 'Overpopulation'" by Chelsea Follett and "The Victorian Workhouse" by Jessica Brain

Above: John Leech cartoon from *Punch*, 1852, courtesy of the Wellcome Library, London

in its early modern iteration, Thomas Malthus's 1798 work *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. Malthus's idea—that too many people would deplete resources and lead to scarcity—was popular among British intellectuals when Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol*. Indeed, in 1840s England, the concept of overpopulation seemed more relevant than ever as the population of London swelled.

Writer and economist Jerry Bowyer has argued in *Forbes* that with *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens was weighing in on a central economic debate of his time. That is, the debate between Malthusians and the disciples of the Scottish economist Adam Smith, like the French economist Jean Baptiste Say, who argued that peaceful market exchange could create prosperity and meet the needs of a growing populace. Say was right. British population growth coincided with massive enrichment.

The debate over "overpopulation," has continued to rage on, more recently between neo-Malthusians like the Stanford University biologist Paul Ehrlich and rational optimists like the late University of Maryland economist Julian Simon. The latter's insight was that human beings themselves are the "ultimate resource" making all other resources more plentiful. (Recent research lends support to Simon's ideas).

During Dickens' time, the idea of humans being the "ultimate resource" was used to a fault in workhouses, which often operated closer to prisons. The history of workhouses traces back to the Poor Law Act of 1388. By 1576 the law stipulated in the Poor Relief Act that if a person was able and willing, they needed to work in order to receive support. People who were able to work were thus given the offer of employment in a house of correction, essentially to serve as a punishment for people who were capable of working but were unwilling. This was a system designed to deal with the "persistent idlers."

When enacting the Poor Laws in some cases, some parishes forced horrendous family situations, for example whereby a husband would sell his wife in order to avoid them becoming a burden which would prove costly to the local authorities. The laws brought in throughout the century would only help to entrench the system of the workhouse further into society. By the 1830's the majority of parishes had at least one workhouse which would operate with prison-like conditions. Surviving in such places proved perilous, as mortality rates were high especially with diseases such as smallpox and measles spreading like wildfire. Conditions were cramped with beds squashed together, hardly any room to move and with little light. When they were not in their sleeping corners, the inmates were expected to work. A factory-style production line which used children was both unsafe and in the age of industrialization focused on profit rather than solving issues of pauperism. This system contributed to the splitting up of families, with people forced to sell what little belongings they had and hoping they could see themselves through this rigorous system. The conditions were harsh and treatment was cruel with families divided, forcing children to be separated from their parents. Once an individual had entered the workhouse they would be given a uniform to be worn for the entirety of their stay. The inmates were prohibited from talking to one another and were expected to work long hours doing manual labour such as cleaning, cooking and using machinery. ■

# 43 Years of Holly and Ivy, Spirits and Smiles at Trinity Rep



**J**ust as Charles Dickens had no idea that his little book would sell 6,000 copies on its first day of publication, Trinity Rep's founding artistic director Adrian Hall and composer Richard Cumming had no idea that tickets for their premiere stage adaptation of Dickens' classic would nearly sell out before it was even written. Over four decades later, *A Christmas Carol* is Trinity Rep's favorite holiday tradition.

In 1977, Hall and Cumming wrote an adaptation with music of the Dickens novel for the stage. It was such a great success that audience demand warranted another production the following year. This challenged the company of directors, designers, and actors to re-invent the story of *A Christmas Carol* each season. It remains the most anticipated and highly attended production in Trinity Rep's season, a family tradition for 43 years... and counting!

In 2020, when faced with unprecedented circumstances, Trinity Rep felt it was more urgent than ever to bring *A Christmas Carol* to families and schools across New England in a virtual format. Our creative team asked ourselves, how does this play change throughout the years? How do we create a production that meets the current needs of our audiences?

To answer these questions, we needed to embrace the fact that elements can change to meet the moment and center our community.

Representation matters and we believe that art-making and story-telling are better when they reflect the fullness of humanity. Trinity Rep acknowledges our complicit and too-often active involvement in upholding and benefiting from structures of racism and oppression, including the ways in which we tell stories and whose voices and experiences are at the center of those stories. We are committed to going further and taking steps toward healing in our community.

While we remain true to the spirit and message of Dickens' story, we deliberately departed from his original text in a few ways. In London in 1843, it was rare that a black man would be a successful businessman due to racist laws and enslavement. This year, resident acting company member, artist and activist, Joe Wilson, Jr. portrays Scrooge as a Black man. Another departure is that Bob Cratchit does not have a wife but rather a husband, Sam. In Dickensian times, gay couples would have lived as "roommates," as same-sex marriage was not legalized in England until 2014. The character known as Mr. Fezziwig in the story is Mrs. Fezziwig in our production, even though a woman would not have legally been allowed to own property nor run her own business unless she was a widow. We chose to portray an empowered, independent, successful woman in business.

As we rebuild our organization and industry back from the destructive effects of the pandemic, we celebrate all people and all forms of love, in an effort to model and enact a more equitable world. We are steadfast in our work to be as inclusive and representative of our community as possible. ■

**How would you design A Christmas Carol to represent your community? What pieces would you try to ground in historical accuracy and what would you change? Are there traditions or practices that you would include? Is there a certain song that would tie together your production? What would your ghosts look like? Would the story be set in your hometown or London? Get creative! Include a description of why you chose your interpretation and how your original concept will best serve to tell the story.**

*Above: Richard Kneeland as Scrooge in Trinity Rep's first production of A Christmas Carol, 1977*



# UNIT TWO: BUILDING CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

***It is important to build community and trust in your classroom before introducing other theater activities. Some students may feel nervous or uncomfortable using their actors' tools of body, voice, and imagination in front of their classmates. This section will include a few games that can be used either in person or through distance learning to encourage ensemble building in your classroom.***

## **ACTIVITY ONE: ONE WORD STORY**

Students should sit in a circle or establish an order of who will go next. Together we are going to tell a story, but each person can only add one word. This is a great way to have students listen to each other and stay in the moment as it is impossible to anticipate how the story might change before it is their turn again. It is sometimes helpful to have someone in charge of writing the story down and pausing to read the whole thing back every once and awhile. This game can be very silly. Make sure you all agree about any content that might not be school appropriate.

## **ACTIVITY TWO: THIS IS NOT A...**

Suspension of disbelief is one of the key philosophies that is used in the theatre. When we enter into a space we are all agreeing to a certain set of rules, that what we are seeing is going to be real, even if we all know that there is no way it could actually snow inside a building. This activity helps exercise our imagination. Each student should pick up a pencil, pen, marker or something of that relative size and shape. One at a time they will begin by saying "This is not a pen it's a..." and then instead of telling the class they will use their body to act out what the object represents. For example, "This is not a pencil, it's a..." and you might use your pencil as a flute and pretend to play the instrument. Keep offering suggestions until the group seems to slow down and then challenge them to come up with at least five more. This game can be very silly. Make sure you all agree about any content that might not be school appropriate.

## **ACTIVITY THREE: WALK LIKE — BUILDING PHYSICALIZATION FOR CHARACTER WORK**

*Note: Model this exercise first!*

This exercise is similar to how some actors develop the physicalization of their characters. Brainstorm with the students how differently each person holds their body as they walk. Which part of themselves do they lead with as they walk? What do they do with their arms? Do they make eye contact? Then, call out the following characters and your students' own brainstorms, and ask students to "walk like" this character around the room. Encourage a sense of play and imagination. This can again be done either virtually or in a classroom. Make sure students check the space around them so that they can keep their body safe.

- Walk by leading with your nose.
- Walk by leading with your elbow.
- Walk by leading with your toes.
- Walk like someone who just woke up from an amazing dream.
- Walk like you just woke up from a nightmare.
- Walk like a person who just fell in love.
- Walk like a rock star.
- Walk like a person whose love has been rejected.
- Walk like a person with enormous pride in themselves.
- Walk like a ruler of the city.
- Walk like someone who feels enormous guilt.
- Walk like a bully who wants to pick a fight.
- Walk like a queen.
- Walk like someone who is late for school.

## **ACTIVITY FOUR: SHARING TRADITIONS**

The holidays are a special time for people around the world, but how and what we celebrate looks different for everyone. Take time to reflect on how your students celebrate the holidays by sharing some of your own traditions to start a conversation. It might also be helpful to start by reflecting on how other countries celebrate (see Christmas Across Cultures on page 16). Make sure to invite other holidays into the space — (Chanukkah, Kwanzaa, Winter Solstice) and encourage your students to do research on different practices. ■

## UNIT THREE: ENTERING THE TEXT

*Now that your students have had the chance to be a little silly together and warm up their actors' tools of body, voice and imagination, they are ready to jump into activities focused on the text.*

### ACTIVITY ONE: A CHARACTER JOURNEY

This exercise serves to introduce the students to the dramatic changes experienced by the character of Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*. Depending on the number of students in your class, assign each person one of the following lines:

1. Bah! Humbug!
2. What reason do you have to be merry? You're poor enough.
3. Out upon Merry Christmas!
4. What's Christmastime to you but a time for paying bills with no money?
5. Every idiot who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips should be boiled in his own pudding.
6. Let me hear another sound from you and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your position.
7. Are there no prisons?
8. I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry.
9. If they would rather die, they had better do it and decrease the surplus population.
10. Pooh! Pooh!
11. Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?
12. I am a mortal and liable to fall.
13. I wish...but it's too late now.
14. The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.
15. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now.
16. Spirit, show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?
17. I cannot bear it!
18. Spirit, conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson, which is working now.
19. Tonight, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.
20. Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live?
21. Oh no, Kind Spirit! Say he will be spared!
22. Have they no refuge or resource?
23. Ghost of the Future, I fear you more than any Spectre I have seen.
24. I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was,

I am prepared to bear your company, and do it with a thankful heart.

25. I see! I see! The life of this unhappy man might be my own.
26. Spirit, this is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me.
27. Are these the shadows of the things that will be, or are they shadows that may be, only?
28. I am not the man I was!
29. Why show me this if I am past all hope?
30. I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year.
31. I will live in the past, the present and the future. The Spirits of all three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach.
32. I am as light as a feather. I am as happy as an angel. I am as merry as a schoolboy.
33. I thank you fifty times! Bless you!
34. A Merry Christmas to everybody!
35. I'll raise your family salary and endeavor to assist your struggling family.

Even though each of the lines is taken out of context, the tone and the meaning of each line is very clear. Ask each reader to make a clear vocal and physical choice for each line. What might Scrooge be doing while saying the line? What might he be feeling? Give the students a minute to rehearse their line and their action or physicalization of the line. Have the students stand in numbered order and speak their lines one after the other.

**Post-activity reflection:** Even though this exercise only involved one line of dialogue for each student, did it help to show the complete arc of Scrooge's character? What information, about the character, were students able to discern from just a single line of dialogue? What causes the changes in Scrooge? What caused him to be so unpleasant in the first place?

### ACTIVITY TWO: EMBODYING THE TEXT

Hand out the following lines of each character to each group. One student in the group will be the reader, and the others will each create a full-body pose that physicalizes their line (a frozen sculpture). Encourage them to improvise on the spot – they can use the whole line, or merely a phrase or word that inspires them to create a physical picture of their line. Give them thirty seconds to decide their pose, and then hand their lines to the designated reader. Have one group line up in numerical order (the other three groups will be the audience). One by one, each student should strike their pose, as the reader



reads the line that corresponds. Each should stay frozen while the others pose, forming a character arc and sculpture garden. After the last pose, the reader announces the name of the character. Repeat for the other three characters. If you are meeting virtually - you can privately message students their lines, or have them work in break out rooms and then come back together and share as a class.

#### **EBENEZER SCROOGE:**

- What is fun but is not funny? Can't you guess? It's counting money.
- Bah. Humbug.
- If they would rather die, they had better do it and decrease the surplus population.
- I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year.

#### **JACOB MARLEY:**

- Ebenezer! I'm your only friend. I am near the end.
- My spirit never walked beyond our counting house.
- Why did I walk through crowds of fellow beings with my eyes turned down?
- Remember what has passed between us.

#### **BOB CRATCHIT:**

- A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears...
- Oh... my little, little child. My little child...
- I am sure we shall none of us forget poor Tiny Tim — shall we?

#### **MR. SAM CRATCHIT:**

- I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it.
- Such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge.
- Ah, the poor dear, little lad.
- I wouldn't show weak eyes to your father when he came home for the world.

#### **FRED:**

- I have always thought Christmas time as a good time — a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time.
- I'll keep my Christmas humor to the last.
- I pity him.

### **ACTIVITY THREE: PAGE TO STAGE! (OR SCREEN)**

*A Christmas Carol* is an adaptation of a classic novel by Charles Dickens. While our scripts are based on his original words, there are always inter-

pretations, edits and changes. In this activity you will be in charge of choosing a short scene to adapt for the stage (or screen). First, choose a moment or character that you would like to focus on. Go back to the original text and read through the section. When directing we want to challenge you to "show us" not "tell us". If there are ways for the character to show what is happening rather than narrate that is always more fun! Once you have chosen what lines will go to which characters, start thinking about the mood of the scene. We often enhance the emotion of a scene through different design elements — costumes, lighting, props, etc. In this activity we would like you to focus on the sound elements. It might be helpful to watch a scene of your favorite movie on mute to get a feel for all of the layers of sound that go into producing a scene.

- What is fun but is not funny? Can't you guess? It's counting money.
- Is there a carol or song that should be sung by the characters? Should it be playing in the background?
- Are there any sound effects?
- Where is the scene located? What would we hear at that location?
- Are there certain effects that we could use to enhance the desired emotional tone of the scene?

Once you have answered these questions, go back to the text and find where these choices are supported by textual evidence. If there is no direct connection, write a brief explanation of your artistic vision for that moment. With your list of sound effects, background noise and music, begin looking around your house for objects that could help you make those sounds. Foley is the art of adding sound effects to a given scene or recording. Create a soundscape for your scene (use youtube, spotify, etc as a final addition not a jumping off point).

### **ACTIVITY FOUR: 101 WAYS TO READ A MONOLOGUE**

A monologue, or soliloquy, is a long speech made by one person. Sometimes it can be a challenge for a young actor to take on a piece of text and perform it on his or her own, so this activity is a way to get your students to forget their inhibitions and have fun with it.

1. Pick one or more of the monologues attached at the end of the packet, and hand them out to your students. You can assign or let them choose which monologue they

want to do and give them a few minutes to read it over a few times and familiarize themselves with it.

2. In partners, let them read it out loud to one another a few times in whichever way they want to.
3. Pick a few brave souls to come up and read/perform their own interpretation of the monologue for the rest of the group.
4. After this, using your own suggestions and those of your students, throw out different ways to read the monologue. Feel free to be as wacky as you want – this is supposed to be fun. You can filter the suggestions and pick one that you think would work and let them do it that way. Let each volunteer perform the monologue, or part of the monologue, three different ways before moving on. Some examples of different

ways to read it include (but are definitely not limited to): an aerobics instructor, an army general, a drunk, someone who desperately has to go to the bathroom, a squirrel, the laziest person in the world, singing it, whispering it, telling it like it's a scary story, like an interpretive dancer, like they are in a musical, like a President, or a King...you can even use celebrity names and have them imitate them using the monologue.

5. After every willing student has performed, take some time to talk about what they got from it. Did it help them understand the monologue better? If so, how? Did they find that any of the interpretations, as silly as they may have been, actually worked and made some sense? Which ones, and why? How does this help them as actors? ■



*Stephen Berenson as Scrooge (far left) with Fred Sullivan, Jr. and Janice Duclos as Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig (center) and the cast of A Christmas Carol in 2015*



# UNIT FOUR: THEME QUESTIONS & EXERCISES

## ACTIVITY ONE: MILLING AND FREEZING VOCABULARY

Clear room for your students and coach them to avoid eye contact with anyone and create their own focus while moving among the group. Have them freeze when you call out a word. Ask them to create a pose physicalizing that word and hold it for a few seconds. Then ask them to continue walking.

### Some topics and phrases:

Factory	Equality	Celebration
Soul	Injustice	Future
Fairness	Greed	Turkey
Money	Winter	Death
Ghosts	Poor	Mercy
Charity	Ignorance	Want

Afterwards, write the words on the board and ask the students to define what each means to them.

## ACTIVITY TWO: RECLAMATION OR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

*A Christmas Carol* is divided into staves, rather than scenes or acts, with the final staff referred to as "The Reclamation." Scrooge commits to being a better person and changing his ways, but he takes his change a step further by endeavoring to support those he had previously harmed. This practice is more commonly referred to as "restorative justice" and centers the work around repairing harm. Typically this refers to a crime committed, but as a theory, it can be applied to many different situations. As a class, brainstorm a list of actions and/or offenses in one column. Create two more columns, one that will include the typical "punishment" and another for alternative responses or "restorative actions."

### Discussion:

- Are there certain offenses that can't be matched with restorative actions?
- Where could you use restorative justice in your classroom or school?
- Do you think Scrooge did enough?
- If you were Mr. Sam Cratchit would you forgive Scrooge and welcome him into your home? Why or why not?

## ACTIVITY THREE: VISUALIZING POVERTY

Charles Dickens was a social activist who strongly believed in using his fiction to change attitudes and laws regarding the poor. Using magazines, newspapers and the internet, compare and contrast poverty in the United States in 2020 with Charles Dickens' 1843 London using a collage format. What are the images of wealth and poverty in each society? What images speak strongly to you about this subject? What has changed, and what has stayed the same?

### Some websites for pictures:

- British history and child labor: [http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/citizenship/struggle\\_democracy/childlabour.htm](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/citizenship/struggle_democracy/childlabour.htm)
- London in the 19th Century: <https://www.britain-magazine.com/features/region/england/london/victorian-london-photo-gallery/>

**Variation for older students:** Research the history of this country's welfare program. When did the U.S. government begin giving financial assistance to the poor? How has welfare changed over time? How many people are on welfare in the U.S. today and how much money does the government spend on programs such as food stamps, Medicaid, etc. each year? What is the welfare reform movement and what kind of reforms have been suggested? Research another country (such as France or China) and its solutions to its poverty problems. Whose system do you think is best? Why? Write up the results of your research, using informative graphs/charts you find.

### Informative Websites:

- Poverty: <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty.html>
- World Bank: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty>
- American Public Human Services Association: <http://www.apwa.org>
- Welfare and families: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/supporting/>
- State of RI resources: <http://www.dhs.ri.gov/Programs/index.php>

## ACTIVITY FOUR: M&M'S (ME AND MINE)

In *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge's obsession with his wealth perpetuates greed. Wealth and greed can often be part of a vicious cycle. The following essay and exercise give some students the choice of being greedy or charitable with their "wealth," and other students the feeling of being cut off from material goods.

### "Scrooge Times"

by Roger Rosenblatt, PBS essayist

**GENTLEMAN:** *What can I put you down for?*

**EBENEZER SCROOGE:** *Nothing.*

Until recently, the idea of being fascinated with something as intrinsically dull as money made people like Ebenezer Scrooge seem unusual. Today everybody is a little like Scrooge — not selfish necessarily but given to crediting money with a lot more importance than it deserves. Even the richest people in history had the good sense to realize that money was only interesting in proportion to the things one could do with it. What happens, though, when every ordinary Jack and Jill is presented with a culture that declares money is significant? I am not suggesting that one ought to follow Thoreau into the woods. Some portion of one's gray matter has to be given over to green matter as a matter of necessity and security and blah, blah, blah. But to actually think about money really is blah, blah, blah. Divorced from function it cannot compare to thinking about art, or sports, or politics, or nature, or God, or other people. Ah, yes, other people. One of the dangers in taking money seriously is that it may get in the way of taking people seriously — seriously. Who would have believed that of all the potential lessons to have emerged from *A Christmas Carol* the most durable would turn out to be Scrooge in his dark dullness?

With the rich wide universe outside his door, filled with people he could help if he lifted a finger, he remained closeted in the gloomy contemplation of paper and coins. What a waste, suggested Dickens, and how fitting for the darkest time of year, when all that Scrooge ever had to do was turn off the TV, put down the magazines, step out into the light, and embrace the needy world.

Bring in a bag of M&M's or mini bags of M&M's and let them know that you will be playing a game to win the candy! Have the students sit in rows facing the front of the class. Place a trash can at the front of the class and give each student paper that they must get into the trash can. Have the students write their names on the sheets of paper. Some students should be much farther away than other students, as they are in the back row. The students are not allowed to move and must all throw the paper from the same, seated position. Split up the candy so that those who got the most in the trashcan get the most candy and those who got the least in the trashcan do not get any candy. Be sure to tell each student how much they are allowed to take based on how well they did in the game. Hand out the winners first, working backwards to the losers. Encourage the students to eat their candy (Make sure you have extra candy to share with the losers after the discussion).



Mauro Hantman as Ebenezer Scrooge and Joe Wilson, Jr. as a Solicitor for the Poor in 2010

#### Discussion Questions:

**Whole Group:** How does this exercise relate to real life? What could you have done better throughout the course of this exercise?

**Students without candy:** How did you feel not getting any candy? How did you feel competing in the game? Why didn't you get candy?

**Students with candy:** How did you feel eating candy? What were your thoughts about those who did not have candy? What were your thoughts about sharing your candy? Why didn't the other students have candy and why? How did you feel competing in the game? ■



# Monologues

**FAN:** I have come to bring you home, dear brother. Home! Home! Home, for good and all. Home, for ever and ever. Father is ever so much kinder than he used to be, that home's like heaven! He spoke so gently to me one night when I was going to bed, that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home; and he said yes, you should; and sent me in a coach to bring you. And you're to be a man! And are never to come back here. But first, we'll be together all the Christmas long, and to have the merriest time in the world!

**SCROOGE:** What else can I be when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas? Out upon Merry Christmas! What's Christmastime to you but a time for paying bills without money? A time for finding yourself a year older and not a penny richer? If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips should be boiled in his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart.

**FRED:** I have always thought of Christmas as a good time — a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time. The only time I know when men and women seem to open their shut-up hearts freely. And therefore, Uncle, though it has never put a scrap of silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good and will do me good!

**MARLEY:** In his lifetime, it is required of every mortal that he walk abroad and help his fellowman. And if he goes not forth in life, his spirit is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through this world — oh woe is me! And witness what it might have shared on earth and turned to happiness. I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link and yard by yard, and of my own free will I wore it. Yours is a ponderous chain, Ebenezer. It was as heavy and as long as this seven Christmases ago. You have labored on it since.

**SCROOGE:** I will not shut out the lessons the spirits have taught me! I will live in the Past, the Present and the Future. I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year! Ahh. Yes! I'm alive. I'm alive! And I will not be the man I was! No! This bed — it's mine! My room's my own! Oh, my bed curtains! Oh they are not torn down! Rings and all! They are here! I am here! And best and happiest of all — the time before me is my own! To make amends in! The shadows of the things that would have been may be dispelled! They will be! I know they will! ■



*Anne Scurria as Scrooge, 2003*

## FURTHER READING & WATCHING

### More holiday stories by Charles Dickens:

*The Chimes*  
*Cricket on the Hearth*  
*The Haunted Man*  
*A Christmas Tree*  
The "Christmas chapter" of  
*The Pickwick Papers*

### A *Christmas Carol* on film:

Reginald Owen as Scrooge, 1938  
Alastair Sim as Scrooge, 1951  
George C. Scott as Scrooge, 1984  
Patrick Stewart as Scrooge, 1999  
Kelsey Grammer as Scrooge, 2004,  
musical TV film  
Jim Carrey as Scrooge, 2009,  
animated retelling

### The Morgan Library & Museum (NYC)

website has a high-res scan of the original handwritten manuscript of *A Christmas Carol* (with word additions/corrections/etc. and typed text below, so you can translate the script handwriting). Visit [www.themorgan.org/collections/works/dickens/ChristmasCarol](http://www.themorgan.org/collections/works/dickens/ChristmasCarol)

### ...and looking farther afield:

*Scrooged*, Bill Murray, 1988,  
American contemporary  
*The Muppet Christmas Carol*, 1992,  
musical  
*Mr. Magoo's Christmas Carol*, 1962  
animated musical  
*The Man Who Invented Christmas*,  
2017

### Bonus Trinity Rep Content:

For a sensory friendly guide, information on how to view the show, bonus videos, a family guide, and more, visit [www.TrinityRep.com/carol](http://www.TrinityRep.com/carol)

# Another Holiday Theater Tradition: *Black Nativity*

Although none are as popular or as widely done as *A Christmas Carol*, there are other theatrical productions in Chicago and throughout the nation that capture the holiday season and have become annual classics.

One of the most beloved is *Black Nativity* by Langston Hughes, who called it a "gospel song play." You'll find productions of this musical performed in churches, theaters, on college campuses, and more in cities across the country. It is a joyful retelling of St. Luke's story of the birth of Christ by way of gospel music, dance, poetry and narrative.

First produced on Broadway on Dec. 11, 1961, the original name for this play was *Wasn't It a Mighty Day?*, and it was adapted from Hughes' 1958 novel *Tambourines to Glory*, which featured gospel music. Gospel music was popular at this time, and Hughes was inspired to incorporate more of the music into his dramatic writing. He was also aware of the popularity of Gian Carlo Menotti's Christmas television opera, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. Hughes decided that rather than write a play featuring a few gospel songs, he would create a Nativity play with gospel music at its heart.

*"There are certain very practical things American Negro writers can do. And must do. There's a song that says, 'the time ain't long.' That song is right. Something has got to change in America — and change soon. We must help that change to come."* —LANGSTON HUGHES



The original Broadway cast included Alvin Ailey and Carmen de Lavallade, and its opening night audience was so enthusiastic that the cast sang for an additional half hour after the close of the show.

Gian Carlo Menotti arranged to have the show taken to his Spoleto Festival in Italy in 1962, where it was the hit of the festival, then toured Europe for the rest of the year before returning to New York's Lincoln Center for Christmas.

Many contemporary productions of *Black Nativity* have tweaked the original musical to reflect today's cultural interests. Congo Square Theatre's production, which ran in the Goodman's Owen Theater last year, ushered in a hope-filled holiday season. Amidst troubling headlines of war, starvation and genocide, prayers for "peace on earth and good will toward men" echo across the globe now more than ever. Director and co-choreographer Rajendra Ramoon Maharaj breathed new life into this holiday classic in a journey across the African Diaspora, celebrating the story of the birth of Christ while honoring the gift of life and strength of spirit that connects us all.

Although best known as a poet, Langston Hughes wrote more than 20 plays and other musicals. *Tambourines to Glory*, *Mulatto*, *Emperor of Haiti*, *Simply Heavenly*, and *Jericho-Jim Crow* are a few of the stage works by Hughes, a writer interested in the African-American oral tradition. His political plays include *Scottsboro Limited*, *Harvest*, *Angelo Herndon Jones*, and *De Organizer*. He also wrote *Mule Bone* with Zora Neale Hurston. ■

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