



One Christmas Carol

Adapted by Douglas H. Backer

One Christmas Carol is adapted from Charles Dickens

December 11, 2020 - Live streamed at 8:00 PM ET

Recorded links will also be available for purchase on December 12 through December 19, 2020.
Available to Teachers and Students

Presented by special arrangement with Stage Rights (www.stagerights.com)



Dear Families, Students and Educators,

We are pleased to bring you *One Christmas Carol* adapted by Douglas H. Baker. This one man show, offers a stirring re-telling of the holiday classic, *A Christmas Carol*. For the safety to our patrons, we are presenting *One Christmas Carol* as part of our Prime Online series. You can watch online from your home, your classroom or anywhere!

All literature produced by Prime Stage is always drawn from middle and secondary Reading Lists and themes are in the current Pennsylvania curriculum.

This Resource Guide is designed to provide background and context, classroom or home activities and content to help you enliven your students' experience with the literature and the theatre. We encourage you to use and games, activities and journal entries to spark connections with the themes, characters and story.

If you have any questions about the information or activities in the guide, please contact me and I will be happy to assist you, *and* I welcome your suggestions and comments!

Linda Haston, Education Director & Teaching Artist
Prime Stage Theatre
lhaston@primestage.com

The activities in this guide are intended to enliven, clarify and enrich the text as you read, and the experience as you *watch* the literature

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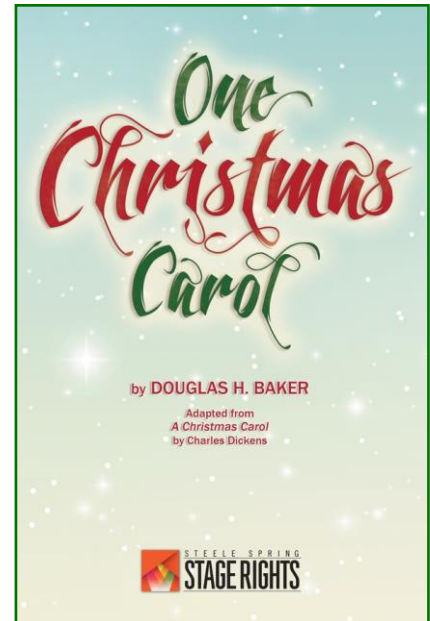


One Christmas Carol

About the play

One Christmas Carol is adapted from Charles Dickens' most famous work, *A Christmas Carol*. With one actor and over 35 distinct characters, *One Christmas Carol* is an intimate and spirited evening of theatre that everyone in the family will love! Utilizing only three unmatched chairs, Dickens' famous story about selfishness and selflessness is stripped down to its bare essence, forgoing the usual opulence of the holidays and focusing on what is of utmost importance during the season. Dickens' colorful characters are all present— Ebenezer Scrooge, Bob Cratchitt, Tiny Tim, Fezziwig, Belle, the Ghosts of Christmases Past, Present, and Future— springing to new life with a treasure trove of moral lessons for one and all. No scenery, no costumes— just one actor and a timeless story. God bless us, every one!

“An animated, intimate evening of drama.” –City Life News

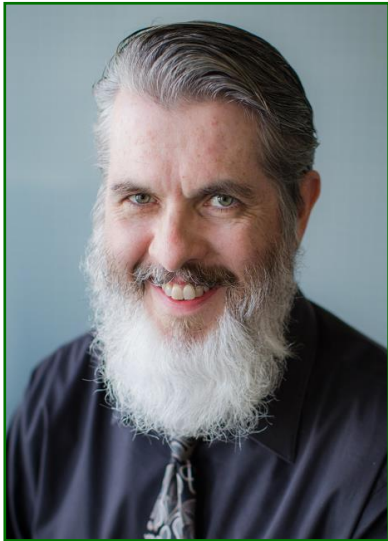


Douglas H. Baker performing in *One Christmas Carol*.
www.stagerights.com

Douglas H. Baker (playwright) has an extensive background in professional and educational theatre. A member of Actors Equity Association for 23 years, he has performed for a wide variety of regional, stock and touring companies, as well as having made numerous appearances in film and television. He holds a BFA from Utah State University and an MFA from Ohio University. Baker has written two Las Vegas production shows: *Winds of the Gods* for the Luxor Hotel and *Tournament of Kings* for the Excalibur Hotel, where he performed the leading role of Merlin the Master for over ten years. *One Christmas Carol* had its premiere in 1996 at the Lady Luck Casino in Las Vegas. Mr. Baker has since performed *One Christmas Carol* in and around Las Vegas and throughout Nevada.

Prime Online Behind the Scenes

One Christmas Carol stars local actor and director, Scott Patrick Calhoun. Prime Stage Education was excited to hang out with Scott ‘virtually’ and learn more about what goes into recreating this iconic story!



The Dickens classic, *A Christmas Carol* has become a bit of a yearly Christmas tradition. Can you share how you first came to know this story and any experiences you may have had seeing or performing other adaptations of this work?

Honestly, I don’t recall the first time I became aware of A CHRISTMAS CAROL. It had to be when I was very young. Probably on television back in the 60s or 70s and then, of course, reading the book. I seem to recall it was required reading but I read a lot back then, so I would have read it anyway. This is the first time I have been involved with a stage production but, hopefully, not the last.

It’s going to be awesome to see you portray so many famous characters in Charles Dickens story. In fact, you play over 35 different characters in this play! Could you tell us about your preparation and process for playing that many different people?

I hope that will be true, being awesome to see me portray so many characters. It’s probably been one of the most challenging roles I have done. The approach for creating the many characters started with reading the play over and over and studying what was said about them in the story. Of course, the original story and the many versions of its telling influence, to some degree, the ideas for each of the characters. And then, creating voices that are representative of the characters’ descriptions followed by developing a physical characteristic that distinguishes each character from one another, one that can be easily and quickly transitioned to, hopefully, will round out the work. To me, it was especially important to distinguish characters that interacted with each other in the same scenes. My director and vocal coach deserve a lot of credit for assisting in the creation of the characters. They gave a lot of very helpful, tangible advise. Plus, they actually see what I’m doing, which I obviously don’t, so they can see what works and what doesn’t. In addition, Shane is very knowledgeable of the original story and its characters.

How is the remote rehearsal process going? Are you doing everything over Zoom or are you and director Shane Valenzi able to do some work in-person? I believe Shane and I have been in the same room together one time so far. It’s been quite a challenge all around on so many levels. I do get to go to the studio on occasion, by myself, where there is space for me to move around but the rest of the time, I have been constrained to a small corner of my basement with scoop lights keeping me lit for everyone on zoom to see. It’s a huge challenge already, trying to remember all the lines, all the physical characterizations, all the different dialects, sound changes and voices while also thinking about, how to rehearse in a virtual setting - been a bit surreal since live theatre is usually about interaction with live ‘others.’ I suppose film actors have some experience with this but, as a stage actor, it takes some getting used to and, I am sure, once we get to the point where there are cameras in front of me, I’ll be completely blown away.

Q & A with Costume Designer, Kim Brown

Kim Brown is one of Pittsburgh's most in demand costume designers. She designs costumes nationally and locally for professional, amateur and academic theaters.

Could you tell us about the role of the costume designer in a theatrical production? What do they do? So, the function of a costume designer is to support the story telling of the director/producer/playwright by providing the physical wardrobe elements and hand held props that the actor needs to communicate to an audience. This form of story telling, while visual, is moving into new realms, as audio descriptions are made available for audience members who are blind or vision impaired. I write key information for audio describers that can be shared to enhance the experience. This information is also useful to describers for a blind and deaf person, who then have the entire show "signed" into their own hand as the show progresses.

What lead you become a costume designer? What do you most enjoy about it?

I was adopted at the age of six (that's another story) and my adopted grandmother made my Barbie doll clothes. We watched "The Lawrence Welk" variety show on television together and I announced I was "going to make clothes for people like that" You know - performers. I had never been to a play at that young age, but I was fascinated by the wardrobe and recognized it's role. My grandmother taught me embroidery, which is a skill I still use today and she taught me how to machine sew when I was 13. I sewed projects for college money and made Cabbage Patch doll clothes by the hundreds in the early 1980's.

I earned my Bachelor of Science degree in Fashion Merchandising and Design and my Master of Fine Arts degrees from Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. I opened Spotlight Costumes in Pittsburgh in 1988 with fellow OU alum Anne Oates who was a cutter/drapeer. Sadly, she died in 2005 from glioblastoma, the malignant brain cancer that took the lives of John McCain and Beau Biden.

Like Paul Tazewell, "Hamilton"'s designer, dual degrees in fashion and theatrical costume has helped me over the years to create proper marriages of fashion and stage fashion. It is for the actors that I do this, for they bear the most responsibility in this story telling responsibility.

Spotlight Costumes is the last year round costume shop in Pittsburgh serving professional and community theater. So whether I am providing one costume or hundreds, I take my role in production seriously. I hope the "extended intermission" gives people renewed appreciation for all who work in the arts. I remain grateful to clients like Prime Stage who have remained committed to bringing theater to audiences and remain committed to the employment of local talent.

Could you tell us about your design for this production of *One Christmas Carol*?

This one actor production that will feature the actor Scott Calhoon as Charles Dickens. We have had an initial fitting of period inspired shirt, neckwear and vest with a frockcoat and pants to follow. This production will not feature costume changes. The base costume serves to present Dickens "reading" his classic take and taking on all of the characters.

Have you discovered any new challenges for costuming during this time of social distancing?

The most challenging part is creating the hair and facial beard of Dickens. Fortunately, Scott has grown his own beard which will be colored darker brown with temporary color. Using safe practices, with clean costumes, it has been possible for me to costume this actor in the same manner that I costumed Matt Henderson as Einstein for Prime Stage's recent production.



A Christmas Carol in 2 minutes or less..

A mean-spirited, miserly old man named Ebenezer Scrooge sits in his counting-house on a frigid Christmas Eve. His clerk, Bob Cratchit, shivers because Scrooge refuses to spend money on heating coals for a fire. Scrooge's nephew, Fred, pays his uncle a visit and invites him to his annual Christmas party. Two portly gentlemen drop by and ask for a contribution to their charity. Scrooge reacts to the holiday visitors with bitterness spitting out an angry "Bah! Humbug!"

Later that evening, Scrooge receives a chilling visitation from the ghost of his dead partner, Jacob Marley. As punishment for his greedy and self-serving life his spirit has been condemned to wander the Earth weighted down with heavy chains. Marley hopes to save Scrooge from sharing the same fate. Marley informs Scrooge that three spirits will visit him during each of the next three nights.

He wakes moments before the arrival of the Ghost of Christmas Past, a strange childlike phantom with a brightly glowing head. The spirit escorts Scrooge on a journey into the past to previous Christmases from the curmudgeon's earlier years. Scrooge sheds tears of regret before the phantom returns him to his bed.

The Ghost of Christmas Present arrives and takes Scrooge through London to unveil Christmas as it will happen. Scrooge watches the Cratchit family prepare a meal in their meager home. He discovers Bob Cratchit's son, Tiny Tim, a boy whose kindness warms Scrooge's heart. And, he is brought to a Christmas party at Fred's home. Scrooge finds the gathering delightful and pleads with the spirit to stay. Toward the end of the day, the spirit shows Scrooge two starved children, Ignorance and Want, living under his coat. He vanishes instantly as Scrooge notices a dark, hooded figure coming toward him.

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come leads Scrooge through a sequence of mysterious scenes relating to an unnamed man's recent death - businessmen discussing the riches, vagabonds trading his items for cash, and a poor couple expressing relief at the death of their creditor. Scrooge begs to know the name of the dead man and finds himself in a churchyard, the spirit pointing to a grave. Scrooge looks at the headstone and is shocked to read his own name. He desperately implores the spirit to alter his fate, promising to renounce his ways and honor Christmas with all his heart. Whoosh! He suddenly finds himself safely tucked in his bed.

Overwhelmed with joy, Scrooge rushes out onto the street to share his newfound Christmas spirit. He sends a giant Christmas turkey to the Cratchits and attends Fred's party. As the years go by, he holds true to his promise and honors Christmas with all his heart.



Key Plot Details Picture from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zgvbqk7/revision/2>

Putting it in Context



Sketch of Charles Dickens in 1842

A Christmas Carol is the most popular piece of fiction that Charles Dickens ever wrote. When it was initially published in December 1843, Dickens had been certain the book would sell well. But he couldn't have foreseen how completely the tale would be embraced by the public, or that it would evolve into a beloved classic.

Dickens began to write *A Christmas Carol* in October 1843. He was determined to get the book out in time for Christmas, giving him a very short window to work in. However, the pressing schedule wasn't solely motivated by inspiration, Dickens was desperate for money. At the time, Dickens' writing career was in a slump. He was in debt with a family to support and a new child on the way.

While money was admittedly a factor in writing *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens also wanted to convey a message about Victorian society and how it treated its most desperate members. Early in 1843, Dickens had read a report about children in the workforce, which contained testimony from young laborers about their long days, low

wages, and dangerous working conditions. Having worked in a factory himself as a boy, Dickens always felt a kinship with those who were struggling, particularly children.

Later in 1843, Dickens visited schools for the poor in slums (called "ragged schools" in reference to the worn clothes of many attendees), where he encountered children who lived as thieves and prostitutes to survive. After giving a speech on the importance of education for every class, Dickens had the idea for *A Christmas Carol* — a book that showed the challenges faced by the poor, and how generosity could lessen their burdens.

Dickens finished *A Christmas Carol* in only six weeks! Writing a full story in this manner was new for him, as his other novels had been serialized in newspapers and magazines over months and years. Scholars say that the shorter writing period may have helped him craft a stronger story.

To create the character of Tiny Tim, the ailing young boy and primary catalyst for Ebenezer Scrooge changing his miserly ways, Dickens drew on the lives of two family members: a sickly younger brother who'd been known as Tiny Fred and a nephew, Henry Burnett Jr., who was disabled. Dickens had seen his nephew on his Manchester visit and had noted some of the difficulties the boy faced.



Jacob Marley's ghost visits Scrooge in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. Original 1843 illustration by John Leech.

Putting it in Context Continued

In addition to Tiny Tim, Dickens incorporated a glimpse of the devastation he witnessed in real life. Scrooge discovers a feral boy (Ignorance) and girl (Want) under the cloak of the visiting Ghost of Christmas Present. The two are described as "wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable." When Scrooge asks if they can be helped, the spirit throws the miser's earlier words back at him, asking, "Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?"

Some books need to build a following, but *A Christmas Carol* was an immediate success. The debut print run of 6,000 copies, which arrived on December 19, sold out in a week. The timing was ripe for a Christmas book to take off, as Christmas trees were being popularized by Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, and Christmas cards soon arrived on the scene.

The book is as popular today as it was over 175 years ago. Charles Dickens, through the voice of Scrooge, urges us to honor Christmas in our hearts and try to keep it all the year round.

Content from: <https://www.charlesdickensinfo.com/christmas-carol/> & <https://www.biography.com/news/charles-dickens-a-christmas-carol/> by Sara Kettler



“After hearing a Carol reading by Dickens in Boston on Christmas Eve in 1867, a businessman decided to close his factory for Christmas. He also provided all of his workers with a turkey, just like Scrooge. This demonstrates the powerful message — and renown of A Christmas Carol. It's another reason why the name Charles Dickens is forever linked with Christmas and his famous novel, A Christmas Carol.” -Sara Kettler

Want to learn more about Charles Dickens and *A Christmas Carol*?

Check out these online articles.

The Real Reason Charles Dickens Wrote *A Christmas Carol*

<https://time.com/4597964/history-charles-dickens-christmas-carol/>

The Wrenching Reason Charles Dickens wrote ‘A Christmas Carol’

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/12/21/wrenching-reason-charles-dickens-wrote-christmas-carol/>

Activities, Games & Journal Entries

We encourage you to use these in-home or classroom activities to spark personal connections with the theme, characters and story of *A Christmas Carol*.

YES AND NO GAME!

It was popular during Dickens' time to play party games during holiday gatherings. One popular game was called the "Yes and No Game." Similar to a game we play today called, "20 Questions." One player thinks of a person, place or thing. The others try to guess what that person is thinking by asking questions that can only be answered with a yes or a no. When someone guesses correctly it is that person's turn to think of a person, place or thing. Trying playing as a class, virtually, or with your family, choosing a person, place or thing from *A Christmas Carol*.



SCROOGE'S KIND DEEDS

A Christmas Carol is a reminder of what it means to open our hearts and help each other. Try one of these activities or another Act of Kindness to explore the theme of generosity.

Thank You Letter

Encourage your student or child to individually brainstorm people in their lives that use their time, talent, and/or treasure to lift up the community. Create a special card or write a note thanking them for their service!

Loving Letters For Grandfriends

Would you like to uplift the spirits of seniors (lovingly referred to as grandfriends) who could use some extra love during these trying times? If so, you can sign up to participate in the Loving Letters for Grandfriends project.

Sign up here: [https:// kidsforpeaceglobal.org/lovingletters/](https://kidsforpeaceglobal.org/lovingletters/)

WRITING THE NEXT SCENE: A CHRISTMAS CAROL CREATIVE WRITING RESPONSE

Ask your students to recall the ending of *A Christmas Carol* and have them consider how the future might change once Scrooge sees the error of his ways. What might the next Christmas look like for Scrooge and the people with whom he engages? Write a scene that answers this question.

BEFORE AND AFTER CHRISTMAS CARDS

John Calcott Horsley created the first Christmas cards in 1843. In this activity design one Christmas card that Ebenezer Scrooge may have made BEFORE being visited by the spirits and one Christmas Card the he may have made AFTER he has seen the error of his ways. Materials Needed: Construction paper, markers, crayons, scissors, glue and any other appropriate materials

Before designing the card discuss the following questions:

1. What were Scrooge's character traits and feelings about Christmas - Before and After
2. What are some reasons that people send Christmas cards?

Lastly, remind students to design cards that the Before and After Scrooge would find appropriate to send.



JOURNAL ENTRIES (These questions can be used in journal entries or group discussions)

1. You are visited by the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, & Future. What do they show you when they take you on the journey of your own life? Would you be happy with what you saw? What would you go back and change if you could?
2. Which Ghost would you like to be and why?
3. Charles Dickens wrote about the troubles in Victorian era England. If the author were alive today, what social issues do you think he would write about?
4. Scrooge eventually learns the importance of charity. Think about a cause that is important to you (ie: homelessness, equality, cancer treatments) and write a short, persuasive letter to Scrooge, urging him to donate some money and/or time. Be sure to include some statistics to help convey your message and describe how his donation would improve the situation.

Reading List

One Christmas Carol



If this play has piqued your interest, why not check out a book or movie and explore more?

Your public libraries have many online resources you can access from home through online services Libby, Hoopla, or Flipster! Check your library's website for help in getting started or use this handy link: [Your Library From Home](#).

For Children

Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, illustrated by **Brett Helquist** (picture book adaptation)

Deck the Walls: A Wacky Christmas Carol by **Erin Dealey** (picture book)

Dora's Christmas Carol by **Christine Ricco** (picture book in Dora the Explorer series)

Hanukkah Shmanukkah! by **Esme Raji Codell** (picture book retelling of the "carol" as a "Hanukkah" tale)

The Tailor of Gloucester by **Beatrix Potter** (picture book Christmas story)

For Young Adults

Bah! Humbug! by **Michael Rosen** (middle grade fiction)

Young Scrooge: A Very Scary Christmas by **R.L. Stine** (middle grade fiction)

A Christmas Carol: The Graphic Novel by **Charles Dickens** (young adult graphic novel)

The Afterlife of Holly Chase by **Cynthia Hand** (young adult fiction available on eBook)

Marly's Ghost: A Remix of Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol by **David Levithan** (young adult fiction)

For Adults

The Man Who Invented Christmas: How Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol Rescued His Career and Revived Our Holiday Spirits by **Les Standiford** (Available as a book, eBook, and DVD)

This book tells the story of how Dickens', already in debt, wrote and published this story himself, wondering if his career was coming to an end. Instead it was a 'best seller' and breathed new life into the Christmas holiday.

A Vintage Christmas: A Collection of Classic Stories and Poems

A collection of lesser-known Christmas stories and poems from classic authors that celebrates the beauty, mystery, and joy found in the season. Includes brief stories and poems from well-known authors such as Louisa May Alcott, L.M. Montgomery, William Dean Howells, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Charles Dickens, and Mark Twain.

Mr. Dickens and His Carol by **Samantha Silva** (Available as an eBook, audiobook, and in Large Print)

This quote from author Anthony Doerr (*New York Times* bestselling author of *All the Light We Cannot See*) tells it perfectly--"Mr. Dickens and His Carol is a charming, comic, and ultimately poignant story about the creation of the most famous Christmas tale ever written. It's as foggy and haunted and redemptive as the original; it's all heart, and I read it in a couple of ebullient, Christmassy gulps."

A Christmas Memory by **Truman Capote**

"Capote's autobiographical recollection of life as a young boy in rural Alabama is an intricate and touching look at his close relationship with his elderly cousin set in the backdrop of a very special holiday."—Early Bird Books

The Haunted Tea-Cosy: A Dispirited and Distasteful Diversion for Christmas by **Edward Gorey**

A strange retelling of *A Christmas Carol* with three very different ghosts--The Spectre of Christmas That Never Was; the Spectre of Christmas That Isn't; and, the Spectre of Christmas That Never Will Be. Accompanied by Gorey's illustrations, you will find this version unsettling.

Christmas With Dickens: Seasonal Recipes Inspired by the Life and Work of Charles Dickens by **Pen Vogler**

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Or you can mail it to us at: Prime Stage Theatre P.O. Box 99446 Pittsburgh, PA 15233.

THE RESOURCE GUIDE TEACHER / HOME SCHOOL EVALUATION FORM

Prime Stage constantly assesses the work provided by our education department. Your feedback is vital to our ongoing need for funding for this program. Please fill out the following forms and mail or email them to the address given below. Thank you.

YOUR NAME _____

NAME OF SCHOOL _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Which part(s) of this experience you find most helpful for you and your students?

Was the guide useful to you?

Which part(s) did you find most helpful?

How can we improve the theatrical for the future?