

A CHRISTMAS CHAOS – FULL LENGTH

By Michael Wehrli

Copyright © 2011 by Michael Wehrli, All rights reserved.
Brooklyn Publishers LLC in association with Heuer Publishing LLC
ISBN: 978-1-61588-223-6

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

RIGHTS RESERVED: All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS: All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Brooklyn Publishers LLC. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Brooklyn Publishers LLC. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers LLC. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers LLC.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

AUTHOR CREDIT: All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this Work must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this Work. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the Work. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

PUBLISHER CREDIT: Whenever this Work is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice: *Produced by special arrangement with Brooklyn Publishers LLC.*

COPYING: Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Brooklyn Publishers LLC.

BROOKLYN PUBLISHERS LLC
P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406
TOLL FREE (888) 473-8521 • FAX (319) 368-8011

A CHRISTMAS CHAOS – FULL LENGTH

By Michael Wehrli

A SATIRE OF THEATRICAL BACKSTAGE MAYHEM AND CHARLES DICKENS' A CHRISTMAS CAROL

SYNOPSIS: When The Royal Shakespeare Company doesn't show up to perform their stirring rendition of *A Christmas Carol*, it's up to this intrepid band of hapless actors and technicians to pull together their own production in less than seven hours! Have you ever experienced backstage mayhem? Well, you haven't seen anything yet! Chaos comes crashing down as two kids start fighting over who gets to play Tiny Tim, a confused actor thinks she's in another show, and another actor tries to play both Bob and Mrs. Cratchit at the same time. With an out-of-control director, ridiculous scenery, and tons of flubs and confusion, this extremely fast-paced, physical comedy proves that sometimes everything that can go wrong will go wrong!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(FLEXIBLE CAST OF 16: THREE MEN, FOUR WOMEN, ONE YOUTH FEMALE, ONE YOUTH MALE, AND SEVEN EITHER GENDER.)

Note: The characters' first names listed below come from the original casts. I encourage theatre companies to use the names of their actual cast members.

—ALL LINE COUNTS ARE APPROXIMATE—

GREGORY, SCROOGE (m) Considers himself a “professional actor” and is appalled when others don't take the craft seriously. Strong willed. *(164 lines)*

DONOVAN, DIRECTOR (m/f)..... Enjoys being a director but frequently loses his cool when things go awry. He's doing his best to keep it together. *(126 lines)*

LYSSA, STAGE MANAGER (m/f) Tough, no-nonsense type.
(75 lines)

MARTHA, WRITER,

NARRATOR (m/f) Considers herself a great
writer. Loves to show off
her vocabulary. (64 lines)

BRYNN (m/f) Talented yet very flighty.
Easily confused. (28 lines)

MARINA,

TINY TIM 1 (youth, f) Strong-willed. Used to
getting her own way. (23
lines)

RYAN, SINGER,

TINY TIM 2 (youth, m) Considers himself the child
star of the area. (27 lines)

NAN, FRED,

CHRISTMAS FUTURE (f) Was the understudy for the
production. Suffers from
stage fright. Shy and
nervous. (41 lines)

DUANE, MUSICIAN,

BOB CRATCHIT, FAN, BELLE (m) A goofball. Thinks he's a
good actor, but tends to over
play things. In a relationship
with Pamela and they
frequently butt heads. (43
lines)

SARA, SERIOUS 2, CHRISTMAS PAST, CHRISTMAS PRESENT,

BUSINESSMAN 1 (m/f).....Loves to ad-lib or find humor in everything. Frequently amuses herself. (32 lines)

ROBERT, SERIOUS 3, PETER, BUSINESSMAN 2, HUSBAND (m)Loves being involved in the theatre even though his talents are minimal. He strives to do his best. (41 lines)

AMY JO, SERIOUS 3, CHARITY LADY, MARY (f)Very quick on her feet. Can always make the best of a tough situation. (41 lines)

LINDA, SERIOUS 1, MARLEY, BOB AND MRS. CRATCHIT (f)Strong actress that loves a challenge. Able to ad-lib well and roll with whatever is presented to her. But has a tendency to go overboard. (49 lines)

PAMELA, MUSICIAN, YOUNG SCROOGE, BOY (f).....Strong-willed and hard-headed. In a relationship with Duane and they frequently argue. Tends to “lose” herself in her roles. (61 lines)

JOHANNA, LIGHT BOARD OPERATOR (f).....Loves being a “techie.” Has worked with the director before and knows how to handle him. (20 lines)

MEGAN,

SOUND BOARD OPERATOR (m/f).....Probably a volunteer. Doesn't take her job seriously. Is mainly there to hang out with the cast and crew. (19 lines)

SETTING

A theatre or auditorium. The stage starts off bare.

TIME

The present.

SET/TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

The show can be done very minimally or on a larger scale. The important thing to note is the play should look as if it was thrown together very hastily. The show starts off on a completely bare stage. From there, set pieces and props are brought on to the stage to suggest new locations – so everything should be easily movable. Every set piece should look as if the theatre company pulled from what they already had in stock or could quickly find. In the script, there is a reference to a Roll Drop, and this too should look as if it was hastily painted. Costumes and props should follow the same rule. Lighting can be somewhat minimal, though it would be more fun if several areas could be delineated. Shy away from too many lighting effects – remember, they only put the show together in a day! If you do decide to have lighting effects, consider having them not work out as planned. Sound effects should be realistic, but as noted in the script, usually not on cue.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The best way to bring out the full comedy of the play is for the actors to play it honestly. Each character, in their own way, should be trying to do their best to make the show work – even though their choices vary from odd to outright ridiculous. The stage directions into should be followed closely, as the stage movement of the show is an integral part of the overall comedic effects. Though the look of the show is chaotic, the actors and crew should be very carefully choreographed. The playwright encourages each production to add local references (only where it is marked in the script). This includes the actors using their actual names. You may want to consider setting up a false tech booth or table in the back of the theatre for the light and sound board characters. Another choice is to have microphones set up in your existing booth.

PERFORMANCE HISTORY

Dates: December 13 – 22, 2002 (All-youth cast)

Venue: The Corner Theatre (DeSoto, Texas)

Company: New Moon Productions

Dates: November 28 – December 7, 2003 (Adult cast)

Venue: Multnomah Arts Center (Portland, Oregon)

Companies: New Moon Productions

American Heritage Theatre Company

Dates: December 5 – 13, 2003 (All-youth cast)

Venue: Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center (Portland, Oregon)

Companies: New Moon Productions

Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center

ORIGINAL YOUTH CAST (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)*THE CORNER THEATRE (TX)***CAST:**

Nathan Bush — Christmas Present, Husband
Annalise Caudle — Christmas Past
Michael Cole — Serious Person, Scrooge
Lyssa Dennis — Stage Manager
Allison Dryer — Serious Person, Marley, Wife
Katie Dryer — Tiny Tim 1
Katrina Gamber — Serious Person, Charity Lady Person, Bob/Mrs. Cratchit
Amanda Hoover — Bob Cratchit, Businessman 1
Michael Ingram — Tiny Tim 2
Betsy Keane — Serious Person, Writer, Narrator
Patrick Keane — Peter, Boy 1
Alex Klooster — Director
Taylor Johnston — Fred
Rebecca McPherson — Confused Person
Anna Robinson — Singer, Ghost
Patrick Robinson — Fan/Belle, Christmas Future, Boy 2
Caroline Storm — Young Scrooge, Mary, Businessman 2

Special Appearances by Deborah Wilson and Neale Shutler

CREW:

Grace Caudle, Johanna Storm — Light Board Operators
Dolores Cole — Box Office
Eugene Johnson — Musical Arrangements
Natalie Robinson — Properties
Pamela Stringer — Costumer
Michael Wehrli — Director
Deborah Wilson — Sound Board Operator
Christia Caudle, Lisa Dryer, Audrey Ingram, Susan Klooster, Natalie Robinson — Crew

ORIGINAL ADULT CAST (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)*MULTNOMAH ARTS CENTER (OR)***CAST:**

Greg Alexander — Scrooge
Brynn Baron — Confused Character
Amy Barth — Tiny Tim 2, Singer
Nan Frederick — Fred, Christmas Future
Martha Hall — Serious 1, Writer, Narrator
Duane Hanson — Bob Cratchit, Fan/Belle, Businessman 1
Marina Harrington — Tiny Tim 1
Sara Kennedy Adams — Serious 2, Christmas Past, Christmas Present
Cynthia Kerns — Stage Manager
Johanna Labadie — Light Board Operator
Amy Jo McCarville — Serious 4, Marley, Mary, Boy 1
Robert Bonwell Parker — Serious 3, Peter, Businessman 2, Husband
Megan Parrington — Sound Board Operator
Linda Rutledge — Charity Lady, Bob/Mrs. Cratchit
Donovan Snyder — Director
Pamela Stringer — Young Scrooge, Wife, Boy 2

CREW:

Debra Brimacombe — Costumes
Bryn Garris — Costume Assistant, Crew
Sharon Heltai — Production Assistant
Michael Wehrli — Director

ACT ONE**SETTING:**

A theatre or auditorium. The stage is empty.

AT RISE:

The CURTAINS are closed. Intro MUSIC plays then underscores below.

ANNOUNCER: *(Voice over.) Ladies and gentlemen. Tonight, for your pleasure and delight, we present the Royal Shakespeare Company and their adaptation of Charles Dickens' timeless story "A Christmas Carol." So sit back, relax and enjoy one of the world's most prestigious theatre companies and their version of this classic Christmas novel.*

Big swell of grand introduction MUSIC. As it reaches a huge climax, the CURTAINS open to reveal...nothing. A bare stage. A long silence. Eventually, SERIOUS 1 and 2 come out, well-dressed and looking very serious and business-like. They are silent until they reach down center.

SERIOUS 1 (LINDA): Greetings one and all.

SERIOUS 2 (SARA): We regret to inform you that a grave error has occurred.

SERIOUS 1 (LINDA): It pains us greatly that some of you came this evening believing you were going to see a production of *A Christmas Carol* as performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company.

SERIOUS 1 (LINDA): We have to admit that there was some... confusion on our part regarding the show tonight.

SERIOUS 2 (SARA): Truth be told...*A Christmas Carol* as performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company is *not* what you will be seeing this evening.

SERIOUS 1 (LINDA): Tonight's entertainment is actually a recital of fifteenth century Icelandic ballads compiled by Delmus Boonswagger.

SERIOUS 1 (LINDA): The songs were arranged by Bartholomew Tweedhonker, for the two most popular Icelandic instruments of that time period: the ukulele and the accordion.

SERIOUS 2 (SARA): I believe that covers everything.

SERIOUS 1 (LINDA): Thank you.

SERIOUS 2 (SARA): Good evening and enjoy the performance.
(They exit.)

Another huge swell of MUSIC. CURTAINS close. MUSIC underscores below.

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentleman, prepare yourselves for a feast of sounds to entrance your aural receptors. Flown in, courtesy of Iceland Air, are two of Iceland's preeminent performers of traditional ballads. Please give a hand for Haraldur Sveinsson and Bára Sif Jóhannsdóttir.

Big swell of MUSIC. It reaches another huge climax, the CURTAINS open to reveal...nothing. Again, a bare stage. Another LONG silence. Eventually whispering is heard off stage. Some protests. Finally, two MUSICIANS, PAMELA and DUANE are pushed out with a UKULELE and an ACCORDION. They stand dumbfounded, looking at the audience. Soon they attempt to play something that sounds very strange. Eventually, SERIOUS 3 and 4 come out, dressed very businesslike and serious. They stop and look at the MUSICIANS, who stop playing. SERIOUS 3 and 4 then cross down center.

SERIOUS 3 (ROBERT): Ladies and gentlemen, we have an admission to make...

SERIOUS 4 (AMY JO): The program tonight is actually not an Icelandic ballad recital played upon the ukulele and accordion.

The two MUSICIANS look at each other, react, then exit. There is a pause as they exit.

SERIOUS 3 (ROBERT): Ahem. Now, as for tonight's entertainment, we can fully assure you that it *is* the Royal Shakespeare Company's stirring rendition of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol."

SERIOUS 4 (AMY JO): So without further ado or...interruptions. We shall continue.

SERIOUS 3 (ROBERT): Thank you, good evening, and enjoy the show. *(They exit.)*

CURTAINS close. Huge build-up of MUSIC underscores below.

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, [Name of the Theatre Company] proudly presents the Royal Shakespeare Company's brilliant adaptation of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol."

The biggest swell of MUSIC yet. The curtain opens to once again reveal...an empty stage. Silence. Then whispers. Finally, someone comes out. NOTE: The names of the below CAST MEMBERS can be changed to accommodate the actual names of the actors in your show.

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): All right, we can't keep this up forever. We've got to tell them what's going on. *(The rest of the cast, except GREGORY, slowly come on stage.)*

NAN: But they'll want to leave, Lyssa!

WRITER (MARTHA): I don't think so Nan. We have it all worked out.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Trust us.

LINDA: That's what you said last year.

EVERYONE ad-libs, loudly.

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): QUIET!!! Go on Duane, tell them.

DUANE: OK. Well, here goes. *(Steps forward.)* Umm, hi there, uh everyone. Well, heh heh, you see a really funny, um, thing happened, heh heh...

PAMELA: Oh come on. (*Steps forward.*) Look, here's the deal.
The RSC–

DUANE: –The Royal Shakespeare Company–

PAMELA: –Yeah, thanks Duane. The RSC was supposed to be here tonight. Yes, right here in Portland.

AMY JO: And they made it to Portland, all right. Portland, Maine!

NOTE: *Your production may substitute the name of your actual city along with another alternate city in a different state.*

LINDA: We found that out this morning.

SARA: They supposedly took another flight to get here, but...

PAMELA: But, we just found out that they are stuck in Chicago.

NAN: Please don't leave!

EVERYONE rushes to the front of the stage, ad-libbing to the audience to please stay.

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): All right, knock it off!

EVERYONE quiets down.

WRITER (MARTHA): We have everything under control.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Yes! As a back-up plan, we have been working all day to put together our own "Christmas Carol."

WRITER (MARTHA): You see, I have a gift for the written word.
So–

PAMELA: What she's trying to say, is that we do have a show for you tonight.

LINDA: We apologize, by the way, for all that business at the beginning.

SARA: We thought we could stall for time until the RSC got here.

ROBERT: That was Sara's idea, by the way...

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): That'll do. (*To audience.*) Look, just bear with us. (*GREGORY enters.*)

MARINA: On the bright side, we do have Gregory Baron playing Scrooge!

WRITER (MARTHA): We are sure you will remember his stunning performance in *The Mystery of Irma Vep*, or his touching portrayal in *One Flew Over the Cuckoos' Nest*. And of course, who could forget his hilarious turn in *The Importance of Being Ernest*.

NOTE: *The production may substitute actual titles of shows that the actor playing GREG/SCROOGE has done.*

RYAN: You were awesome in that one!

GREGORY: Thank you, Ryan, I appreciate it.

MARINA: And thanks to you, this will be the best play ever!

BRYNN blows her nose loudly.

GREGORY: Oh, please, please –

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): *(Overlapping, sarcastic.)* Yeah, thank God for Gregory –

GREGORY: –You are all too, too kind.

BRYNN blows her nose loudly again. WRITER, DIRECTOR, STAGE MANAGER and GREGORY all gather and quietly meet during the below.

ROBERT: Still dealing with allergies, Brynn?

BRYNN: Always, this time of year.

LINDA: Sounds pretty bad.

BRYNN: It is, it is. But I took a maximum strength antihistamine, so it should go away soon.

DUANE: Didn't you say that stuff makes you loopy?

BRYNN: Did I? Whoa, how weird and surreal.

DUANE: Yeah...

BRYNN: Well, I don't want to be all drippy for the show.

ROBERT: Ugh, thank you for that...

MARINA: Let's get started!

RYAN: Oh, I can't wait!!!

BRYNN: I'll go get my costume on! *(Exits.)*

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): What? Hold on, Brynn...

DUANE: Let me take over! Umm, ladies and gentlemen. We, uh, are proud to present *A Christmas Carol* as performed by the...by the... (*Whispers.*) What did we decide to call ourselves?

AMY JO: Oh man!

PAMELA: Calm down, I've got it. Everyone, prepare to be entertained by the Not-quite-as-royal-as-the-RSC-but-what-do-you-expect-with-less-than-six-hours-notice Players!!!

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): That is not what we decided
Pamela–

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Never mind. (*To audience.*) We'll begin in a moment! (*Calls to the tech booth.*) Give us some music, Megan.

SOUND (MEGAN): Got it.

LIGHTS (JOHANNA): I'll dim the lights a bit, too.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Thanks. (*To the cast.*) Now listen...

MUSIC plays. DIRECTOR and STAGE MANAGER quickly pull everyone upstage. Both are giving instructions. Eventually, BRYNN shows up wearing an "Anne" outfit from Anne of Green Gables including a bad red hair wig. She carries an old suitcase. MUSIC stops. ALL react.

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Brynn, what are you doing?

BRYNN: You told us to get into costume. So, here I am!

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): But what–

BRYNN: (*Rehearsing.*) Oh Mr. Cuthbert, I can't wait to arrive at Green Gables. Thank you for picking me up from the train station–

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Wait, Brynn –

BRYNN: –There is so much to learn about this wonderful and interesting world. Don't you think? –

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): What on earth?

BRYNN: –Oh! And I'd love to have a dress with great puffed sleeves. You know, I believe, you and I are going to be kindred spirits–

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): All right, can it, Brynn! We are doing "A Christmas Carol."

BRYNN: Oooohhh! Why didn't you say so? Right. Got it. Be ready soon! *(Exits.)*

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): *(To DIRECTOR.)* I'll take care of it. *(Exits.)*

More MUSIC. DIRECTOR ad-libs to the cast, issuing some last-minute directions, then EVERYONE bolts off the stage. Roll-drops are brought out and hung but not unrolled yet. WRITER eventually steps forward.

WRITER (MARTHA): My dear theatre patrons, I bid you a hearty welcome. It was my playwriting skills that were employed to bring you tonight's presentation. But first, a short explanation regarding my approach to the adaptation—

GREGORY: *(Entering.)* Sorry to bother you, but I've a couple quick things.

WRITER (MARTHA): Ah...All right. What?

GREGORY: I've taken the liberty of changing a couple of my speeches to make them more faithful to the book.

WRITER (MARTHA): I'm sorry—?

GREGORY: I knew you wouldn't mind. Trust me, Dickens' words will ring true now that—

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): *(Entering.)* What are you two doing?

WRITER (MARTHA): He's changing my words—

GREGORY: *(Overlap above.)* Ah, Donovan, my fine director and friend. Couple of things. First, in the graveyard scene I think I should be further downstage, so the audience will see my anguish more clearly.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Yeah, but—

GREGORY: Excellent. Next, I need to tell you that some of my fellow cast members are planning on doing some ad-libbing. You know how I feel about that. Do have talk with them prior to curtain, will you?

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): But the curtain has—

GREGORY: Good man. I'd love to stay and chat, but we have a show to do. If you need me, I'll be warming up in my usual spot. Make sure the stage manager gives me the five-minute call.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): We're past the five min—

GREGORY: Ta for now!

GREGORY exits doing vocal warm-ups.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Would that be considered a conversation?

WRITER (MARTHA): Hard to tell...

BRYNN enters in a "Huckleberry Finn" outfit.

BRYNN: Now looky here, Jim. I can rightly say that you've always been good to me. An I ain't one to forget it–

WRITER (MARTHA): Brynn! We are not doing *Huckleberry Finn*. It's *A Christmas Carol*!

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): *A - Christmas - Carol.*

BRYNN: Oh. Yeah. Whoa, my bad. Lyssa did say that. Sorry. I'll get into the right costume. Later. *(Exits.)*

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Amazing.

WRITER (MARTHA): What role did you cast her in?

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): None. She's part of the crew. Oh well, Lyssa will handle it.

WRITER (MARTHA): Hope so.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): So, what are you doing out here?

WRITER (MARTHA): Informing the crowd about my adaptation.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Ooo kay. Go ahead. *(WRITER is about to say something, he cuts her off.)* Oh, hang on. Hey there people. I'm Donovan, the director of the show.

DUANE wanders by, listening to his MP3 player. He walks right in front of them.

WRITER (MARTHA): Now, my script–

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Duane, what are you doing?!

DUANE: Hmm? Oh. Just pumpin' up my energy!

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Well, do you think you could do your pumping off stage?!

WRITER (MARTHA): Donovan!

Indicates the audience.

DUANE: Hmm? Oh, yeah. Sure. *(He walks up stage.)*

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Duane, OFF stage.

DUANE: Hmm? Oh. *(Starts messing with his cell phone.)* Yeah, right.

He stands there a minute, messing with his cell phone.

DIRECTOR goes and pushes him off stage.

WRITER (MARTHA): Thank you. Now, as I was saying—

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): *(Entering.)* Hey, Donovan. We have a little problem. Todd still isn't here, so I think we'll need to go with Nan for Fred.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Yeah, great. Fine.

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Even if she doesn't know all the lines I'm sure she can wing it—

NAN enters during above.

WRITER (MARTHA): —Wing it—?!

NAN: —I couldn't help overhearing...Are you talking about me?

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Yeah, you're playing Todd's roles tonight.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Right, so why don't—

NAN: Oh, I'm sorry to be a bother, but—

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): You're the understudy, you're doing it.

NAN: Lyssa, I've never run through it!

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Whatever.

NAN: Oh dear, oh dear.

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Come on. *(Starts to take her off stage.)*

NAN: *(Stops.)* Wait. Fred is Scrooge's nephew! How can I be a nephew?!

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): We'll put a hat on you. No one will know—

NAN: Please, don't force this upon—

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Enough.

Starts pulling her off stage, NAN rushes over to DIRECTOR.

NAN: Todd will show up, I'm sure—

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Nan, please just —

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): *(Taking her off stage.)* You're doing it. Get used to the idea. There's a script backstage. You've got at least another five minutes before you go on. Plenty of time... *(Both exit.)*

WRITER (MARTHA): My apologies, dear guests. Now, back to my work. When I sat down to pen my little opus, it occurred to me that a minimalist approach would best serve this timeless story. That way, without all the trappings of scenery and “eye-candy,” as we call it in the biz—

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): —the biz—

WRITER (MARTHA): —we could truly delve into the underlying themes of redemption and the human spirit so prevalent in Dickens' great novel.

They exchange looks. DIRECTOR acts as if “what now,” and WRITER is looking as if “just go with me on this.”

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Yes...so I, then, as the director, used Martha's fantastic script and shaped it into a...a....

WRITER (MARTHA): Surrealistic theatre piece.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Exactly. You took the words right out of my—

MARINA: *(From off stage.)* DOVOVAN!!!

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Oh geez, what now!?

MARINA: *(Entering.)* You said I could play Tiny Tim!

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): I did?

MARINA: Yes!!!

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): When?

MARINA: Right after lunch.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): What?

MARINA: You said Ryan was out and I was in.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): I don't remember saying—

MARINA: You did! You did! You did!

Keeps repeating this as she circles the DIRECTOR who tries to interject.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): But I didn't—I wouldn't have—couldn't we—OK, FINE! You can be Tiny Tim!

MARINA stops instantly, and smiles.

MARINA: Thank you. *(Starts to exits.)*

WRITER (MARTHA): *(To DIRECTOR.)* What about Ryan? He's not going to like it.

MARINA stops, glares at them.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): I'll let the stage manager handle it.

MARINA exits.

WRITER (MARTHA): Excellent idea. So, where were we?

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Hmm. Oh yes. Ah! Surrealism. Yes people, through the magic of the living theatre, we will transport you back to Dickens' merry ol' England. How will we do this? *(Thinks for a moment for a good way to put it.)* How will we do this? Ah! By the use of our collective imagination.

WRITER (MARTHA): Well done! I mean, good point. We knew our audience would be supremely creative—and to provide you with unnecessary distractions merely for visual splendor would be untoward.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Yes. You hit the nail on—

STAGE MANAGER comes charging out.

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Did you tell Marina she could play Tiny Tim?!

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Um, yes.

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Great, just great.

WRITER (MARTHA): What is the—

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): The problem?! The problem is Marina came backstage and did a victory dance in front of Ryan. He starts bawling and ran into the break room and slammed smack into Linda who was working with her chains for Marley's ghost.

WRITER (MARTHA): We're sure you can handle—

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Well, Linda lays into Ryan and calls him a brat. So Ryan kicks her, grabs her Marley chains, runs out of the break room, sees Marina and sticks his tongue out at her—which of course makes her start chasing him. Before I could do anything, they're running out the back door. Marina tossed the chain somewhere and is now chasing Ryan around the building!

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Oh geez...

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): One of the backstage crew is hunting them down. So, now I've got a chainless Marley and two fighting Tiny Tims.

WRITER (MARTHA): Please, just fix it.

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): But what about the chain—

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): I don't care how, just take care of it.

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Well, thank you for your words of encouragement. *(Exits in a huff.)*

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): *(To audience.)* Nothing to worry about folks. This is just...the usual opening night jitters! I'm sure it'll all work out. *(Under his breath.)* I hope.

During the below speech, there is an elaborate pantomime played out up stage of where the WRITER is standing. She is unaware of what is going on. The following events should happen sometime during the pantomime: BRYNN keeps bringing on scenery items and the STAGE MANAGER keeps taking them off; PAMELA and DUANE are in an argument and somehow the DIRECTOR gets in the middle of it; MARINA chases RYAN across the stage; an actor is eating something while in costume and is chastised by the STAGE MANAGER; there can be other things happening with people coming on and off stage. Towards the end of the speech, DIRECTOR and STAGE MANAGER come out and the STAGE MANAGER rolls down the roll-drops.

WRITER (MARTHA): Yes. Ahem. Well, back to the minimalist treatment of the show. We have every confidence that our bare stage concept will bring your focus to Scrooge's journey—and rightfully so. Certainly as a writer, it is my deepest desire that full attention be paid to the development of the storyline and the emotional context. Just imagine if you had to gaze upon thousands of dollars worth of highly detailed scenery all evening. Obviously you'd be lost in all the splendor and pageantry! Not so with our creative troupe, dear patrons. We want our audience's creative input—so when we bring out our seemingly ordinary and everyday items as set pieces, your imagination will become the source of wonder and beauty.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): *(Yells.)* My God! Those are the drops?!

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Deal with it. *(Exits.)*

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Deal with it... *(Takes a deep breath.)*

Well, it looks like the stage is...ready...

WRITER (MARTHA): Oh! I need to run backstage. I just had a marvelous thought for the act two narration. The re-writes will just take a minute. *(Starts to exit, muttering the new lines to herself.)*

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Wait!

WRITER (MARTHA): Hush! I don't want to lose it. *(Exits.)*

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): *(Sighs, then talks to the audience.)*

Hey. I'm gonna hang out with you if you don't mind. I need to keep an eye on things. Hey Duane, bring me out a headset will you?

DUANE: *(From off stage.)* There's not one back here.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Dang. Well how about—

LIGHTS (JOHANNA): Don't bust a gut. We have an extra one back here. *(Runs from the tech booth to the DIRECTOR, brings him a headset as he comes out to the audience. CURTAINS close.)*

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Thanks. *(Bellows to backstage.)* Are we ready to go back there?! *(Pause.)* Hello?! *(Pause.)* Are we ready to go to places?

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): *(Coming out.)* I haven't given the two-minute call yet.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): We need to get going!

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Whatever. Places, fine. (*Exits. Yells out backstage.*) Places!!!!

ALL: (*Off stage.*) Thank you, places.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Remember to whisper please!

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): (*Peeks out. Whispers.*) Places!!!

STAGE MANAGER exits.

ALL: (*Off stage, whispering.*) Thank you, places.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Ugh. Lights and sound are you ready?

LIGHTS (JOHANNA): Yeah, I'm here, but Megan has gone out for a bite.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): You've gotta be kidding! Why couldn't she have wait–

SOUND (MEGAN): (*Entering.*) What's your problem? I'm back. OK?!

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Thank you.

SOUND (MEGAN): Gosh, no, thank you.

LIGHTS (JOHANNA): Yes, from the bottom of our hearts.

SOUND (MEGAN): It's a pleasure to be at your beck and call.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): (*Sighs.*) My life is flashing before my eyes... (*Bellows to backstage.*) Everyone in places?!

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): (*Coming out. Whispers.*) Use the headsets.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): What?

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): (*Yells.*) Use the headsets!!!

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Oh, yeah, thanks. Remember to whisper. (*STAGE MANAGER shoots him a look, exits. He whispers into his headset.*) Go lights and–

LIGHTS: How about turning it on?

SOUND (MEGAN): It's the lower button on–

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): I know how to do it!!! (*Turns on his headset, whispers.*) Lights and sound go!

LIGHTS/SOUND: Come back?

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): (*Yells.*) Go lights and sound!!!

LIGHTS slowly fade out. MUSIC plays. SCENE CHANGE into "Scrooge's Office." Audience should hear all sorts of noise going on behind the CURTAINS. NARRATOR enters in the dark and sits in a chair far down stage right, near the edge of the stage, holding a book. Eventually LIGHTS come back up on the NARRATOR and "Scrooge's Office." SCROOGE and BOB CRATCHIT are near their "desks." Scrooge's "desk" is a typical all-in-one school desk that is so small that he can barely get into it. Bob's "desk" is a tall stool and a very low table. There is a pause as SCROOGE and BOB struggle for a few seconds with their "desks." NARRATOR sits watching, dumbfounded. Eventually, BOB sits on the floor in order to reach his desk. He begins working on a ten-key machine. The NARRATOR finally begins her narration.

NARRATOR (MARTHA): Marley, was dead—

SCROOGE (GREGORY): (Looking at BOB, referring to the ten-key machine.) That is not period!

BOB (DUANE): Nope. It's a decimal point! (Laughs at his own joke.)

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Oh!

NARRATOR (MARTHA): Marley was— (SFX: BOB'S cell phone rings. He answers it.)

BOB (DUANE): Hello? Yeah. Hey there, Alex. What's up?

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Oh, for the love of—

BOB (DUANE): (Talking on the phone.) No, no man. Doing my show. Yeah, we just started. When you coming to see it?

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Turn that blasted thing off!!!

BOB (DUANE): Hang on. Yeah, Donovan?

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Turn it off! NOW!!!

BOB (DUANE): Oh. Alex, sorry dude, gotta run. Listen let's hook up at _____ (Name of a local karaoke place.) later and sing some tunes.

During above, SCROOGE walks over, takes the cell phone from him, and tosses it off stage.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): We're doomed, doomed.

We hear the STAGE MANAGER and NAN talking backstage.

NARRATOR (MARTHA): Marley was—

NAN enters, looks out towards the audience to the DIRECTOR. She is pursued by the STAGE MANAGER.

NAN: Donovan, I assure you I cannot do this.

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): There's no one else—

NAN: I can't! All those people staring and watching. *(Sees the audience, freezes.)* Staring and watching. Staring and watching. *(She continues. STAGE MANAGER takes her off stage.)*

NARRATOR (MARTHA): Sorry everyone. Marley was dead—

NAN: *(Re-enters followed by STAGE MANAGER.)* Staring and watching. Staring and watching. *(Keeps repeating till she is off stage.)*

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Will you get hold of yourself?! *(STAGE MANAGER takes her off again as she continues chanting.)*

NARRATOR (MARTHA): Oh dear. Well, here we go. Marley was dead to begin with. There was no doubt whatever about that.

MARLEY/LINDA enters and elaborately "dies" far up stage, unseen by NARRATOR.

NARRATOR (MARTHA): *(Continued.)* Even Scrooge signed the register of his burial. Old Marley was as dead as a doornail.

NARRATOR finally notices MARLEY as he finishes dying gloriously and loudly.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Get off the stage!

MARLEY exits.

NARRATOR (MARTHA): Oh, but he was a tightfisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge.

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Bah, humbug!

SCROOGE pantomimes the below description.

NARRATOR (MARTHA): A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, clutching, covetous old sinner!

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Bah, humbug!

NARRATOR (MARTHA): And once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting house with his clerk, Bob Cratchit. (*She pronounces clerk as “clark.”*)

BOB (DUANE): Clark?

NARRATOR (MARTHA): That’s the way it’s pronounced in England.

BOB (DUANE): Clerk is clark?

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Go, go, go!

BOB (DUANE): Right! (*Clears throat, pretends he is very cold.*)
S... S...Sir...I am s...so...C...C...Cold. Can I p...p...please
p...put an...another—

SCROOGE (GREGORY): You’re never going to finish that line are you?

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Gregory, don’t break character!

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Right, sorry! No sir, Bob Cratchit! If you use coal at that rate you and I will soon be parting company.

BOB (DUANE): Y...Y...Yes...S...Si...Si...

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Never mind!!! Just warm your hands at your candle. Bah humbug!

SINGER/RYAN comes up and pretends to knock on the “door.” His pantomime is terrible. The SFX happens after his knock.

SOUND (MEGAN): Sorry. (*DIRECTOR looks at her.*) Don’t worry, I’ll get it.

SINGER starts singing a gut-wrenchingly awful version of a standard Christmas song. SCROOGE and BOB react. Finally, SCROOGE can’t stand it anymore. He goes over, opens the “door” and again the SFX happens afterward. The SINGER smiles, and holds out his hand and continues singing.

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Go on, get away from my door!

SINGER (RYAN): *(Stops singing.)* What?

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Stop your blasted caroling!

SINGER (RYAN): But it's a tradition at Christmas time! *(SINGER starts singing again.)*

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Aaaaah!!! Well I don't want any of your customs. Close your oral opening, lower your grubby paw, and go away.

SINGER (RYAN): Sorry sir. Merry Christmas to you anyway, sir. *(Exits sadly.)*

SCROOGE (GREGORY): *(Closes the "door.")* Christmas. Bah, humbug! *(SFX happens, he reacts.)*

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Errrrr. And what are you looking at, Bob Cratchit?! Get back to your work!

BOB: Yes s...s...sir, M...M...Mis-

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Don't start that again! Carolers. Decorations. Holiday cheer. Bah, it's all humbug. *(Pause.)* It's...All...Humbug! *(Pause. SCROOGE and BOB look at each other. Finally, STAGE MANAGER pushes out NAN (FRED). She is petrified and stands motionless looking at the audience.)*

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Come on, Nan. You can do it.

NARRATOR (MARTHA): *(Prompting.)* "Merry Christmas, Uncle!"

FRED (NAN): Mm...Mmerr...Mmm...

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Don't be nervous, Nan!

BOB (DUANE): Yeah! Just imagine all those people in the audience in their underwear-

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Don't try to help! *(Getting back into character.)* Uh, bah, humbug!

FRED (NAN): Underwear?

NARRATOR (MARTHA): Merry Christmas Uncle.

FRED (NAN): Underwear? Underwear...Underwear...

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Oh man.

STAGE MANAGER enters, stands behind FRED (NAN), and says FRED'S lines. STAGE MANAGER moves FRED'S arms to gesture. FRED (NAN) is petrified throughout. STAGE MANAGER drags or lifts FRED (NAN) to the "door." STAGE MANAGER pantomimes opening the "door," SFX happens afterward.

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): *(As FRED, using different voice.)*
"Merry Christmas Uncle."

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Hmm? Oh, yes. Bah, humbug!

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): "Christmas a humbug, Uncle?
Surely you don't mean that."

SCROOGE (GREGORY): I do mean that!

BOB (DUANE): And don't call him Shirley! *(Laughs at his own joke.)*

SCROOGE glares at BOB.

SCROOGE (GREGORY): You keep Christmas in your own way
and let me keep it in mine!

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): *(With difficulty, she moves FRED.)*
"But you don't keep it. Christmas is a kind, forgiving, charitable,
pleasant time. And though it hasn't put a scrap of gold in my
pocket. I say it has done me good and will do me good, and I
say"—

FRED (NAN): *(Snaps out of it.)* God bless it.

BOB (DUANE): God bless Christmas! Hurrah!

STAGE MANAGER tries to sneak off.

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Quiet you! Bah, humbug!

FRED (NAN): Please don't be angry, Uncle... *(She sees audience again, freezes. Pause.)*

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Oh! *(Runs back behind her. Gestures and speaks for her again.)* "Come! Dine with us tomorrow."

SCROOGE (GREGORY): No!

During the below, FRED (NAN) quietly echoes each sentence after STAGE MANAGER says it.

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): *(Moving FRED/NAN.)* “I want nothing from you. I ask nothing of you. Why cannot we be friends?”

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Good afternoon. Bah, humbug!

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): “I am sorry to find you so resolute. But I’ll keep my Christmas humor to the last! So a merry Christmas, Uncle!”

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Good afternoon!

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): “And a happy new year!” *(They open the “door.” SCROOGE follows.)*

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Good afternoon, bah, humbug!

SFX of door.

LIGHTS (JOHANNA): My bad. I was telling her something.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Both of you maintain silence.

SOUND (MEGAN): Ja, mein fuehrer.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Ugh. Go on please!

STAGE MANAGER quickly pushes FRED (NAN) to get off stage, but as they do they run smack into CHARITY LADY/AMY JO sending her box of coins to the floor, spilling. FRED (NAN) snaps out of it.

FRED (NAN): Oh, my gracious! I am so sorry!

CHARITY LADY (AMY JO): *(Whispers.)* Go on. I’ll handle it.

FRED (NAN): *(Kneeling to help pick up her coins.)* But what about your coins?

STAGE MANAGER picks FRED (NAN) up; she sees the audience and freezes again.

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Move it.

STAGE MANAGER pushes FRED (NAN) off stage with great effort.

FRED (NAN): Underwear...underwear...underwear... *(Exits.)*

CHARITY LADY (AMY JO): *(Kneeling on floor, picking up coins.)*

Scrooge and Marley's I believe? *(SCROOGE crosses over to her. He thinks he has come up with an excellent piece of business to "cover" for what has happened: During the below scene, he tries to distract her and every time she looks away he picks up and pockets a coin.)*

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Mr. Marley died seven years ago this very night. I am Scrooge.

CHARITY LADY (AMY JO): At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is more than desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time.

SCROOGE (GREGORY): *(Distracts her, picks up a coin.)* Are there no prisons?

CHARITY LADY (AMY JO): Plenty of prisons.

SCROOGE (GREGORY): *(Distracts her.)* And the Union workhouses, they are still in operation then?

CHARITY LADY (AMY JO): I wish I could say they were not.

SCROOGE (GREGORY): *(Distracts her.)* The Treadmill and the Poor Law?

CHARITY LADY catches him. SCROOGE pretends that he was helping her. As he hands it to her he picks up another coin and pockets it.

CHARITY LADY (AMY JO): Both very busy, sir.

SCROOGE (GREGORY): I'm very glad to hear it. *(Stands, all the coins fall out of his pocket.)*

CHARITY LADY (AMY JO): Look, we just need a donation Mr. Skinflint—Mr. Scrooge. So what shall I put you down for?

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Nothing.

CHARITY LADY (AMY JO): You wish to remain anon...anony...anomo... *(Keeps trying to say "anonymous.")*

SCROOGE (GREGORY): I wish to be left alone! Bah, humbug!

CHARITY LADY (AMY JO): But what if–

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Nothing. (*CHARITY LADY keeps trying to say something, he keeps cutting her off.*) Nothing. Zero. Nada. Zippo.

CHARITY LADY (AMY JO): Well fine! Sheesh, what a grouch.

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Bah, humbug!

CHARITY LADY (AMY JO): Good day sir!

Starts to exit.

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Bah, humbug! (*Door SFX happens. To cover, SCROOGE rushes to open and close the door. He then crosses and looks at his “desk.”*) Bah, humbug. (*To BOB.*) Bah, humbug. We have got to find something else for me to say. (*BOB brings him his hat and coat.*)

BOB (DUANE): If it’s quite convenient sir, may I take the entire day tomorrow?

SCROOGE (GREGORY): It is not convenient. Bah, humbug!–

BOB (DUANE): It does get old, doesn’t it?

SCROOGE (GREGORY): –Oh, I suppose that you–

BRYNN enters in a pirate outfit.

BRYNN: Aaaargh matey! Shiver me timbers!!!

SCROOGE (GREGORY): What on earth–

BRYNN: Ye’ll be walkin’ the plank before I get through with ye’.
Now tell me where be the treasure–

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Lyssa! Get her off the stage!

STAGE MANAGER enters.

BRYNN: (*Stops.*) What?

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): Move it. (*Taking her off.*) It’s A Christmas Carol. Get it through your head. A...Christmas...

They exit.

BOB (DUANE): Wow. That was...weird.

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Tell me about it. I mean, I suppose you can have the entire day. But be here all the earlier the next morning.

BOB (DUANE): Thank you sir! And a Merry Christmas, sir!

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Bah—

SCROOGE/BOB: Humbug!!!

LIGHTS shift. SCROOGE and BOB freeze in a tableau.

NARRATOR (MARTHA): The office was closed in a twinkling and Bob ran home to Camden Town to play with his family at Blindman's Buff. *(Pause. Then louder.)* Closed in a twinkling!

A chaotic SCENE CHANGE. There is a huge flurry of activity as the stage is changed into "Scrooge's Bedroom"—a chair, small table, bowl of gruel and spoon, something that looks vaguely like a fireplace, and a very, very small bed. The stool is left on stage from the previous scene. MARLEY/LINDA holds a huge posterboard or something that has a "door" painted on one side and a flap where the knocker is painted on. SCROOGE pantomimes the below.

NARRATOR (MARTHA): Scrooge lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner. The yard was so dark that even Scrooge, who knew its every stone— *(SCROOGE runs into the stool and it falls over with a crash.)* —was fain to grope with his hands. *(SCROOGE gets up and goes to the door. STAGE MANAGER sneaks on and takes off the stool.)* When Scrooge reached his familiar door, he was greeted by a dismal sight. There, where the knocker once stood, was Marley's face.

MARLEY pokes her face through the flap in the "door." SCROOGE pantomimes the below.

The face looked at Scrooge as Marley used to do. The hair was curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot air.

MARLEY blows on her long and stringy wig hair.

And as Scrooge opened the door–

SCROOGE does, MARLEY moves the “door” as if it is opening and makes a creaking sound.

–the ghostly visage vanished.

MARLEY stands there, SCROOGE quietly tells her to “beat it.”

NARRATOR (MARTHA): After a thorough check of his house, Scrooge retired to his bedroom to sit by the fire to take his gruel.

SCROOGE changes into his robe or dressing gown and nightcap. He stops suddenly when he sees the “fireplace.”

SCROOGE (GREGORY): (Referring to the “fireplace.”) What is this?

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): It’s a fireplace.

SCROOGE (GREGORY): No it isn’t.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): You’re an actor, use your imagination.

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Use my... (Grumbles.)

When SCROOGE is seated, a bell starts to ring off stage, followed by another, then another. Then a series of other odd sounds are heard off stage—e.g. kazoo, slide whistle, juice harp—anything that will sound odd! SCROOGE gets progressively more scared until all the sounds cease and MARLEY enters. MARLEY is dressed in a sheet with two eye holes and a bowler hat and carries a tiny little chain—which she pretends is very heavy.

MARLEY (LINDA): Scroooooooge! Scroooooooge!!
Scroooooooge!!!

MARLEY tries to stand on the "bed" and falls over. SCROOGE and the STAGE MANAGER run over to help her to her feet. Once she is up, we see the eyeholes are not over her eyes. SCROOGE is disgusted.

MARLEY (LINDA): Scrooooooooooge! (She fixes the sheet so she can see during below.)

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Jacob Marley! (MARLEY is startled.)
Why do you walk the earth and why do you bother me?

MARLEY (LINDA): Your welfare. (Gets carried away.)
Boooooooooo!!! Aaaaaaaahhhhhhhh!!!

STAGE MANAGER comes out and bonks MARLEY on the head with her script, then exits.

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Why do you wear that– (Tries to see the very small chain. Finally does.) You've got to be kidding...why do you wear that chain?

MARLEY (LINDA): I wear the chain I forged in life! Boooooo!
AAAAAAHHHH!!! (MARLEY waves the chain grandly and promptly drops it. During below she is trying to find it.) Uh-oh.
Uh, you have a chance of escaping my fate, Gregory.

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Ebenezer!

MARLEY (LINDA): Ebenezer!

SCROOGE (GREGORY): You were always a good friend to me.
Thank you. (MARLEY is still looking for the chain.)

MARLEY (LINDA): You shall be haunted by three spirits. (Pops up from looking.) Check your e-mail for the days and times.
(Laughs at her own joke. SCROOGE is disgusted.)

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Linda!!!

MARLEY (LINDA): Ahem. (Rising, crosses to SCROOGE.)
Expect the first tomorrow, when the bell tolls one.

SCROOGE has found the chain and hands it to her.

MARLEY (LINDA): Oh, thanks! (Starts backing off.) Boooooo!!!
Remember! Aaaaahhhh!!! Remember! Remember! (When she gets off stage there is a huge crash.) I'm all right.

NARRATOR (MARTHA): The apparition had walked backward from him and floated out the window. Scrooge followed and he looked out.

SCROOGE goes and pantomimes opening a “window.” SFX happens on time but it is “busy city sounds.”

SOUND (MEGAN): Sorry, wrong cue.

NARRATOR (MARTHA): The air was filled with phantoms–

LIGHTS (JOHANNA): Give her a sec!

SOUND (MEGAN): I got it.

SFX plays again and it is wind. Several people come out as various GHOSTS. They make a lot of ghostly sounds which increase in volume so that the NARRATOR has to shout by the end of her line.

NARRATOR (MARTHA): The air was filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste. The misery with them was clear. Soon these creatures faded into the mist and their spirit voices faded together. *(Pause.)* The creatures faded!!!!

GHOSTS quickly exit. SCROOGE closes the “window.” SFX happens three beats afterward. SCROOGE reacts then goes to his bed which is very tiny. He spends a few moments figuring out how to best lie on it. LIGHTS shift. Eventually, a cow bell chimes “one” off stage. Christmas PAST/SARA enters slowly.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): *(Whispering loudly into headsets.)* Tell everyone the show is running really slow, so pick up the pace.

STAGE MANAGER (LYSSA): *(Whispers from off stage to PAST.)* Pick up the pace!

PAST (SARA): Right. *(She starts pacing.)*

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): What are you doing?!

PAST (SARA): I’m picking up the pace! *(Smirks.)*

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Ugh...just get on with it!

PAST (SARA): Right!

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Who are you? (*SCROOGE rises.*)

PAST (SARA): (*Ghostly voice.*) llllllll am the Ghooooost of Christmas Paaaaast!

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Long past?

PAST (SARA): (*Looks at watch.*) No, about half past. (*Smirks.*)

SCROOGE (GREGORY): Errrr! Long past!?

PAST (SARA): Noooooo, your paaaaast. Rise and waaalllllk with meeeeeeee.

SCROOGE (GREGORY): I'm already standing.

PAST (SARA): Goooood pooiiiiinnntttt! Cooooommmmmme!
(*PAST leads him to another part of the stage. There is a flurry of activity as "Scrooge's Bedroom" is struck.*)

PAST (SARA): Now loooooo!

FAN/DUANE and YOUNG SCROOGE/PAMELA enter. DUANE is not happy about being in woman's clothing.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Hold it! You're wearing each other's costumes!

FAN and YOUNG SCROOGE exchange looks.

YOUNG SCROOGE (PAMELA): I told you!

FAN (DUANE): No you didn't!

YOUNG SCROOGE (PAMELA): Yes I did!!

FAN (DUANE): No you didn't!!

YOUNG SCROOGE (PAMELA): Yes, I did!!!

FAN (DUANE): I'm telling you—

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Stop! Just go on.

FAN (DUANE): How can we "go on"?

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): Do each other's roles.

FAN (DUANE): No way on earth!

YOUNG SCROOGE grabs him.

YOUNG SCROOGE (PAMELA): Do it!

FAN (DUANE): Fine. (*Half-heartedly.*) Dear, dear brother.

YOUNG SCROOGE (PAMELA): (*Stepping on his foot.*) Do it right!

FAN (DUANE): *(Winces. YOUNG SCROOGE gestures. He does a little girl voice.)* Dear, dear brother. I have come to bring you home, dear Ebenezer.

YOUNG SCROOGE (PAMELA): *(Boy voice.)* Home little Fan?

FAN (DUANE): Yes! Home, for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be that home is like Heaven!

YOUNG SCROOGE (PAMELA): Hoorah!

She does a large gesture and accidentally hits FAN in the face. Both scramble off stage. PAST leads SCROOGE to another part of the stage. You hear FAN and YOUNG SCROOGE as they run very loudly backstage to get to the other side of the stage. We hear the STAGE MANAGER yell "Slow down and keep quiet!"

PAST (SARA): Aaaaalways a deeeeelicate creature. But she had a laaaaaarge heaaaaaart.

SCROOGE (GREGORY): So she had. You are right, Spirit.

PAST (SARA): Now loooooook. *(Pause. No one enters.)* Now loooooook!

Overlap the below dialogue.

BELLE (DUANE): *(Off stage.)* I am not doing this—

YOUNG SCROOGE (PAMELA): *(Off stage.)* Yes you are —

BELLE (DUANE): *(Off stage.)* Stop telling me what to do!

YOUNG SCROOGE (PAMELA): *(Off stage.)* Get your butt on that stage!

They enter again, BELLE being pushed on by YOUNG SCROOGE. Again, they have their costumes switched so that he is BELLE and YOUNG SCROOGE is still in her costume.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): You did it again!

YOUNG SCROOGE (PAMELA): There wasn't time for me to change!

Overlap the below dialogue.

BELLE (DUANE): Yeah right—

YOUNG SCROOGE (PAMELA): Just shut up and go on!–
BELLE (DUANE): Don't you tell me to shut up!–
YOUNG SCROOGE (PAMELA): Well then don't get me mad–
BELLE (DUANE): I didn't do anything!–
YOUNG SCROOGE (PAMELA): Right. You never do anything–
BELLE (DUANE): Don't bring on that crud again–
YOUNG SCROOGE (PAMELA): Oh, there's more where that
came from–

Both continue to ad-lib/argue.

DIRECTOR (DONOVAN): BOTH OF YOU SHUT UP! (*Both glare at him.*) I'm...sorry. Please, go on.

Thank you for reading this free excerpt from A CHRISTMAS CHAOS-FULL LENGTH by Michael Wehrli. For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script, please contact us at:

**Brooklyn Publishers, LLC
P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406
Toll Free: 1-888-473-8521 • Fax (319) 368-8011
www.brookpub.com**