

# **EBENEZER!**

## **By David LeMaster**

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ISBN: 1-931805-19-9

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## CHARACTERS

Please note that actors may play multiple characters. This play may be done with a small cast or a larger one. The following breakdown is suggested for a large cast.

Ebenezer Scrooge	Construction worker*
Young Scrooge	Father
Child Scrooge	Social Worker*
Tom Jenkins*	Green*
Business Man*	Lackey*
Santa Claus	TV Announcers*
Ghost 1*	Mrs. Bergensen
Ghost 2	Mother
Ghost 3/ Mime*	Fezziwig*
Street kids*	Homeless Man*
Tiny Tim	Tourist/Grocer*
Cratchet	

Shopper, Partiers, Customers, Ensemble

\*may be played by either male or female

With the exception of SCROOGE, any actor may play a number of parts. The production in Shreveport, LA used a nonrealistic set with a series of painted flats put together as a storybook for change of location. It is possible to combine roles to fit the needs of a theatre, and only one STREET KID is needed to offset TINY TIM. The staged reading at The Country Playhouse used eight actors. The Shreveport Little Theatre created the following breakdown:

Actor 1	Scrooge
Actor 2	Tom Jenkins, Marely, Fezziwig, Ghost 2
Actor 3	Ghost 1, Mr. Green, Business Man
Actor 4	Mime, Ghost 3, Street kid
Actor 5	Cratchet, Construction Worker, Scrooge's Father
Actor 6	Young Scrooge, Tiny Tim (Street Kid)
Actor 7	Street Kid, Partier, Social Worker, Mr. Lackey, Announcer, Ron
Actress 1	Belle, Liz, Street Kid, Ensemble
Actress 2	Mother, Mrs. Bergensen
Actress 3	Ensemble

## **A NOTE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT**

We've all seen several dozen versions of Scrooge, and after awhile, the traditional story loses its message because we're so intent on having everything exactly the way it's always been done. I know, I know... messing with a classic is dangerous. But I had to do it. The Scrooge story was important when Dickens wrote it, and it has repercussions on modern day America. We just needed to give it a little twist.

My main goal with this script was to examine a question that seems important to all Americans: Why do bad things happen to good people. We've all felt depression at one time or another during the holidays – those sappy Frank Capra movies and the joy of everyone else seems to make it worse. So, just what in the world should one do to counter those very natural feelings.

I hope Ebenezer! brings a message to all of us. We must accept things the way they are and find joy from within ourselves.

Ebenezer! is designed for theaters of all sizes. The play needs no set; in fact, it may be played on a bare stage if the director so chooses. At the same time, an elaborate mock-up of the big city, the toy company, and Scrooge's home would also fit the action. In the original production at the Shreveport Little Theatre, the director chose to use a bare stage with "animated storybook pictures" on flats to represent the change of scenery. The flats were put together into giant storybook. The director also chose to make the props and set pieces larger-than-life, to give a feeling of animation. The production was a great success.

Please feel free to adapt Ebenezer! to the needs of your theater and your community.

### **PROP LIST**

#### ACT ONE

Pretzel car with pretzels, etc. for TOM JENKINS  
Tool belt, hat for CONSTRUCCION WORKER  
Salvation Army bell for SANTA CLAUS  
Camera for TOURIST  
Shopping bags and packages for SHOPPER  
Telephone for LIZ  
Money and wallet for SCROOGE  
Baby Giggles Doll  
Cigarettes, etc. for STREET KIDS

Crutches for TINY TIM  
Broom for GROCER  
Picture of MARLEY  
Chains for MARLEY  
Alarm clock for SCROOGE  
Block of wood, pocket knife, matches for YOUNG SCROOGE  
Telegram for SOLDIERS  
Drinks for the party  
Ring and box for SCROOGE  
Plates, food, notepad for diner

ACT TWO

Television  
Ear plugs for SCROOGE  
Cigar for SANTA  
Champagne for LIZ  
Champagne glasses  
Cash for TIM and BOB  
A dog (preferably looking quite dead) for JENKINS  
Phone, TV, remote control for JENKINS

Candle and food plate for MRS. BERGENSEN  
Jello, crackers, watch for SOCIAL WORKER  
Radio for MRS. BERGENSEN  
Food for suffering masses  
Sweater for JENKINS to give  
Stale Pretzel

**SET PIECES**

Pretzel Cart

TV built for Ron and announcer to be inside

Scrooge and Marelly Toy Company (Cratchet's office):  
Desk and chair  
Hat rack

Diner:  
Countertop  
Two stools

Store:  
Store front for Grocer (grocery store sign)

Potential sets:  
Street scene  
Scrooge and Marelly Toy Company  
Scrooge's house  
Backdrop to symbolize Scrooge's past  
Jenkin's house

Rest home:  
Wheel chair for Mrs. Bergensen  
Sign for mime to indicate we're in rest home

Scrooge's house:  
Bed with nightstand attached, lamp, clock  
Drink cart with drinks  
Hat rack from office  
Life-size picture frame for Marelly  
Square cut out television for Santa (something for him to be in and crawl out of)

Tom Jenkin's house:  
Chair  
Lamp that works

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### ACT 1

*(Lights up on an empty stage. We hear street sounds underneath. Enter TOM JENKINS, 30-ish, who pushes a pretzel cart and tries selling pretzels to the audience. After a moment, JENKINS pauses and looks at us.)*

TOM JENKINS: Oh. I didn't see you come in. **(HE straightens his clothing a bit)** You get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the big city, you know? Folks don't have time to sit and talk anymore. But me? I got time to sit and talk. Pretzel business ain't too good these days. A guy moved in up the street, and he's underselling me by a buck a pretzel. Don't know how he can do it, but he's got all my regular customers running over to his stand. I'm thinking about taking up a new line of work. Hot dogs. Used to sell 'em back when I was young, you know? In Yankee Stadium, with Marris and Mantle and those guys. You remember Joltin' Joe Dimagio! There was one afternoon during the fall, about thirty years ago, and the Yankees were up 2-1 in the seventh. I got my hotdog box strapped around my neck, and this kid comes up to me and says... **(stops himself)** Wait a second. You didn't come here to talk about the Yankees, huh? The sign outside says Ebenezer Scrooge, right? What's Christmas without Scrooge, after all? Well, alright. But I got something to tell you about Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge. He's not who you think he is. I know, I know. You've heard it all before. Scrooge lives in Victorian England. Mistreats his nephew and employees. "Bah humbug. Bury your merry Christmas with a stake of holly through the heart!" Well I'm telling you. It's pure fiction. There wasn't never anybody named Scrooge living in England. It was all just a story by Mr. Charles Dickens. You know. The guy who wrote Oliver Twist and David Copperfield and all that. Yeah. Same guy. Made stuff like that up all the time. So why are you here, you ask? Well, you're here because Ebenezer Scrooge is here. In the theatre. Not in England. That's right. Scrooge lives right here in the big city—Americaville, USA. He sublets an apartment on 5<sup>th</sup> and L. and tonight... in just a minute... you're going to meet the real Ebenezer Scrooge. But you've got to understand something first. See, this play isn't about good people trying to have Christmas in merry old England. We're in the good ol' USA, after all. It's about regular folk coping with the Christmas holidays and trying to survive yet another shopping season. This is

the city. And the people around here don't play too nice. Just look around. You'll see. **(HE snaps his fingers and the stage comes alive with city life. There are various people darting back and forth across the stage depending on the number of people in the company. A Salvation Army SANTA CLAUSE rings a bell center stage. A man and a woman race to get to TOM JENKINS for pretzels. A HOMELESS MAN stands on the street corner and watches another man hail a taxi. A street MIME entertains passers-by. The following dialogue is quick and overlapping.)**

Pretzels! Get your red-hot pretzels here!

CONSTRUCTION WORKER: Hey, pretzels! Gimme one with extra cheese.

TOM JENKINS: Sure. You want mustard with that?

CONSTRUCTION WORKER: Read my lips. Extra cheese.

TOM JENKINS: Extra cheese it is, sir.

TOURIST: **(shoves worker away)** Excuse me. I'd like a pretzel with extra cheese and mustard on the side. And one Diet Cola.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER: *(to TOURIST)* I was here first, lady.

TOURIST: Indeed. Only because you shoved me out of the way, you gorilla.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER: What'd you call me, you stupid cow?

TOURIST: I beg your par don!

CONSTRUCTION WORKER: Lay off the cheese. You've had too many pretzels already, you porker.

TOURIST: Oh!

TOM JENKINS: **(to WORKER)** That's two-fifty.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER: **(to JENKINS)** Two-fifty? That's highway robbery!

TOURIST: Guy down the street charges a dollar and fifty cents.

TOM JENKINS: **(shrugs)** Got to make a living.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER: **(gives money)** Cheapskate.

TOURIST: I'm not paying two dollars and fifty cents for a pretzel.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER: Yeah. I hope you starve, you crook!

**(BUSINESS MAN attempts to hail a cab. A HOMELESS MAN watches him.)**

BUSINESS MAN: Cabbie! Cabbie! **(watches it pass)** Come on you big jerk, I've had my thumb out for an hour.

HOMELESS MAN: **(to MAN 2)** Hey, buddy. Can you spare a couple of bucks?

BUSINESS MAN: Kiss off.

HOMELESS MAN: What was that?

SANTA CLAUS: Salvation Army! **(to SHOPPER)** Donations for children!

SHOPPER: **(to SANTA)** I gave at the office.

SANTA CLAUS: Come on, lady. It's the Salvation Army.

SHOPPER: Are you harassing me?

**(The HOMELESS MAN runs a dirty rag over the BUSINESS MAN's shoes.)**

BUSINESS MAN: What do you think you're doing?

HOMELESS MAN: I'm shining your shoes, man.

BUSINESS MAN: With that dirty rag?

HOMELESS MAN: Give me five bucks.

BUSINESS MAN: I won't!

HOMELESS MAN: Give me five bucks or I'll shove this rag down your throat.

SANTA CLAUS: **(to SHOPPER)** Forget it.

BUSINESS MAN: **(to HOMELESS MAN)** Here's five bucks. Get out of my face.

HOMELESS MAN: Did I say five? I meant eight.

SHOPPER: **(to SANTA CLAUS)** I'm reporting you for harassment, you bum. Who's your supervisor?

HOMELESS MAN: **(to BUSINESS MAN)** Eight bucks too much for you?

SANTA CLAUS: **(overlap, to SHOPPER)** Who are you calling a bum?

BUSINESS MAN: **(overlap, to HOMELESS MAN)** I'm not afraid of you, you bum!

SHOPPER: **(overlap, to SANTA)** You're a bum! You're a big, fat, red-faced bum!

TOM JENKINS: **(overlap, to EVERYONE)** Hold it! Hold it! HOLD IT! **(EVERYONE freezes, then JENKINS turns to audience)** So much for "It's Christmas Time in the City," huh? You get used to it. If you live in the city these days you've got to be tough and mean and insensitive. That's where Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge comes in. He's not any of those things. In fact, the real Mr. Scrooge—well, he's a simple fella. He fit in to the city pretty good about thirty years ago. I sold him hotdogs at Yankee games. But every few years would change their lineup, until finally, Scrooge didn't recognize any of the names at all. Same thing happened around here. Old Ebenezer, well, time just marched right around him and left him standing there like an old tree. And you know what they say about trees in the city. There's no room for them anymore. They just stand underneath the skyscrapers and wait to die.

Here I go blubbering again. You wanted to hear a story about Ebenezer Scrooge, right? Well, I guess you gotta meet him first. There he is. Coming up Fifth Avenue. Can't miss 'em. He's the old guy in the top hat and cane.

***(HE snaps his fingers and EVERYONE shouts. Enter EBENEZER SCROOGE, a jolly old man.)***

SCROOGE: ***(to BUSINESS MAN)*** Good morning, my friend!

BUSINESS MAN: Who are you calling friend, you jerk?

HOMELESS MAN: ***(to SCROOGE)*** Say, man? Can you spare a couple of bucks?

SCROOGE: Certainly. Here's a certificate for a hot meal. Get plenty of fiber.

HOMELESS MAN: ***(confused)*** Fiber?

BUSINESS MAN: ***(to SCROOGE)*** He doesn't want food to eat. He wants food to snort.

***(HOMELESS MAN takes a swing at BUSINESS MAN; they fight. SCROOGE walks away, oblivious. HE watches the STREET MIME for a few moments and then tosses him some money.)***

SHOPPER: ***(to SANTA)*** Give me your supervisor's name or I'll beat it out of you!

SANTA CLAUS: ***(to SHOPPER)*** You and who else?

SHOPPER: ***(throws down packages)*** Come on! You want a piece of me, lard butt? Come on!

SCROOGE: Pardon me, madam. ***(HE puts money in the pot for SANTA)*** Merry Christmas.

SANTA CLAUS: ***(to WOMAN)*** Yeah, merry CHRISTMAS you old windbag!

***(SHOPPER attacks SANTA. SCROOGE tries to help pick up her packages.)***

HOMELESS MAN: ***(to SCROOGE)*** Let me help you with those packages.

SCROOGE: ***(giving packages)*** Why, thank you, young man.

HOMELESS MAN: ***(running away)*** No problem!

SHOPPER: ***(chases after packages)*** Hey! Hey! Police!

TOM JENKINS: Morning, Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE: Good morning, Tom Jenkins. How's the pretzel business?

TOM JENKINS: Not so hot, but thanks just the same.

SCROOGE: Maybe I can help. How about a pretzel with cheese?

TOM JENKINS: One pretzel it is, Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE: Have you heard a forecast, Tom? It's supposed to snow.

TOM JENKINS: Is that right?

SCROOGE: Another white Christmas.

TOM JENKINS: Marvelous, Mr. Scrooge. Here's your pretzel. That's two-fifty.

SCROOGE: Here's a five. Keep the change.

TOM JENKINS: Thank you, Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE: Merry Christmas, Tom.

TOM JENKINS: And a merry Christmas to you, too, sir. Pretzels! Get your hot pretzels here! **(Exit SCROOGE. TOM bundles himself and shivers)** And that, my friends, is Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge. Not what you expected, eh? Well Scrooge has been like that for years—nicest fella you'd ever hope to meet. Except for one Christmas—one mysterious Christmas back a few years ago. Now that's the real story of Scrooge, sure as I'm standing here. What, you haven't heard that one? Are you from the moon or something? Everybody knows the story of Ebenezer Scrooge... Alright, alright. I'll tell it to you just the way I heard it. But when we come to the spooky stuff, don't roll your eyes and say there's no such things as ghosts... It all started one Christmas Eve in a toy shop. A toy company, actually. The Scrooge and Marley Toy Company. **(JENKINS helps set the stage for the toy company)** Imagine if you will, the very nicest offices in the entire city. All designed by Ebenezer Scrooge. Teddy Bears guard the entrances. Wooden blocks form the walls. Jalopies park row after row along office shelves. And the message system--the Old Santa Fe Line. One ancient engine, pulling a coal car full of liquorice. Row after row of box cars with messages to and from each floor. They make stop after stop, with the caboose chugging along in the back, holding special messages for the corporate decision makers. The managers of the store. And the most important one of all, Scrooge's nephew, set to inherit everything. The acting President of the company that sends good will across the world, Mr. Bob Cratchet.

**(Lights up on the SCROOGE and Marley Toy Company. LIZ PEARCE, the secretary, sits at a large desk filing her nails. BOB CRATCHET, an overbearing monster, is firing a timid employee.)**

CRATCHET: YOU BLITHERING IDIOT!!!!!!

EMPLOYEE: I'm sorry Mr. Cratchet, sir!

CRATCHET: GET OUT BEFORE I THROW YOU OUT!

EMPLOYEE: Yes, Mr. Cratchet, sir... Er... Sir. If I may be so impertinent-

CRATCHET: WHAT?

EMPLOYEE: One... final... paycheck, sir?

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