

PERUSAL SCRIPT

A
SOUTHERN
CHRISTMAS CAROL

Book, Music & Lyrics

By

ROB. LAUER

Musical Arrangements

By

JEFF JOYNER

*Based on "A Christmas Carol in Prose: A Ghost Story of Christmas"
By Charles Dickens*



Salt Lake City

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A SOUTHERN CHRISTMAS CAROL

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A Southern Christmas Carol premiered on December 2, 2003 at Cotton Hall Theatre in Colquitt, Georgia. It was produced by the Colquitt Miller Arts Council with a grant from the Georgia Council for the Arts (Office of the Governor) and the National Endowment for the Arts. The production was directed by Rob. Lauer, with choreography by Karen Beyer, costume designs by Mike Johns and lighting designs by Price Johnston. Production Manager was Beth Stewart. The production ran for 28 performances. The following cast was featured:

Old Man Scrooge.....PETER LEWIS
Actor 1, Missionary Man, Ghost of Christmas Present.....JIMMY BISHOP
Actor 2, Freddie, Marley, Jesse.....MIKE JOHNS
Actor 3, Eb, Topper, Mr. Miller.....JORDAN COUGHTRY
Actor 4, Ghost of Christmas Past.....MORGAN CARSON
Actor 5, Tiny, Ghost of Christmas Future.....RUBEN SINGLETON
Actress 1, Eppie.....ALLISON SPRAGIN
Actress 2, Missionary Lady, Poor Woman 1.....KAREN BEYER
Actress 3, Belle, Caroline, Poor Woman 2.....KATIE WEIGERS
Actress 4, Fan, Celia Ray, Poor Woman 3.....MARISSA MCGOWAN

The second production of **A Southern Christmas Carol** opened on November 26, 2004 at Cotton Hall Theatre in Colquitt Georgia. Produced by the Colquitt Miller Arts Council with a grant from the Georgia for the Arts (Office of the Governor) and the National Endowment for the Arts, it ran for 29 performances and featured the following cast:

Old Man Scrooge.....PETER LEWIS
Actor 1, Missionary Man, Marley, Ghost of Present.....RYAN GERARD
Actor 2, Freddie, Farmer.....ROB LAUER
Actor 3, Eb, Topper, Mr. Miller.....MORGAN CARSON
Actor 4, Ghost of Christmas Past.....ANDREW FRACE
Actor 5, Tiny, Ghost of Christmas Future.....RUBEN SINGLETON
Actress 1, Eppie.....ALLISON SPRAGIN
Actress 2, Missionary Lady, Poor Woman 1.....KAREN BEYER
Actress 3, Belle, Caroline, Poor Woman 2.....KATIE WEIGERS
Actress 4, Fan, Freddie's Wife, Poor Woman 3.....AMY CAINE

The third production of **A Southern Christmas Carol** opened on November 27, 2005 at Cotton Hall Theatre in Colquitt Georgia. Produced by the Colquitt Miller Arts Council with a grant from the Georgia for the Arts (Office of the Governor) and the National Endowment for the Arts, it ran for 31 performances and featured the following cast.

Old Man Scrooge.....MICHAEL MULDON
Actor 1, Missionary Man, Topper, Farmer.....ROB LAUER
Actor 2, Eb, Freddie, Farmer.....MATT GIBSON
Actor 3, Ghost of Christmas Past.....MICHAEL MAHANY
Actor 4, Mr. Miller, Wiggins, Ghost of the Present.....NICK MANNIX
Actor 5, Tiny, Dickie, Ghost of Christmas Future.....SINCEE J. DANIELS
Actress 1, Eppie.....ALLISON SPRAGIN
Actress 2, Missionary Lady, Poor Woman 1.....DAWN TIMM
Actress 3, Belle, Caroline, Poor Woman 2.....DOROTHY SAVAGE
Actress 4, Fan, Freddie's Wife, Caroline, Poor Woman 3.....LAUREN e. HAUSER

CAST

The play was written and originally produced with an ethnically mixed cast of 10 actors (6 men and 4 women.) With the exception of the actor portraying Scrooge, all played multiple roles. (The show has also been produced with larger casts. Several larger productions have featured casts of 50 or more actors.) When casting a 10 actor production, the following “types” are suggested:

OLD MAN SCROOGE

(White male character actor, late middle-aged or older)

ACTRESS 1 -- EPIE

(Black female character actress, in age from late 30's to late 40's)

ACTRESS 2 -- MISSIONARY LADY / OLD LADY WIGGINS / POOR WOMAN 1

(White female middle-aged character actress)

ACTRESS 3 -- FANNIE / CELIA RAY / POOR WOMAN 3

(White female ingénue, early to mid—20's; delicate, willowy)

ACTRESS 4 -- BELLE / POOR WOMAN 2 / MATTIE / CAROLINE

(White female ingénue, early to mid-20's; strong, earthy)

ACTOR 1 -- MISSIONARY MAN / WIGGINS / GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT / MR. MILLER

(White, heavy-set older character actor; the stereotypical Southern “Big Daddy” type.)

ACTOR 2 -- FREDDIE / MARLEY / FARMER 2 / BELLE'S HUSBAND

(White male, “good old boy” type, early 30's)

ACTOR 3 -- GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST / BOBBY / BOY

(White or black youth; if cast older, the actor should be very youthful and boyish in type.)

ACTOR 4 -- EB/ FARMER 1 / TOPPER / ZEKE

(White male, young leading man, early to mid-20's)

ACTOR 5 -- DICKIE / TINY / GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE

(Black, young leading man, late teens to mid-20's)

Rob Lauer is an award-winning playwright, theatrical and television director, and the host of two TV shows in the Hampton Roads region of Virginia.

Rob's first play "Digger" won the 1982 Mayhew Award, and later critical acclaim when it was published in 1988. In 1990 he became the first playwright to win both the Best Play of the Year Award (for his satire, "Tom and Penny's Yard Party") and the Paul T. Nolan Award (for his urban drama, "The Church Street Fantasy") at the Deep South Writers conference.

Currently Rob has been commissioned by the Mountainside Theatre and the Cherokee Historical Association (in Cherokee, North Carolina) to write a new musical, "Chief Little Will," inspired by the life of William Holland Thomas—the only white man to ever serve as chief of the Eastern Cherokees. This musical will premiere in the summer of 2014 and play every summer thereafter in rep with the acclaimed outdoor drama, "Unto These Hills."

Other recent works include the musical "My Jo" (based on the works of Louisa May Alcott), the comedy "Geeks & Gangsters" (inspired by the true story of Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster—the Cleveland teenagers who, during the 1930's, created Superman) and the recently published novel, "A Southern Christmas Carol."

Rob founded and served as Artistic Director of the Olde Theatre Company in Virginia from 1986 until 1990. Rob served as Artistic Director of Sail Productions in New York City from 1996 until 1999. In 2000 and 2001, Rob served as production manager and head writer of MGA Films, Inc. in Colorado. From 2002 through 2005, he was the Artistic Director of "Swamp Gravy"—Georgia's official folk-life play, produced in Colquitt, Georgia. He wrote the critically acclaimed musical "A Southern Christmas Carol" which had its world premiere—featuring a cast of Broadway actors—in Colquitt in 2003, and has since enjoyed multiple productions in Alabama, Arkansas and Virginia.

Jeff Joyner (musical arranger) has taught music in the Newport News, VA public schools for 25 years and holds degrees in vocal performance and music education from Old Dominion University. He has served as musical director and accompanist for numerous shows in amateur and professional theatres and has performed with Virginia Opera, Virginia Musical Theatre, and many amateur and collegiate companies, as well as soloing with church, symphonic, and choral organizations throughout the area.

ACT ONE

Scene 1

AT RISE: ACTOR 1 and ACTRESS 2 now address the audience.)

ACTOR 1: We'd like to welcome y'all out this evening. We hope you're enjoying the Christmas carols we've been singing for you.

ACTRESS 2: Now there seems to be a lot of confusion over just what a Christmas carol is. For instance, some folks think that "Frosty the Snowman" is a carol. I hate to disappoint you folks, but it is *not*.

ACTOR 1: No, Sir, and neither is "Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer." Now those are perfectly good songs. I like hearing them at Christmas as much as the next fella—

ACTRESS 2: But they are *not* carols.

ACTOR 1: A carol is more like a hymn; it has to do with the religious or spiritual meaning of Christmas.

ACTRESS 2: A carol can be about Mary and the Baby Jesus, something like--

MUSICAL NUMBER 2: "Carol Excerpts"

ALL: *(Singing in four part harmony)*

SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT;

ACTRESS 2: It can be about the angels appearing to the shepherds, like—

ALL ACTRESSES: *(Singing in tight three part harmony)*

ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH.

ACTRESS 2: Or about some other part of the Biblical Christmas story, like—

ALL ACTORS: *(Singing in four part harmony)*

WE THREE KINGS OF ORIENT—(HUM)!

ACTRESS 2: *But* a carol can also be about spiritual rebirth. Something like—

ALL: *(Singing in four part harmony)*

I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY

End of MUSICAL NUMBER 2

ACTOR 1: There's no talk of Jesus or Mary in that song, but the fellow in it comes to believe in God and the eventual triumph of righteous--!

REST OF THE CAST: Amen!

ACTOR 1: —All because he hears Church bells ringing on Christmas Day.

ACTRESS 2: So, there you have it, folks. If you leave here with nothing else, you'll have learned the difference between a Christmas *song* and a Christmas *carol*.

ACTOR 1: Now the story we're gonna tell you here is about someone who—because of Christmas—sees the error of his ways, repents and is spiritually reborn!

ACTRESS 2: And so, this story could be thought of as a sort of Christmas Carol--

ACTOR 1: "A Christmas Carol *in Prose*" as Mr. Charles Dickens originally called it.

ACTRESS 2: But since we're changing the setting from London, England in the 1840's to right here in rural

Georgia, during the Great Depression, we're gonna call it:

ALL: A Southern Christmas Carol!

ACTOR 5: (*Stepping forward; addressing the audience*) Before we begin tellin' this story, you all have to understand one thing: Old Man Marley was dead.

ACTOR 4: He was that!

ACTOR 5: As dead as a doornail!

ACTRESS 3: (*To Actor 5*) Why do people always say "Dead as a doornail?" Seems like a coffin nail would be the deadest kind of nail there is.

ACTOR 5: It's just a figure of speech. Now hush up before you confuse these people.

(*To Audience*)

Old Man Marley was dead. You have to understand that right out or else this won't be much of a story at all.

ACTOR 4: Yes, Sir, that old fellow was dead, dead, dead!

ACTOR 5: And it was official, too. There was a death certificate signed by a preacher, an undertaker, a county clerk and by Old Man Scrooge himself—

ACTOR 4: —who was Old Man Marley's business partner and the only person who even attended the funeral.

ACTOR 5: Of course, Old Man Scrooge was such a serious business man that he went right back to work as soon as the preacher said his last "Amen."

ACTOR 4: It didn't make no never mind to him that his partner and only friend in the whole wide world was being planted six feet under.

ACTOR 5: Which brings us to the second important thing you have to understand before we get into this story: Old Man Scrooge *knew* that Marley was dead.

(*LIGHTS RISE on a sign reading "Scrooge & Marley Cotton" hanging over the exterior of Scrooge's office.*)

ACTRESS 4: (*Pointing to the sign*) If Old Man Scrooge knew Marley was dead, then why was his name still on the sign outside their office? I mean, there it was, big as life, for everybody and their sister to see: "Scrooge & Marley Cotton."

ACTOR 5: It stayed that way for seven years after the funeral. And it confused people who were new in town. Sometimes they'd call Old Man Scrooge "Mr. Scrooge," and sometimes they called him "Mr. Marley."

ACTOR 4: It didn't make no never mind to Old Man Scrooge what anyone called him.

ACTRESS 4: Looks like he'd have painted over Marley's name to help avoid the confusion.

ACTOR 5: The only way that would have happened was if someone was givin' away paint for free.

MUSICAL NUMBER 3: "Old Man Scrooge"

ACTOR 4: Old Man Scrooge wasn't about to throw away his hard-earned cash on paint. That's a fact of God!

NOW OLD MAN SCROOGE WAS HARD AS FLINT.

HE CARRIED A CHILL WHEREVER HE WENT,

EVEN IN THE SUMMER'S SCORCHIN' SUN!

NOTHIN' COULD WARM HIM ONE DEGREE,

NO WIND THAT BLEW WAS MORE BITTER THAN HE;

WHEN THEY SAW HIM COMIN' DOGS TURNED TAIL TO RUN!

(*SCROOGE enters; makes his way to his office. HE is reading a newspaper, oblivious to the*

world around him. Seeing him coming, the other ACTORS get out of his way.)

ALL:

FEEL THAT CHILL COMIN' DOWN THE STREET?
THAT'S OLD MAN SCROOGE!
COLD AS SNOW AND HARD AS SLEET—
THAT'S OLD MAN SCROOGE!
GET OUT OF HIS WAY OR DON'T YOU KNOW
HE'S LIABLE TO TELL YOU WHERE TO GO!
A MEAN OLD CUSS
WHO'LL MAKE A FUSS—
THAT'S OLD MAN SCROOGE!

ACTOR 5:

NOW SCROOGE'S FACE WAS FROZEN STIFF
WITH HIS NOSE TURNED UP LIKE HE'D CAUGHT A WHIFF
OF SOME AWFUL, ROTTEN, STINKIN' SMELL!

ACTRESS 3:

HIS CHEEKS WERE SHRIVELED!

ACTRESS 4:

HIS NOSE LOOKED NIPPED!

ACTOR 4:

HAD A BLUISH TINT TO HIS THIN, PURSED LIPS
BECAUSE HE HADN'T SMILED IN QUITE A SPELL

ALL:

DON'T WASTE YOUR BREATH ON A "HOWDY DO!"
TO OLD MAN SCROOGE!
HE'LL KEEP WALKIN' RIGHT PAST YOU.
THAT'S OLD MAN SCROOGE!
WHEN THEY SEE HIM PASSIN' BY
CHILDREN HIDE AND BABIES CRY!
LISTEN TO ME: JUST LEAVE HIM BE!
OLD MAN SCROOGE!

ALL ACTRESSES:

SQUEEZIN', WRENCHIN', GRASPIN', CLUTCHIN'!

ACTOR 1:

BEGGARS NEVER ASKED HIM FOR A DIME!

ALL ACTRESSES:

WHEEZIN', SCRAPIN', CURSIN', CUSSIN'—

ACTOR 1:

NO ONE EVEN ASKED HIM FOR THE TIME!

ALL:

HARD AS FLINT! COLD AS SNOW!

CARRIES A CHILL WHEREVER HE GOES!
DOGS TURN RAIL! BABIES CRY!
HASN'T GOT TIME FOR YOU OR I!

WHO'S THAT COMIN' DOWN THE STREET?
THAT'S OLD MAN SCROOGE!
HURRY! MAKE A FAST RETREAT!
THAT'S OLD MAN SCROOGE!
DON'T YOU DARE TO WISH HIM WELL
OR HE'LL TELL TO YOU TO HELL—

ACTOR 3: (*Stepping forward and cheerfully greeting SCROOGE*) —Hell—o, Mr. Scrooge!

SCROOGE: (*Scowling at the actor*) Bah! Horse hockey!
(*HE continues to his office*)

ALL:

THERE'S NO DOUBT HE'LL CHEW YOU OUT!
THAT'S OLD MAN SCROOGE!
OLD MAN SCROOGE!
OLD MAN SCROOGE!

End of MUSICAL NUMBER 3

(*The CAST exits the stage, as lights change, rising on...*)

Scene 2

SCENE: THE FRONT STEPS & INTERIOR OF THE OFFICE AT THE COTTON GIN. It is the afternoon of December 24, 1933.

AT RISE: SCROOGE sits at his desk, pouring over his account books. EPIE, his black, middle-aged housekeeper, enters carrying a cold plate of food.)

EPIE: Here's your supper. Mister Scrooge, Sir.

SCROOGE: (*Without looking up from his books*) Put it right here.

(*EPIE places the plate on his desk. Shuddering from the cold, SHE starts to put some wood in the small office stove.*)

(*Sternly*) You figurin' on choppin' me some more firewood this afternoon?

EPIE: I hadn't planned on it, Mister Scrooge, Sir.

SCROOGE: Then I'd put that back down, girl.

EPIE: Yes, Sir, Mister Scrooge, Sir.

(*She puts the wood back, picks up her broom and starts out*)

I'll just go sweep the front steps—

(Under her breath)

—outside where it's warmer.

(EPPIE steps outside and begins sweeping the front steps. FREDDIE enters. HE is a cheerful "good old boy" type, about thirty years old..)

FREDDIE: Merry Christmas, Eppie!

EPPIE: Merry Christmas, Mister Freddie, Sir.

FREDDIE: How's that boy of yours doin'?

EPPIE: He's doin' okay, Sir.

FREDDIE: Is my Uncle Eb in there?

EPPIE: That's why I'm out here.

FREDDIE: *(Joking)* He's in a good mood, full of the Christmas Spirit?

EPPIE: He's full of something, alright.

FREDDIE: *(Laughing about it)* Lord love him.

EPPIE: *(Under her breath as FREDDIE goes into the office)* Seems like you're expectin' an awful lot of the Lord.

FREDDIE: *(Loudly, cheerfully as he enters the office)* Merry Christmas, Uncle Eb!

SCROOGE: Bah! Horse Hockey!

FREDDIE: Oh, come on now. You don't mean that.

SCROOGE: Oh, yes I do! What have you got to be merry about, boy? You're poor enough.

FREDDIE: What have you got to be so darn ornery about? You're rich enough.

SCROOGE: Bah!

FREDDIE: Oh, don't be so cranky.

SCROOGE: Why shouldn't I be? I got fools all around me! "Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!" What's Christmas to you but a time for getting bills and having no money in to pay 'em with—a time for finding yourself a year older with nothin' to show for it? If I had my way, every idiot who goes around sayin' "Merry Christmas!" would be strung up by the neck with his own Christmas stocking!

FREDDIE: Uncle!

SCROOGE: Nephew! You celebrate Christmas your way and I'll celebrate it mine.

(EPPIE has quietly entered the office to eavesdrop on the two men.)

FREDDIE: But you *don't* celebrate it

SCROOGE: Let me leave it alone, then. Celebrating Christmas has never done you any good.

FREDDIE: If you mean it's never made me any richer—well, you're sure enough right about that. But it's done me good in a lot of other ways. Why, it's the only time all year when folks seem to open up to each other. It's like everybody realizes, "Hey, we're all in this mess together. It don't matter who we are—young or old, rich or poor, black or white—we've all got a one way ticket to the grave, so why don't we let bygones be bygones." No, Sir, I've never made a dime off of Christmas. Truth be told, it usually leaves me a dollar poorer. But I believe it *has* done me good and *will* do me good, and I say, God bless it!

EPPIE: Amen, Mr. Freddie!

(SCROOGE shoots EPPIE a stern disapproving look. SHE wearily shakes her head and returns to sweeping—outside.)

SCROOGE: Well, listen to you, boy! It's a wonder you haven't become a preacher or a politician. One's about as useless as the other.

FREDDIE: Oh, don't be angry with me, Uncle Eb. Come on: have dinner with me and Celia Ray tomorrow.

SCROOGE: All right; I'll see you...see you in Hell first.

FREDDIE: (*Deeply hurt by this—and angry*) Why are you being this way? Why?

SCROOGE: Why did you get married?

FREDDIE: Because I fell in love.

SCROOGE: (*Scoffing at the idea*) "Fell in love!" I've got work to do. Get a move-on, Boy.

FREDDIE: No, Sir, I will not get a move-on! You never came to see me before I got married, so why are you actin' like that's the reason for not comin' to see me now?

SCROOGE: I said to get a move-on.

FREDDIE: I want nothing from you. I ask you for nothing. Can't we at least be friends?

SCROOGE: Get a move-on!

FREDDIE: All right! Fine! I'm going. It breaks my heart that my only blood relative is so darn pig-headed.

I've never understood what the problem is. But I've done my best: came here in the spirit of the season to try to make amends. You do what you please. I'm not gonna let it ruin my holiday.

(*Suddenly rushing forward and hugging SCROOGE*)

Merry Christmas, Uncle Eb! And a Happy New Year!

(*He grabs SCROOGE'S head and plants a big kiss of his forehead.*)

SCROOGE: (*Breaking free and picking up something from his desk to throw*) Get a move-on!

(*FREDDIE runs from the office onto the front steps where EPPIE is sweeping.*)

FREDDIE: You know what, Eppie? I do believe my uncle will be joining me for Christmas dinner tomorrow.

EPPIE: The Bible says faith can move mountains, but I don't know about it movin' that uncle of yours, Mister Freddie, Sir.

FREDDIE: Merry Christmas, Eppie.

EPPIE: Thank you, Mister Freddie, Sir.

FREDDIE: (*Over his shoulder as he exits.*) And a Merry Christmas to that boy of yours.

EPPIE: (*Calling after him*) Thank you, Mister Freddie. Thank you, Sir.

(*FREDDIE exits, passing the MISSIONARY MAN and MISSIONARY LADY, who are entering. They are "Social Gospel Missionaries." They are educated, as is evidenced in their speech and manners. Their clothes, while not extravagant, are stylish and up-to-date, indicating that they hail from a big city such as Atlanta, Nashville or Richmond. THEY enter Scrooge's office.*)

MISSIONARY MAN: (*Grabbing SCROOGE'S hand in a hearty prolonged shake*) Good afternoon, Sir! Merry Christmas! Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE: Mr. Marley died seven years ago...seven years ago today.

MISSIONARY LADY: (*Offering her hand to SCROOGE*) Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that. Please accept our belated condolences.

MISSIONARY MAN: Mr. Scrooge, this is my wife.

SCROOGE: (*Shaking her hand, coldly*) Madam...

MISSIONARY LADY: I'm sure the late Mr. Marley's generosity is well represented by his surviving partner.

MISSIONARY MAN: Mr. Scrooge, we represent the National Evangelical Social Outreach, Missionary and Tract Society—

MISSIONARY LADY: —Southeastern Division.

MISSIONARY MAN: Our organization is dedicated to the spreadin' of the Gospel and the social uplift of the

less fortunate. We contribute to buildin' of schools in poor rural communities—

MISSIONARY LADY: — advocate the education of the coloreds—

MISSIONARY MAN: —sponsor soup kitchens in places hard hit by this Depression.

MISSIONARY LADY: Support homes for young girls who find themselves in dire circumstances—

MISSIONARY MAN: Finance organizations that care for wounded and disabled veterans from the Great War

—

MISSIONARY LADY: And advocate equal treatment under the law for the coloreds—

MISSIONARY MAN: (*Quickly, cutting his wife off*) Not that we are radicals, Mr. Scrooge. No, Sir! We are not a political organization. We are Christians dedicated to doin' the Lord's work.

MISSIONARY LADY: At this time of year, as we celebrate the birth of our Lord, it's only right that we remember those who've been hard hit by this Depression. I know you've seen destitute men—many of them veterans from the Great War—reduced to livin' under railroad crossings and beggin' for bread at backdoors.

SCROOGE: Indeed, I have.

MISSIONARY LADY: Something has to be done.

SCROOGE: The vagrancy laws are still on the books, aren't they?

MISSIONARY LADY: I'm sure they are, Mr. Scrooge.

SCROOGE: And the jails aren't all full, are they?

MISSIONARY MAN: (*Taken aback*) I'm sure they're not, Sir.

SCROOGE: Well, there's your solution: enforce the law.

MISSIONARY MAN: Mr. Scrooge, our organization is asking for donations from the more fortunate businessmen in this community to help the underprivileged.

SCROOGE: Sir, President Roosevelt's about to raise my taxes again to help the so-called “underprivileged.”

MISSIONARY MAN: But the Government can't take care of everybody.

SCROOGE: Well, now that's the first intelligent thing I've heard so far today.

MISSIONARY LADY: Wonderful! So what can we put you down for, Sir?

SCROOGE: Nothing.

MISSIONARY MAN: Oh? You want to donate a blank check?

SCROOGE: No, I want to be left alone!

(The MISSIONARY LADY gasps in shock.)

Your husband asked me what I want. That's my answer. I don't throw away money on myself at Christmas, and I'm not about to throw it away on others. If folks can't live within their means, they'll have to go on the county dole.

MISSIONARY LADY: But Sir, some people would rather die than go beggin'.

SCROOGE: (*Making a sad attempt at humor*) Well, that's one way to decrease the surplus population.

(SCROOGE chuckles at his joke, then notices that the MISSIONARIES look horrified by it.)

Any way, Madame, that's their business, not mine.

MISSIONARY LADY: But it could be!

SCROOGE: (*Gently escorting the MISSIONARY COUPLE out the door*) No, Ma'am. My philosophy has always been that a man had best keep his nose out of other people's business. Good afternoon.

MISSIONARIES: (*Deflated*) Good afternoon.

(SCROOGE returns to his desk while the MISSIONARIES stand outside his door for a moment in shock; when THEY come to their senses, THEY exit. Quietly EPPIE enters the office and waits

somewhat anxiously by the door for SCROOGE to notice her. Finally HE does.)

SCROOGE: I suppose you want tomorrow off?

EPPIE: Yes, Sir, Mister Scrooge, if it's all right.

SCROOGE: Well, it's not all right and it's not fair. I reckon if I docked your pay, you'd think I was being stingy.

(EPPIE nervously shrugs, unsure of how to respond.)

And yet it's all right for me to pay you a day's wage even though you won't do a lick of work?

EPPIE: *(Cautiously, looking at the floor)* It's only one day a year—

SCROOGE: Speak up, Girl! Stop that mumbling!

EPPIE: I say it's only one day a year, Sir.

SCROOGE: *(Digging in his pockets for the money)* Oh, so it's all right to rob me blind every December twenty-fifth? Go on: take the day off then—but come in even earlier the next day, you hear me?

EPPIE: Yes, Sir, Mister Scrooge, Sir.

SCROOGE: I owe you one week's salary?

EPPIE: Yes, Sir, Mister Scrooge, Sir.

SCROOGE: *(Counting out the money)* One dollar...two...three...four dollars.

EPPIE: Thank you, Mister Scrooge, Sir.

(EPPIE exits. SCROOGE returns to his desk.)

BLACKOUT

Scene 3

(The lights rise elsewhere on ACTOR 5 surrounded by rest of the CAST. The lights indicate that it's nighttime, and the atmosphere created is perfect for telling ghost stories.)

ACTOR 5: *(To the audience)* Old Man Scrooge killed the rest of the afternoon, and finally, come sunset, he locked up his office and headed on home.

ACTRESS 1: *(To the audience, as she joins the rest of the cast)* Home was a rundown old house a block or so off the square that had once belonged to Old Man Marley.

ACTOR 5: That house set off the road, way back a piece, hidden back there behind the neighbors' henhouses and outhouses—

ACTRESS 1: —Back where a decent building had no place bein'. It was as like that house, when younger, had run back there during a game of hide-and-seek with the other houses, and had never found its way out.

ACTOR 5: I'm tellin' you, it was one miserable run-down place. Old Man Scrooge lived in a few room upstairs but all the rooms downstairs, he rented out to folks for storage space.

ACTRESS 1: *(With a laugh)* Anything to make a buck.

MUSICAL NUMBER 4: "Ain't No Rest For the Wicked—I"

(The ACTORS begin to softly make "ghost sounds" under the following dialogue.)

THE CAST: *(Repeating)*

OOOH....OOOH...

(Lights rise elsewhere on SCROOGE walking home.)

ACTOR 5: Well, that night as Scrooge was walkin' all alone across that dark deserted yard, way back off from the road—

(SCROOGE stops; reacts to something he sees in front of him)

—he thought he saw something hanging there in the dark night air: the face of his dead business partner, Old Man Marley.

(An eerie blue light appears on SCROOGE'S face. HE rubs his eyes in disbelief at the apparition before him.)

ACTRESS 1: There was an eerie light glowin' all around it, and its hair moved like it was floatin' in the breeze, but its eyes stared straight ahead—just like you'd expect the eyes of a dead man to do. It was something horrible to look at, but not because of the eerie light, the floatin' hair or those dead man eyes—

ACTOR 5: No, what was most horrible about that face was that wore a look of total despair and hopelessness.

ACTRESS 1: And then, just a quick as it appeared, that old dead face was gone!

End of MUSICAL NUMBER 4

(Instantly the CAST falls silent. The eerie blue light on SCROOGE'S face vanishes)

SCROOGE: *(Rubbing his eyes; then dismissively)* Bah! Horse hockey!

(The lights black out on SCROOGE as he exits.)

ACTRESS 1: That old coot could say “Bah! Horse Hockey” all he wanted, but the truth be told, he was spooked somethin' fierce. Now y'all gotta understand: Old Man Scrooge hadn't given a single thought to Marley since mentionin' his death earlier that afternoon. So why was it that all of a sudden he was seein' that dead man's face?

(SHE starts to snap her finger in rhythm; the CAST joins in. SHE speaks to ACTRESS 2)

Sister, what does the Good book say about the dead once they leave this life?

ACTRESS 2: It says that when the righteous die, they go to rest from their labors.

MUSICAL NUMBER 5: “Ain't No Rest for the Wicked—II”

ACTRESS 1: Amen! It sure enough does: the righteous *do* rest; but the wicked? Well, that's a whole 'nother story.

THERE AIN'T NO REST FOR THE WICKED
EVEN WHEN THEY'RE DEAD!
THERE AIN'T NO REST FOR THE WICKED,
THEY'RE DOOMED TO WANDER INSTEAD!

THERE AIN'T NO REST FOR THE WICKED!
THEY GOT NO ETERNAL HOME!
WEEPIN' AND WAILIN' AND GNASHIN' THEIR TEETH,
THE WICKED ARE DOOMED TO ROAM!
YOU CAN LAY 'EM IN A COFFIN
AND SAY A LITTLE PRAYER—

CAST:

BUT YOU JUST CAN'T KEEP A BAD MAN DOWN!

ACTRESS 1:

YOU CAN PLANT 'EM IN THE GROUND
BUT THEIR SPIRIT'S NOT THERE!

CAST:

NO, YOU JUST CAN'T KEEP A BAD MAN DOWN!

ACTRESS 1:

FORCED TO WANDER WEIGHED DOWN BY SIN!
MOANIN' AND A'GROANIN' FOR THE MESS THAT THEY'RE IN!
FORCED TO WANDER ON THE WINGS OF THE WIND!

CAST:

NO, YOU JUST CAN'T KEEP A BAD MAN DOWN!
THERE AIN'T NO REST FOR THE WICKED!
AIN'T NO REST AT ALL!
AIN'T NO REST FOR THE WICKED!
THE WICKED ARE THE WEARIEST OF ALL!

OOH—OOH—OOH—OOH—OH!
WHAT'S THAT RUSTLIN' IN THE BREEZE!

ACTRESS 1:

OH, THOSE RESTLESS SPIRITS ARE WAND'RIN' BY!

CAST:

THE HOOT OWL'S SCREECHIN' IN THE TREES!

ACTRESS 1: (SINGING)

'CAUSE RESTLESS SPIRITS ARE WAND'RIN' BY!
WELL, THOSE MAN OL' SPIRITS CAN'T FIND NO REST!
THEY WANDER TO THE EAST AND WANDER TO THE WEST,
DRAGGIN' THEIR CHAINS AND FEELING OPPRESSED!

CAST:

THOSE RESTLESS SPIRITS WAND'RIN' BY!
THERE AIN'T NO REST FOR THE WICKED,
NO MATTER WHAT THEY SAY!
THERE AIN'T NO REST FOR THE WICKED!
THEY WANDER TILL THE JUDGMENT DAY!
THERE AIN'T NOT REST FOR THE WICKED!
AIN'T NO REST AT ALL!

ACTRESS 1:

YOU CAN STUFF 'EM IN A COFFIN, PLANT IT IN THE GROUND,
NAIL UP THE LID, BUT THAT WON'T KEEP 'EM DOWN,
'CAUSE THEIR SPIRIT'S GONNA RISE WHEN THEY HEAR THE CALL!

CAST:

YES, THE WICKED ARE THE WEARIEST OF ALL!
OOH—OOH—OOH—OOH!

End of MUSICAL NUMBER 5

(The ACTORS continue to snap their fingers in rhythm. Lights rights elsewhere on:

SCENE: SCROOGE'S BEDROOM

AT RISE: SCROOGES enters dressed in his pajamas.)

ACTRESS 1: Old Scrooge went on inside his dismal, dark house.

ACTOR 5: Darkness is cheap, so Scrooge liked it. But before he went to bed, he poked around a bit to make sure everything was all right.

MUSICAL NUMBER 6: "Ain't No Rest For the Wicked—III"

(SCROOGE looks under the bed; behind things, etc.)

ACTRESS 1: *(Chanting and snapping rhythmically)*

He looked in the closet...

CAST: *(Chanting and snapping rhythmically)*

Nothin' there, nothin' there...

ACTRESS 1: *(Chanting and snapping rhythmically)*

Looked under the bed...

CAST: *(Chanting and snapping rhythmically)*

Nothin' there, nothing' there...

ACTRESS 1: *(Chanting and snapping rhythmically)*

Looked inside the heater....

CAST: *(Chanting and snapping rhythmically)*

Nothin' there, nothing' there...

(SCROOGE looks inside his pajama top.)

ACTRESS 1: *(Chanting and snapping rhythmically)*

He even looked inside his nightshirt.

CAST: *(Chanting and snapping rhythmically)*

Nothin' there, nothing' there...

ACTRESS 1: *(Chanting and snapping rhythmically)*

And bein' satisfied that he was all alone,
He shut himself up in his room—all alone
With nothing but the tick, tick,
tickin' of the clock...

(The snapping now gives the impression of a clock ticking)

Then suddenly
that old clock stopped tickin'.

End of MUSICAL NUMBER 6

(The snapping suddenly stops. SCROOGE sits up in bed, looking alarmed.)

ACTRESS 1: Scrooge started to shake because downstairs he heard the cellar door open with a boom!

(The loud boom of a door opening off stage is heard.)

Then he heard something even louder on the below floor; then moving up the stairs; then coming straight towards his bedroom door!

MUSICAL NUMBER 7: “Ain’t No Rest For the Wicked—IV”

MARLEY’S VOICE & CAST: *(Repeating)*

OOH--OOH--OOH--OOH—OOH.....

(SCROOGE trembles in his bed as the moaning builds in intensity.)

SCROOGE: It’s still a lot of horse hockey! I won’t believe it!

ACTRESS 1: And even as he said that, the color drained from his face ‘cause right into his bedroom walked Old Man Marley’s ghost!

(MARLEY enters. HE is dead, of course, so HE is pale and dressed in rotting grave clothes. HE walks slowly as if exhausted, for over his shoulders are slung two huge burlap “drag sacks”—the type used when picking cotton in the fields— which are stuffed full of cotton and dollar bills, making them very heavy. HE is fettered to the drag sacks with thick heavy chains.)

MARLEY: *(As he approaches cowering SCROOGE)*

THERE AIN’T NO REST FOR THE WICKED,
AIN’T NO REST AT ALL!
DOOMED TO ROAM AND WANDER,
THE WICKED ARE THE WEARIEST OF ALL!

End of Musical Number 7

(Lights go out on the ACTORS so that only SCROOGE and MARLEY in the bedroom are now lit.)

SCROOGE: Who—who are you?

MARLEY: Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE: Who were you then?

MARLEY: I was your business partner, Jacob Marley—when I was alive.

SCROOGE: Well, Jacob, why don’t you have a seat; take a load off.

MARLEY: You don’t believe in me, do you?

SCROOGE: Maybe I’m dreaming. Maybe I ate something that upset my stomach and it’s giving me bad dreams. You might be gas from eating too many collards!

(MARLEY wails in anguish, silencing SCROOGE.)

MARLEY: You hardheaded old fool! Do you believe in me or not?

SCROOGE: But you’re dead! I saw them bury you with my own two eyes. Why are you in chains?

MARLEY: I’m wearing the chains I made when I was alive. I made them link by link and yard by yard of my own free will and choice. But they’re nowhere near as big as the ones you’re wearing right now.

SCROOGE: I’m not wearin’ any chains.

MARLEY: You can’t see or feel them now, but one day you will. Your chains were as big and heavy as mine seven years ago. You’ve been workin’ awful hard on ’em since then, and they’re mighty heavy now—

mighty heavy.

SCROOGE: Please, Jacob! Can't you give me a little comfort!

MARLEY: Comfort comes from some place else. Other kinds of spirits give it to other kinds of men. Oh, Ebenezer, there's so much I wish I could tell you. But I can't. I'm not allowed to. I've gotta go; gotta move on.

SCROOGE: Why?

MARLEY: Because when I was alive, my spirit never wandered much further than our cotton gin...it never concerned itself with anything but making money.

SCROOGE: Well, Jacob, you always had a good head for business.

MARLEY: Business? Mankind was my business! Charity, mercy—these were my business! Listen, Ebenezer! Hear me out! My time here is nearly gone. I don't know why it is that you can see me tonight. I've sat right next to you invisible—many, many a day and night.

SCROOGE: You have?

MARLEY: It's been one of the worst parts of my punishment. But I'm here tonight to tell you that you still have a chance of escapin' my fate—a chance I've been prayin' you might be given.

SCROOGE: Oh, thank you, Jacob! You always were a good friend.

MARLEY: You're gonna be haunted by three ghosts.

SCROOGE: Huh? Well, if that's the hope and the chance you're talkin' about, never mind then. I don't think I'm quite up to that.

MARLEY: Ebenezer, unless you let them visit you, you're gonna end up like me. Expect the first Ghost when the clock strikes one.

SCROOGE: Couldn't I take 'em all at one time and get it over with, Jacob?

MARLEY: Expect the second Ghost when the clock strikes two. Expect the third at three. Now let me get a move-on.

SCROOGE: But Jacob, can't you be here with me when they come?

MARLEY: (*Walking away from SCROOGE*) No. I've gotta keep movin'. For your own sake, Ebenezer, remember what I've told you.

MUSICAL NUMBER 8: "Ain't No Rest For the Wicked (Conclusion)

(Lights rise elsewhere on the ACTORS.)

CAST:

OOH—OOH—OOH—OOH—OOH!

ACTRESS 1: (*To the audience*) Suddenly Old Man Scrooge became aware of sounds in the night air: confused noises—

ACTOR 5: (*To the audience*) Long sorrowful wailings: the sounds of lamentation and regret! And then old Marley himself joined in that mournful song before disappearin' into the bleak, dark night.

(MARLEY joins in the musical wailing, his voice loud and soaring, MARLEY leaves Scrooge's bedroom, and joins the CAST who now—imitating the ghosts being described—writhe around ACTRESS 1 and ACTOR 5, reaching toward THEM with outstretched arms.)

ACTRESS 1: Scared and tremblin', Scrooge looked out his window, and what that old coot saw caused him to shake all the more.

ACTOR 5: The night air was filled with ghosts, wanderin' restlessly here and there, moanin' as they went.

ACTRESS 1: Oh, they were a miserable bunch—all of 'em!

ACTOR 5: It was clear that they were tryin' to interfere with the livin' breathin' folks; tryin' to lend a helpin' hand; tryin' to do some good in the world!

ACTRESS 1: But it was too late for that now! They were dead and had lost that power forever!

YOU CAN STUFF 'EM IN A COFFIN,
YOU CAN PLANT IT IN THE GROUND,
YOU CAN NAIL UP THE LID

BUT THAT WON'T KEEP 'EM DOWN
'CAUSE THEIR SPIRITS GONNA RISE WHEN THEY HEAR THE CALL!
YES, THE WICKED ARE THE WEARIEST OF ALL!

End of MUSICAL NUMBER 8

BLACK OUT

Scene 4

SCENE: SCROOGE'S BEDROOM

AT RISE: SCROOGE is huddled under the covers of his bed, asleep, snoring. Elsewhere, on the perimeter of the scene, in a pool of light we see ACTOR 1 and ACTRESS 2. The sound of a clock striking midnight is heard. SCROOGE wakes up.

ACTOR 1: *(To the audience)* When the clock struck midnight, Old Man Scrooge woke up.

ACTRESS 2: *(To the audience)* He laid there in the dark, just thinkin'. Had he really seen Marley's ghost or had it all been a dream?

ACTOR 1: The more he thought about it, the more confused he became.

ACTRESS 2: And the more he tried not to think about it, the more he did.

ACTOR 1: He remembered how Marley told him he was gonna be haunted by three other ghosts, with first one comin' at one o'clock. So he lay there listening to the clock, waiting to see what would happen.

(A clock is heard striking quarter past the hour)

SCROOGE: *(Listening to the clock; nervously)* A quarter past.

ACTOR 1: Fifteen minutes later—

(A clock is heard striking half past the hour. The lights fade on ACTOR 1 and ACTRESS 2.)

SCROOGE: *(His anxiety growing)* Half past...

(A clock is heard striking a quarter to the hour.)

A quarter till....

(A clock is heard striking one.)

One o'clock!

(SCROOGE sits up; looks around. All is silent.)

Hah! It was a dream. I knew it all along!

(SCROOGE starts to lay back down when suddenly in burst of music and light, THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST [hereafter referred to as THE PAST] appears. THE PAST is a youth, dressed like in simple overalls of an earlier time, but these are a shimmering other-worldly white. In one hand HE carries a large straw hat—also white. The stage lights are focused on HIM so that he seems to glow brilliantly. SCROOGE squints and shields his eyes from the light.)

THE PAST: ‘Evenin’, Ebenezer!

SCROOGE: Are you the ghost I was told was gonna haunt me?

THE PAST: I’m one of ‘em. I’m the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE: Christmas past? Long past?

THE PAST: No. *Your* past.

(With these words, the lights on THE PAST brighten. SCROOGE covers his eyes.)

SCROOGE: Please! My eyes! You’re too bright! Can’t you put on that hat or something?

THE PAST: Sir, I’ve come here to bring you light, and now you want me to cover it up?

SCROOGE: Please!

THE PAST: I swear to goodness, it’s because of you that I’ve been forced to wear this hat all of these years.

(THE PAST put on his straw hat and the lights go down.)

There. You satisfied now?

SCROOGE: *(Angrily)* What would satisfy me, boy, is an explanation of why you’re here!

THE PAST: I’m here to try to save your ornery old soul, so just hush up!

(The PAST waves his hand and magically SCROOGE is momentarily struck dumb)

You’ve ignored me long enough. Now get out of that bed and come take a walk with me.

(SCROOGE refuses to budge.)

There’s no use fightin’. I’m your Past and I’m stronger than you are.

(The PAST waves his hand and SCROOGE, against his will, is pulled magically from his bed and to the PAST’S side.)

SCROOGE: Where are we goin’?

THE PAST: Outside this closed-up old hole that you’ve been hidin’ in all these years.

SCROOGE: But I can’t go outside! I’ll catch my death of cold!

(He makes a run back to his bed)

THE PAST: *(Casually waving his hand and magically drawing SCROOGE to his side)* Stay with me and you’ll be just fine.

SCROOGE: But I’m not dressed!

THE PAST: Nobody’s gonna be able to see us. Now stop your fussin’, relax...

(He waves his hand causing SCROOGE to magically relax)

... and take a walk with me!

MUSICAL NUMBER 9: “Haunted”

(The lights go down on the bedroom, and a special light follows THE PAST as HE strolls and sings. During the following song SCROOGE at times hangs back, refusing to follow the ghost, but the PAST simply makes a few playful passes with his hands and magically SCROOGE, against his will, is pulled along with HIM.)

THE PAST:

SHADES OF NIGHT FALL DENSE AND FAST,
AND ALL THE WORLD IS STILL,
AND MY MIND DRIFTS TO THE PAST
AS IF AGAINST MY WILL.
I CAN'T SLEEP, MY MIND WON'T REST,
MEMORIES WON'T LET GO.
AM I CURSED OR AM I BLESSED
BY ALL THE THINGS I KNOW.

THE FIRE'S EMBERS START TO FADE,
THE AIR NOW HAS A CHILL,
THE LIFE I'VE LIVED, THE MEMORIES MADE
BURN ON WITHIN ME STILL.
THE LIFE I'VE LIVED, THE MEMORIES MADE
BURN ON WITHIN ME STILL.

End of MUSICAL NUMBER 9

THE PAST: Do you remember this place?

(He waves his hands, and lights rise elsewhere on...)

Scene 5

SCENE: A SECTION OF WOODEN FENCE around a cotton field on a farm in southwest rural Georgia. It is Christmas, circa 1894.

AT RISE: EB [Scrooge as a young man of 16 or 17] sits on the fence, glumly reading a book. EB wears a plain, simple collarless shirt and plain dark pants that are held up by old suspenders. His broad-rimmed straw work hat is at his feet. SCROOGE and THE PAST enter the scene, but THEY are invisible to EB.

SCROOGE: *(Looking around in amazement; delighted)* Remember it? Why, I could walk this place blinded-folded! I worked on this farm as boy. My daddy hired me out as a field hand to work here when I was only ten because our family needed the money.

(SCROOGE approaches his younger self; notices the book that he's reading.)

Why, that's my old book: "Tales of the Arabian Knights"! I must have read it a hundred times! When my daddy made me quit school to work, the teacher gave that book to me because she knew how much I liked to read. It was the only book I ever had as a child, and I kept it hidden away because the other boys on the farm would poke fun at you if you liked to read too much. But whenever I was alone, I would open that old book and just escape from everything. Strange to have forgotten about all that for so many years.

THE PAST: Your lip's trembling.

SCROOGE: I'm just feelin' a bit chilly. That's all.

THE PAST: And what's that on your cheek?

SCROOGE: (*Quickly wiping his eye*) It's nothin'.

(*Off stage, DISTANT VOICES begin singing "We Wish You a Merry Christmas." EB looks up from his book and listens sadly to the singing seemingly lost in his thoughts.*)

THE PAST: (*Looking off in the direction of the singing*) What's that?

SCROOGE: That's the owner's family celebratin' Christmas up in the big house.

THE PAST: Are the other field hands up there?

SCROOGE: No, Sir. That wasn't allowed. The other boys usually went home for a few days at Christmas. Their folks would send for 'em.

THE PAST: And your folks?

SCROOGE: My daddy never sent for me.

THE PAST: Why not?

SCROOGE: (*Bitterly*) Well now you'd have to ask him that question yourself! He'd have probably said we couldn't afford it or something like that.

MUSICAL NUMBER 10: "I Don't Care If It's Christmas Time Again"

EB: (*Forlornly; blue*)

CHURCH BELLS ARE RINGIN'
CAROLERS ARE SINGIN'
THE BLUES START TO DESCEND,
BUT ALL THROUGH THE LONELY SILENT NIGHT
I TELL MYSELF EVERYTHING'S ALL RIGHT
'CAUSE I DON'T CARE IF IT'S CHRISTMAS TIME AGAIN.

AT PARTIES THEY'RE DANCIN'
AND SOME ARE ROMANCIN'
WHILE RINGIN' THE HOLIDAY IN.
BUT I LAID ALONE ALL CHRISTMAS EVE
JUST TRYIN' TO MAKE MYSELF BELIEVE
THAT I DON'T CARE IF IT'S CHRISTMAS TIME AGAIN.

OH, BUT WHEN I FELL ASLEEP
I HAD A DREAM SO SWEET
ABOUT THE HOME I USED TO KNOW:
IT WAS A MIDNIGHT CLEAR,
LOVED ONES DREW ME NEAR,
MY TEARS STARTED TO FLOW
BECAUSE I ALMOST BELIEVED IT WAS SO.
WHAT DO I KNOW?
WELL, I'LL TELL YOU....

I KNOW WHEN I WOKE UP

I STARTED TO CHOKE UP
AND SO I FORCED A BIG GRIN.
I SAID, “HEY, IT’S JUST ANOTHER DAY,”
WHILE FIGHTIN’ THE URGE TO KNEEL AND PRAY
THAT HEAVEN WOULD SEND SOMEONE MY WAY
WHO’D MAKE ME CARE THAT IT’S CHRISTMAS TIME
—I WANT TO CARE THAT IT’S CHRISTMAS TIME!
SOMEONE MAKE ME CARE THAT IT’S CHRISTMAS TIME AGAIN.
PLEASE MAKE ME CARE THAT IT’S CHRISTMAS TIME AGAIN.

(EB sits back down and returns to reading his book.)

End of MUSICAL NUMBER 10

THE PAST: Why don’t we have a look at another Christmas?

(THE PAST waves his hand. Suddenly from off stage we hear...)

FANNIE’S VOICE: Eb! Eb!

(FANNIE runs on. Though SHE is a little older than Eb, FANNIE is willowy, delicate and frail. SHE is dressed in a very simple dress made of cheap fabric—such as gingham or calico—which has obviously seen better days. A simple sunbonnet is tied around her neck.)

SCROOGE & EB: *(In unison; lighting up when they see her)* Fannie!

(SCROOGE opens his arm to her. FANNIE opens her arms, runs past SCROOGE and embraces EB.)

SCROOGE: *(To THE PAST)* It’s Fannie! It’s my sister Fannie!

EB: Fannie, what are you doin’ here?

FANNIE: Eb, I’ve come to take you back home! You’re goin’ there—for good!

EB: But what about Daddy?

FANNIE: Oh, Eb, Daddy’s changed so much. He’s nothin’ at all like he used to be...well, most of the time. Just the other night, we were sittin’ by the fire and, Eb, he was actually talkin’ to me—real soft and gentle, not mad at all. And I wanted so badly to ask him just one more time if you might be able to come back home...because the crops were a little better this year. And I almost didn’t ask because I didn’t want to spoil his mood, but then I got up my nerve and asked him any way. And he said, yes, that you should be with us! That you were probably big enough now to be of some real use around the place!

(At this last bit of information, EB hangs his head; turns away from her.)

Eb, aren’t you gonna say somethin’? Aren’t you happy?

(Playing, jubilantly)

You get to leave this place and never come back!

(She touches his hair gently, lovingly)

Just look at you: my baby brother’s all grown up. It don’t seem fair that I had to miss it...that you had to grow up here all by yourself.

EB: *(Overcome with emotion, embracing her again tightly)* Fannie!

FANNIE: Oh, Eb, you’re nearly squeezing the breath out of me!

EB: *(Quickly letting go)* I’m sorry.

FANNIE: *(Smiling, touching his hair)* No. I don’t mind.

(FANNIE takes EB'S hand and THEY hurry off.)

THE PAST: *(Watching FANNIE as she exits)* She had a good heart.

SCROOGE: *(Smiling)* She did. God forbid I dispute you on that.

THE PAST: And such a delicate thing; looks a like breath would've withered her right away.

SCROOGE: *(His smile suddenly fading)* Yes.

(The lights fade on SCROOGE and THE PAST, rising elsewhere on...)

Scene 6

SCENE: THE KITCHEN TABLE in a poor sharecropper's shack.

AT RISE: EB helps FANNIE clean up after the family's Christmas dinner. EB seems anxious—wanting to tell his sister something but unsure of how to say it.

EB: Fannie?

FANNIE: Yes, Eb?...What is it?

EB: *(With difficulty)* I...I care about you...an awful lot, Fannie.

FANNIE: *(With a knowing, understanding smile)* I know. And I love you, too, Eb.

EB: If I had to choose between you and Daddy or anybody else in the world, I'd choose you.

(HE suddenly grabs her hands; holds them tightly, not looking up at her.)

Promise me...promise that you'll never leave me here alone.

FANNIE: Eb, why are you so dismal all of a sudden?

EB: *(Releasing her hands, turning away)* I'm sorry.

FANNIE: Oh, now, don't look so hurt. Look: we have our entire lives ahead of us. Of course, I'll get married some day and have children. Oh, I want a while bunch of kids, Eb! I do! And of course, bein' a Mama and all, I'll have to put them first. But you'll do the same thing yourself one day when you're a daddy. Oh, Eb, it's gonna be so wonderful—our life! Our kids'll all play with one another. Come Sundays, after church, we'll have dinner together, and every Christmas we'll get together and celebrate just like right now.

EB: Do you promise?

FANNIE: Of course I do, brother.

(The lights on THEM, and rise elsewhere on SCROOGE and THE PAST.)

THE PAST: Your sister—she died a young woman, didn't she?

SCROOGE: *(Suddenly stiffening)* She died a girl.

THE PAST: She had children, didn't she?

SCROOGE: One child.

THE PAST: Your nephew.

SCROOGE: *(Uneasily)* Yes.

(A single light rises elsewhere, illuminating only FANNIE'S face; otherwise she is standing alone in utter darkness. SHE is somewhat older now; weak and near death.)

FANNIE: *(Calling out weakly to the darkness)* Eb?.....Eb?.....Eb, are you there?

SCROOGE: *(Overcome with emotion and barely about to speak)* Yes...Yes, Fannie, I'm here.

FANNIE: Eb, watch over my baby—my boy. Promise me! Will you promise me? Eb?

SCROOGE: *(Hanging his head)* Yes...I promise, Fannie.

FANNIE: *(Smiling weakly)* Good. Then I'll always be with you...just as I promised.

(FANNIE disappears into the darkness as the light on her fades to black.)

THE PAST: *(To a shaken Scrooge)* He was in your office this afternoon...your nephew.

SCROOGE: Yes.

THE PAST: Invited you to celebrate Christmas with him and his new wife, didn't he?

SCROOGE: *(Bitterly)* What have we got to celebrate?

THE PAST: I think it's time for a change of scenery.

(THE PAST waves his arm and the lights come up all around them revealing...).

Scene 7

SCENE: *THE OFFICE AND WAREHOUSE OF THE COTTON GIN. It is Christmas Eve, 1900. Where the sign "Scrooge & Marley Cotton" was hung earlier, there now hangs a sign reading "Wiggins Cotton."*

AT RISE: *EB enters, walks to the desk in the office area, and begins working on the account books. Still a young man, EB now wears a collar on his shirt and a tie; HE also wears a vest.*

A young African-American man, DICKIE WILKINS, enters carrying a bale of cotton on his shoulders.)

THE PAST: Do you remember this place?

SCROOGE: *(His spirits lifting)* Of course I do. It's Wiggins's Cotton Gin. I was an apprentice bookkeeper here.

(OLD MAN WIGGINS, a large jovial, middle-aged man, enters.)

WIGGINS: *(Calling to EB and DICKIE)* Hey there, boys! Eb! Dickie!

EB: Afternoon, Mr. Wiggins!

DICKIE: Afternoon, Mr. Wiggins, Sir!

SCROOGE: Lord have mercy! There's Old Man Wiggins himself! Bless my heart! He's alive again!

(Seeing DICKIE)

And there's Dickie-Boy Wilkins! I haven't thought about him in years!

(Laughing with delight)

You know, I think he always sort-of looked up to me.

THE PAST: Well, why wouldn't he? Look at yourself, Ebenezer.

(Pointing at EB)

You were a bright, out-goin', smart-lookin' young fellow.

SCROOGE: Oh no, Spirit! Not me! I never felt like that—not for a minute!

THE PAST: But you were, Ebenezer. Look at yourself the way others saw you. You were a regular dude—and a handsome one, at that.

SCROOGE: No! You think so?

(Looking at EB closely and seeing something for the first time)

Well, Lord have mercy, Spirit! I was pretty good lookin', wasn't I?

THE PAST: Of course, you were.

SCROOGE: How sad to realize it now when it can't do me a bit of good.

WIGGINS: *(To EB & DICKIE)* Yo, Boys! No more work tonight! It's Christmas Eve! Let's have some light in this place!

EB & DICKIE: Yes, Sir, Mr. Wiggins!

WIGGINS: Push your desks back and clear away some of this cotton! We've gotta make lots of room!

EB & DICKIE: Yes, Sir, Mr. Wiggins!

(THEY begin running and clearing the room.)

SCROOGE: *(Laughing as he watches this)* There was nothin' we couldn't have done with Old Man Wiggins lookin' on!

(WIGGINS and the BOYS start decorating.)

Every Christmas Eve, we'd close down the office in the afternoon and turn that old warehouse into a regular dance hall! And then the guests would start arrivin'—

--everybody who worked for Wiggins—white folks and colored, too—all in the same place—it didn't make no never mind to Old Man Wiggins!

(The GUESTS start pouring in, laughing and talking, with some carrying in plates of food. The GUESTS are poor rural whites and poor black field hands; among them are BELLE—an attractive young woman, and JESSE—a struggling young farmer. A lively square dance begins, with everyone clapping and foot stomping)

MUSICAL NUMBER 11: "Deck the Halls—Southern Style"

JESSE:

DECK THE HALLS WITH BOWS OF HOLLY!

ALL:

FA-LA-LA-LA-LA! LA-LA-LA-LA!

'TIS THE SEASON TO BE JOLLY!

FA-LA-LA-LA-LA! LA-LA-LA-LA!

DON WE NOW OUR GAY APPAREL !

FA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA!

WHILE WE SING A YULETIDE CAROL!

FA-LA-LA-LA-LA! LA-LA-LA-LA!

SCROOGE: And the food! Lord Have Mercy! Chickens, hams, yams, pies, cakes, cornbread and a big mess of Old Lady Wiggins's collard greens! Lord, but that woman could cook some good collards!

(OLD LADY WIGGINS, a plump jovial woman, dances in with a pot of collard greens that SHE puts with the rest of the food.)

WIGGINS:

SEE THE COLLARD GREENS BEFORE US!

ALL:

FA-LA-LA-LA LA! LA-LA-LA-LA!

WIGGINS:

EAT 'EM UP, THEN BELCH THE CHORUS!

ALL:

FA-LA-LA-LA LA! LA-LA-LA-LA!

WIGGINS:

DON'T FORGET SOME PEPPER JELLY!

ALL:

FA-LA-LA-LA LA! LA-LA-LA-LA!

WIGGINS:

IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE, SO STUFF YOUR BELLY!

ALL:

FA-LA-LA-LA LA! LA-LA-LA-LA!

(EVERYONE is dancing, laughing, cutting up.)

SCROOGE: *(Laughing, pointing at WIGGINS and his WIFE dancing)* And of course, there was music, so everybody danced—even the Baptists! Look at Old man Wiggins and his wife! Boy, could they shake a leg! *(WIGGINS and his WIFE take center floor, dancing. EVERYONE else stands back, claps, laughs, and encourages them. Then JESSE comes forward.)*

JESSE: *(Mischievously)*

NO ONE DANCES LIKE THE WIGGINS!

ALL:

FA-LA-LA-LA LA! LA-LA-LA-LA!

JESSE:

THEY'RE THAT COUPLE THERE: THE BIG ONES!

ALL:

FA-LA-LA-LA LA! LA-LA-LA-LA!

MRS. WIGGINS:

HERE WE COME! GET OUT OUR WAY!

ALL:

FA-LA-LA-LA LA! LA-LA-LA-LA!

MRS. WIGGINS:

WE'LL OUT DANCE YOU ANY DAY!

ALL:

FA-LA-LA-LA LA! LA-LA-LA-LA!

(Musical underscoring and the dancing continue under the following.)

THE PAST: Ebenezer, you're actin' like you loved that old fellow.

SCROOGE: *(Clapping his hands to the music)* Oh, I did, Spirit! Everybody who knew him did!

THE PAST: Why? He was one of the richest men in the county, but I bet he didn't spend that much on these parties.

SCROOGE: It wasn't the money, Spirit! You've missed the point! He was the boss-man. He could have made our lives miserable if he had a mind to, but he didn't. Working for him was a pleasure because of the way he treated us; the way he'd look at us, the way he'd speak to us—all those little things folks take for granted—those things made us happy, and they didn't cost him a dime.

(SCROOGE suddenly stops clapping)

THE PAST: What's the matter?

SCROOGE: Nothin’.

THE PAST: Somethin’, I think.

End of MUSICAL NUMBER 11

SCROOGE: I was just thinkin’ about the colored girl who works for me. That’s all.

THE PAST: *(Pointing out BELLE in the crowd)* There’s someone to cheer you up. I know you remember her.

MUSICAL NUMBER 12: “Dance Continuation”

SCROOGE: *(Seeing her for the first time; deeply moved)* Belle!

(BELLE and EB, finding themselves dance-partners and standing face to face with one another, start to waltz slowly to the music. The other GUESTS dance off stage leaving BELLE and EB alone as the music ends. THEY stand facing one another. There is an awkward silence.)

End of MUSICAL NUMBER 12

BELLE: Eb, would you mind walkin’ me home.

EB: *(Nervously, going to his desk)* I would, but...but I’ve got some work here to finish.

BELLE: *(Following right behind him)* On Christmas Eve?

EB: I gotta get through these account books before the end of the year. I’ll be here for a while. Maybe you’d best catch up with the others. .

BELLE: Everybody’s already gone. I don’t mind waitin’ here for you to finish--if *you* don’t mind.

EB: I don’t mind--if *you* don’t mind.

BELLE: *I* don’t mind.

EB: Then I don’t either...I reckon.

(There is an uneasy pause. EB opens an account and tries hard—very hard—to concentrate, but HE is too aware of Belle. SHE watches him and chuckles to herself.)

EB: *(Unnerved by her chuckles)* What?

BELLE: I ain’t never seen nobody look so serious.

EB: Well, these account books are very important.

BELLE: *(Walking over to him and carelessly flipping through the account book)* Oh, I know. It’s just that all those numbers...well, just lookin’ at ‘em sort of gives me a headache. I was never very good at ‘rithmetic.

EB: This isn’t just arithmetic. Each one of these numbers represents somethin’ that someone has produced or sold or bought. Because of these numbers someone can put food on their table or buy a new plow or pay off a mortgage on a farm.

BELLE: *(Smiling mischievously)* Oh, I know they’re all very, very important.

EB: Well, they are. And you’ll realize that when you get married.

BELLE: Sometimes I don’t think I’ll ever get married. Most girls my age already have, you know, and I’m not gettin’ any younger. Besides I don’t have no dowry. I don’t even have a hope chest. No, Sir, Mister Ebenezer Scrooge, I don’t have a single thing to bring to a marriage.... just myself...and possibly children some day.

EB: One would think that would be enough.

BELLE: *One* would? And what about you?

EB: I...uh...I suppose I include myself in that one.

BELLE: Well, that's mighty polite of you...to *suppose* that.

EB: I didn't mean to be polite.

BELLE: *(With a laugh)* Oh?

EB: *(Fumbling)* I mean I was being sincere.

BELLE: Well, thank you. I'm afraid when it comes to worldly things I'm just plain old worthless. My daddy's people lost everything in the war—their farm, their land, their house.

EB: So did my daddy's people.

BELLE: The whole lot of 'em is nothin' but poor sharecroppers now. And bitter—Lord have mercy, but they're bitter! Goin' on and on about what they used to have, how things used to be. I'm so sick and tired of hearin' their belly-achin'. The past is past and it ain't never comin' back, and I say “Good riddance.” The future's what matters most. That's what I'm pinnin' my hopes to. This whole world can go to the devil, but I intend to fight back in the only way that'll work.

EB: What way is that?

BELLE: I intend to be happy no matter what comes my way. All my life I've seen bitterness eat away at people. Well, there ain't any of us that gets through this life without misery. That's just a fact of God, so why should a body let it eat away at her heart. It makes no difference to me if I live in a big fine mansion or a shack--though I'll admit, a mansion would be more to my liking. It makes no difference if I marry a rich man--which ain't very likely--a some poor farmer--which'll probably be the case; as long as I live, I intend to be happy.

(From somewhere a clock is heard striking midnight.)

It's midnight already. Mr. Eb, may I be the first to officially wish you a Merry Christmas?

EB: Thank you. You know you'd best be gettin' home.

BELLE: A young lady shouldn't be out walkin' alone at this hour.

EB: *(Closing his books)* Then I suppose it's up me to see you there.

BELLE: But what about those numbers. They're mighty important.

EB: I think they can wait until after Christmas.

(HE offers his arm. SHE takes it and THEY start off. THE PAST waves his hand and the LIGHTS GO DOWN on the scene.)

THE PAST: My time's growing short. Let's move on.

SCROOGE: *(Wistfully looking at BELLE and his younger self)* Can't I stay here just a little longer?

THE PAST: You can see her as she appeared on another Christmas a few years later.

(THE PAST waves his hand and lights rise on BELLE and EB in the cotton gin office. It is two years later—Christmas Eve 1902. EB'S countenance is different: somewhat hardened; sterner; emotionally detached. BELLE has also changed; SHE is not stern, but tired. SHE wears an engagement ring. There is an obvious tension between THEM. SCROOGE immediately recognizes the scene.)

SCROOGE: No! Not this! Not again!

BELLE: *(To EB)* I know it doesn't matter to you. Something else has taken my place. Well, if it makes you happy—Lord knows I don't seem to be able to anymore—I ain't got no cause to grieve.

EB: What are you talkin' about, girl? What in the world do you think has taken your place?

(BELLE crosses to his desk and picks up his account book)

Not this again!

(Frustrated by the remark, the situation and her inability to articulate her feelings, BELLE angrily throws the account book to the floor. Angrily EB rushes to pick it up.)

I swear I don't know what everybody expects of me! On the one hand, you're supposed to be able to take care of yourself, stay out of debt, not be burden on anybody else; on the other hand, you're not supposed to be so concerned about money because it's "the root of all evil!" So what in the world am I supposed to do, Belle? You tell me!

BELLE: You're too afraid of the world, Eb. Everything you do is keep yourself from bein' hurt by it.

EB: I'm just tryin' to get us some security! You're a woman. You don't understand what the world expects of a man--

SCROOGE: Not at all!

EB: You're a dreamer—

SCROOGE: Yes!

EB: Too unrealistic!

SCROOGE: Yes!

EB: You're always laughing at the important business of the world!

SCROOGE: *(To BELLE)* And I loved you for it!

EB: So what if I'm a little wiser now about the dealings of the world? I haven't changed toward you...have I?

SCROOGE: I didn't think so.

BELLE: *(To EB)* Eb, whatever we had when we first got engaged—well, we've lost it. Back then we were both poor and happy to stay that way until, in good time, we could work our way up.

SCROOGE: But I never had any patience, Belle! I was always so serious and hardheaded. You knew that from the beginning!

BELLE: *(To EB)* You have changed. When we first met you was a different man.

EB: I was a boy.

BELLE: Be honest with yourself, Eb. You know that you weren't then what you are now.

SCROOGE: *(Sadly confessing)* She was right.

BELLE: But I'm the same girl I've always been. The things about me that you liked once upon a time, these same things make you miserable now.

EB: *(Looking at her helplessly, at a loss)* Belle...

BELLE: Be honest with yourself, Eb. If you were to meet me today for the very first time—a dirt poor, ignorant, sharecropper's daughter—you'd never propose to me.

MUSICAL NUMBER 13: "You Never Said a Word"

I've been able to admit that to myself for a long time, even if you haven't. So instead of waitin' for you to come to your senses and ask me for your freedom, why don't I go ahead and give it to you now? Save us both some time and heartache.

EB: Have I ever, *ever* asked for my freedom?

BELLE: Not in so many words.

EB: In what way then?

BELLE:

YOU NEVER SAID A WORD,
YOU NEVER SAID A SINGLE THING
TO REVEAL YOUR HEART'S NO LONGER MINE.
AND YET WITHOUT A WORD
IN EVERYTHING LITTLE THING YOU DO
SOMETHING'S CHANGED THAT I CANNOT DEFINE.

OF COURSE YOU'LL SAY THAT THAT'S ABSURD,
INSIST YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED TOWARDS ME,
THOUGH YOU KNOW YOU'RE NOT THE MAN YOU WERE.
AND IF I TAKE YOU AT YOUR WORD,
IGNORE WHAT YOU REFUSE TO SEE
IN THE END WE KNOW WHAT WILL OCCUR

YOU'LL NEVER SAY A WORD,
YOU'LL NEVER SAY A SINGLE THING
ABOUT THE BITTER TRUTH WE NEVER FACED.
BUT STILL YOU'RE SURE TO KNOW
AS SURELY AS I KNOW IT BOW
IN YOUR HEART MY LOVE HAS BEEN REPLACED.

SO NOT ANOTHER WORD;
LET ME SAVE THOSE YEARS FOR YOU.
NOT ANOTHER WORD.
I'LL ALWAYS LOVE THE MAN I KNEW.
AND IF YOU FEEL PAIN, FOR GOODNESS SAKE,
MIND YOUR HEART, DEAR; PLEASE DON'T LET IT BREAK;
FOR ONE DAY YOU MAY NEED IT,
THOUGH YOU MAY NOT THINK SO NOW;
I PRAY ONE DAY YOU'LL HEED IT
AND THAT IT WILL TEACH YOU HOW
LOVE IS MORE THAN WORDS.
WE BOTH NEED MORE THAN WORDS.
I HOPE YOU'RE HAPPY IN THE LIFE YOU'VE CHOSEN IT.

(BELLE approaches EB, and leans in to kisses his cheek, but EB turn his face away from her. BELLE pulls back and exits with an air of sad resolve. The musical underscoring continues under the following dialogue.)

THE PAST: She left...

SCROOGE: And that was the end of it.

(Angrily at EB)

And you! You said nothin'! You let her walk away without sayin' a single word!

End of MUSICAL NUMBER 13

THE PAST: He can't hear you. These are only shadows of things as they were.

(EB continues to stare straight ahead without any show of emotion. HE blinks once, as if to fight back a tear, and his face hardens as if fighting the urge to call after Belle; then HE returns to his desk and account books. The lights lower on EB at work as SCROOGE drops his head in defeat. SCROOGE and THE PAST are now left alone together in a small pool of light.)

THE PAST: You saw Belle again?

SCROOGE: A few times over the years...on the town square.

THE PAST: And?

SCROOGE: I'd always run as fast I could in the other direction.

THE PAST: She always saw you.

SCROOGE: And?

THE PAST: Let's just say she was moved.

SCROOGE: But she didn't feel any pain?

THE PAST: You old fool, you were the one in pain. That's why you turned tail and ran.

SCROOGE: *(Annoyed)* All right, I admit it! Lord knows I can't keep any secrets from you!

THE PAST: You gotta remember that on the night you met her, Belle swore that she was gonna be happy—and she was. She married a right nice fellow, not too poor but not too well off, who gave her all the things you wouldn't.

SCROOGE: Couldn't--

THE PAST: Wouldn't.

SCROOGE: *(Finally admitting it)* Wouldn't!

THE PAST: I have one more thing to show you.

(HE waves his arm and lights rise elsewhere on...)

Scene 8

SCENE: BELLE'S KITCHEN TABLE, Christmas Eve 1926.

AT RISE: BELLE, now older, is preparing food for Christmas dinner. Her husband, JESSE, enters; sneaks up behind her, puts his arms around her, pulls her close to him and kisses her neck. BELLE smiles to herself, but smacks JESSE'S arms so that he'll let go of her.)

JESSE: Come on, Darlin', it's the season of love.

BELLE: It's the season of stuffin' your belly, too.

JESSE: But Darlin', I'm ready for my Christmas present.

BELLE: And just what do you think you're gettin' for Christmas.

(JESSE grins at her mischievously; gives her sly wink.)

Lord have mercy! As tired I am right now, you'll be lucky if you get *that* before the Fourth of July. I'm afraid you'll have to make due with a cookie.

(BELLE holds up a cookie. JESSE plants a kiss on her nose, takes the cookie, and sits down while she returns to preparing the food.)

JESSE: *(Playfully; referencing a long running inside joke)* I saw an “old friend” of yours this afternoon.

BELLE: *(Playfully)* An “old friend?” My, my, my...who could that be?

JESSE: You get one guess.

BELLE: I don’t know. Could it have been Ebenezer Scrooge?

JESSE: That’s the one.

BELLE: You didn’t go to Jacob Marley’s funeral, did you?

JESSE: Good Lord, Woman! I’ve got more important things to do the day before Christmas than to go watch ‘em bury that old buzzard.

BELLE: Then where’d you see Eb?

JESSE: Over at the cotton gin. I happened to glance in the office window as I passed the place, and there he was, sittin’ at his desk with his nose buried in his books.

BELLE: *(Softly, to herself)* Poor Eb.

JESSE: His only friend’s just been buried six feet under, and there he is goin’ about his business like nothin’s even happened. Can you believe it?

BELLE: *(Smiling, sadly)* Yes, I can...sad to say.

JESSE: Yes Sir, there he sat all alone in the dark hole of an office—all alone in the world, I do believe.

BELLE: *(Softly)* Poor thing.

SCROOGE: *(To THE PAST)* Spirit, let’s get out of here.

JESSE: Hey now, what’s this? “Poor thing.” You tryin’ to make me jealous?

BELLE: Jealous? Of Ebenezer Scrooge? Have you been drinkin’?

JESSE: *(Rising, playfully approaching her)* You still have feelings for him. I can tell.

BELLE: I feel sorry for him—same as any good Christian would.

SCROOGE: *(To THE PAST)* I want to go now!

JESSE: I’m not buyin’ that, Darlin’. There’s only one way you can convince that you don’t have feelin’s for him.

BELLE: Why don’t I convince you with a turkey drum stick up the side of your head?

JESSE: No, that ain’t it! You gotta give me my Christmas present right now!

(HE starts to chase after BELLE.)

BELLE: *(Laughing as SHE smacks him away)* Stop it, you old fool! I’ve got flour and turkey broth on my hands!

JESSE: Gravy! Yum-yum!

(BELLE runs off laughing with JESSE in pursuit. The lights fade on the kitchen so that SCROOGE and THE PAST now stand isolated in a small pool of light.)

SCROOGE: Stop it! Stop it! Why are you doin’ this to me?

THE PAST: I told you before: these are the shadows of things that were. They are what they are. Don’t blame me!

SCROOGE: I can’t take it anymore! Leave me be! Stop hauntin’ me!

(SCROOGE crosses away from THE PAST as the lights rise elsewhere on...)

Scene 9

SCENE: SCROOGE'S BEDROOM

AT RISE: SCROOGE makes his way to his bed, with the PAST on his heels. SCROOGE climbs back in his bed and pulls the sheets over his head. THE PAST does not leave but plants himself next to the bed; the light on HIM begins to grow brighter. A light rises elsewhere on ACTOR 5.

ACTOR 5: *(To the audience)* But no matter how much Old Man Scrooge put up a fuss, that Ghost stayed right there in front of him, burning brighter and brighter. And when Scrooge looked at that Ghost's face, in some strange way, it was like it was made up of bits and pieces of all the other faces he had been shown that night. *(FANNIE, WIGGINS, BELLE, JESSE enter one by one, staring straight ahead, and gathering in a grouping behind THE PAST. THEY say their respective line as THEY enter. Discordant underscoring begins to play beneath the spoken lines—creating a nightmare sense of tension and confusion.)*

FANNIE: Eb! Watch over my baby—my boy. Promise me! Will you promise me?

WIGGINS: Yo, Boys! No more work tonight! It's Christmas Eve! Let's have some light in this place!

BELLE: Be honest with yourself, Eb. You know that you weren't then what you are now.

JESSE: Yes Sir, there he sat all alone in the dark hole of an office—all alone in the world, I do believe.

(These CHARACTERS repeat these lines again and again, growing louder each time, until THEY are speaking on top of one another, creating complete confusion.)

SCROOGE: *(Hysterically)* Make them stop! Make them stop! I just want to be left alone!

MUSICAL NUMBER 14: "Haunted" Reprise

(As the music starts, the CHARACTERS suddenly fall silent, freeze, and there is a dramatic change on the lighting.)

ALL: *(Loudly in tight harmony)*

THE FIRE'S EMBERS START TO FADE

THE AIR NOW HAS A CHILL.

THE LIFE I'VE LIVED, THE MEMORIES MADE

BURN ON WITHIN ME STILL.

THE LIFE I'VE LIVED, THE MEMORIES MADE

BURN ON WITHIN ME STILL.

(The lights fade on THE PAST and the other CHARACTERS as a sobbing SCROOGE rolls up in the fetal position on his bed.)

End of MUSICAL NUMBER 14

END OF ACT I

Act Two has 30 pages

**REVIEWS OF THE FIRST PRODUCTION OF
“A SOUTHERN CHRISTMAS CAROL”...**

“A Truly Phenomenal Southern Christmas Story”

By Barbara River Holmes

(From The Albany Herald [Albany, Georgia], December 5, 2003)

“As a dear friend would say, "Lovely." There is no other single word to describe the Colquitt/ Miller Arts Council's first professional production, "A Southern Christmas Carol." Though the mastermind of 1843's "A Christmas Carol," Charles Dickens himself couldn't have written a better account of the spirit of Christmas—at least not Christmas in 1933 Depression-ridden southwest Georgia. "Daddy's family lost everything in the war," says Belle (Katie Wieggers), Scrooge's once fiancée, in a coy, sad and graceful Southern slur; "the whole lot of them ain't nothin' but sharecroppers now.”

...Written by Rob. Lauer, musically arranged by Steve Hacker and choreographed by Atlanta's Karen Beyer, "A Southern Christmas Carol" brings Dickens' tale of greed and giving one step closer to home, making Ebenezer Scrooge a wealthy cotton gin owner. "Bah, horse hockey!" the cold-hearted Scrooge (Peter Lewis — fabulous! hilarious! believable!) groans before his transformation into a Christian man willing to give his money to help those, as he says, inflating the surplus — that is, the poor. Meant to explore some Southern themes like agriculture, racism and poverty, Lauer's play pays close attention to detail: cotton, overalls, accents, home-brewed liquor, biscuits, square dancing, gospel singing, Southern hostility and hospitality, “ain'ts” and hope chests, pork and collards. The 10-actor cast portrays 25 characters phenomenally, including the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Yet-To-Be, farmers and Scrooge's maid, a woman named Eppie whom the old man just calls "girl." ... "Yessuh, Mr. Scrooge sir," she often replies as Scrooge beats her down with his demoralizing words of superiority. ... Though most of the world knows how Dickens' story ends, Lauer did such an excellent job of tailoring the original story to fit the South that one is eager to see how this story will end. The traditional and original music adds so much to Dickens' and Lauer's funny, sad yet inspiring story. Often the crowd was in laughter or tears. ... This season, treat yourself and your loved ones to something truly beautiful, honest and original and head to Colquitt for "A Southern Christmas Carol." You won't be sorry. I wasn't.”

“Scrooge in South Georgia”

by Ed Corson

(From The Macon Telegraph [Macon, Georgia], Dec. 19, 2003)

"Bah! Humbug!" Since Ebenezer Scrooge first spat out that angry phrase, in the pages of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," published 160 years ago come Sunday, those words have summed up the bitterness of Yule phobics, soured secularists and Christmas curmudgeons. The phrase is "Bah! Horse hockey!" down in Miller County on the flat plains of southwest Georgia. I heard Old Man Scrooge say it on stage Wednesday afternoon. There, in "A Southern Christmas Carol," presented in Colquitt's Cotton Hall, Ebenezer Scrooge is a tight-fisted cotton gin owner, the richest and most hated man in a small Southern town in the Depression year 1933. The show is a fresh musical translation of the well-worn story of 19th Century London. I've seen other adaptations of the work; this one really works. It's faithful to the original in much of Dickens' dialogue, character drawing and events, but it shows a sensitive ear for southern talk, music and religious sensibility. As Clarence Jordan's "Cotton Patch Gospel" is to the New Testament original, so Rob Lauer's musical is to the original Dickens story and its stagings. It is also good fun, a hoot that warms the heart...

...In this version, Bob Cratchitt and Tiny Tim are replaced by Eppie, a black maid, and her grown polio-lamed son, Tiny. The delegation soliciting for poor relief becomes an evangelical missionary couple seeking funds to minister to Depression victims. In place of the Londoners who discuss Scrooge are farmers. Jesus comes into the picture much more than in Dickens' original. But the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future are there, as are Scrooge's sister, fiancé and nephew Fred. So are the three crones who scavenge his personal effects. Appalachian and African American carols precede the show. Among the nine original songs are "Ain't No Rest For the Wicked," about Marley's ghost; "It's All Because of Santa Claus," "God Bless Us Everyone," and "Satan's Having Company This Christmas"--an hilarious comment by a trio of farmers on Scrooge's supposed death.