

Pacific Theatre Presents



**A CHRISTMAS CAROL**

adapted by Ron Reed from the novel by Charles Dickens  
December 2-31

**MEDIA RELEASE**

Please include in **NOVEMBER, DECEMBER** calendar listings and announcements

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**A CHRISTMAS CAROL**

adapted by Ron Reed from the novel by Charles Dickens

December 2-31

*"Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner!"*

**IN SHORT:** Pacific Theatre presents A CHRISTMAS CAROL, adapted by Ron Reed from the novel by Charles Dickens. **Playing Dec 2-31 Wednesday – Saturday at 8pm with 2pm matinee on Saturday at Pacific Theatre, 1440 W 12<sup>th</sup> Ave. Artist talkback Friday, Dec 9<sup>th</sup>. For tickets (\$16.50-29.50 HST not incl.) call 604.731.5518 or [pacifictheatre.org](http://pacifictheatre.org).**

**VANCOUVER, BC** – A midnight haunting brings a lone man to the edge of his own demise – sounds more like *Paranormal Activity* than a children’s Christmas story. Pacific Theatre is proud to present *A Christmas Carol* as adapted and performed by Ron Reed, from the novel by Charles Dickens. In this one-man adaptation, the thrilling originality, wit and fire of Dickens’ masterpiece of storytelling is restored – glorious language, vivid characterization and compelling social conscience.

While the image of bankers taking all they can from employees and customers alike might resonate deeply with current events, Scrooge’s picture strikes a dissonant chord with our current headlines. As Dickens put it: “darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it.” A miser to the core, this character lives as a foil to the high-rolling bankers that dominate today, living nearly as poorly as his ill-used underlings.

Reflecting on the choice of production that may seem like a saccharine cash cow for the holiday season, Reed says, “working with Dickens’ original text, the story of Ebenezer Scrooge is anything but frivolous or sentimental. This story plays for keeps. Dickens’ language is extraordinary, his passion for justice electrifying, his insights into the human heart substantial.” In fact, he says, “this show is beginning to feel like one of those personal artistic landmarks – those shows you end up thinking back on as your greatest, or most meaningful experiences as an artist.”

Director Sarah Rodgers calls this production “*A Christmas Carol* as never seen before... it is probably the closest and purest production to Dickens text as you will ever get, in a unique setting that evokes imagination and curiosities.”

Featuring the Jessie Award nominated Ron Reed. Live fiddle by Kathleen Nisbett. Directed by Sarah Rodgers. Set design by Bryan Pollock. Lighting design by Lauchlin Johnston. Costume design by Nicole Bach. Stage management by Kyla Ferrier.

**RAVE REVIEWS**

“Ron Reed’s Damien is a fiery, multi-layered one-man performance – emotional, well-rounded and complex. A tour-de-force!” – Jo Ledingham, *The Vancouver Courier*

Details:	A CHRISTMAS CAROL adapted by Ron Reed from the novel by Charles Dickens
When:	December 2-31, Wednesdays-Saturdays at 8pm, 2pm matinees Saturdays
Where:	Pacific Theatre, 1420 West 12 <sup>th</sup> Ave (at Hemlock St), Vancouver, BC
Tickets:	\$16.50-29.50 (HST not incl.) – to reserve call 604.731.5518, or visit <a href="http://pacifictheatre.org">pacifictheatre.org</a> .

Season sponsor: Rhema Health Products



## About Pacific Theatre

With its beginnings in 1984, Pacific Theatre has been creating theatre that matters for over 25 years. Above all, Pacific Theatre aspires to delight, provoke, and stimulate dialogue by producing theatre that rigorously explores the spiritual aspects of the human experience. Fostering new works and established plays as well as developing emerging artists while creating an artistic home for established practitioners, Pacific Theatre seeks to engage Vancouver's community while creating work that holds the highest artistic standards.

After a wildly successful 2010-2011 season that culminated in 21 nominations and 6 wins, including Best Production for *Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train* and a special award for Curation and Execution of an Outstanding Season of Theatre. This season artistic director Ron Reed has continued the tradition of involving other artists as guest producers, co-producers, and presentations, including Gallery 7 Theatre, Horseshoes & Hand Grenades Theatre, Jason Goode's *Annunciation Pictures*, and *The Lost Gospel Ensemble* (directed by Richard Wolfe of Pi Theatre).



## A Note from the Artistic Director, Playwright, and Performer



It may sound strange for me to say this about an old chestnut like *A Christmas Carol*, but for me this show is beginning to feel like one of those personal artistic landmarks - those shows you end up thinking back on as your greatest, or most meaningful, experiences as an artist. This story, this role connects with me as deeply as my experiences in *Damien*, *Shadowlands*, *A Man For All Seasons* - roles that at first glance might seem more substantial, more serious, more demanding.

But, especially working with Dickens' original text, the story of Ebenezer Scrooge is anything but frivolous or sentimental. This story plays for keeps. Dickens' language is extraordinary, his passion for justice electrifying, his insights into the human heart substantial.

As an artistic director of a very busy, very small, and very artistically ambitious theatre, I don't get to act as often as I'd like. But what's great about my situation is that I never have to do a role, or a show, I don't believe in. But even more than most, this one *matters* to me. There's something about it that feels essential to what my life is about: in the process of rehearsal, (and of learning all those lines!), I'm starting to figure out what.

-Ron Reed

## About Charles Dickens



Charles John Huffman Dickens was born on 7 February, 1812 in Portsmouth, Hampshire, England (now the Dickens Birthplace Museum) the son of Elizabeth née Barrow (1789-1863) and John Dickens (c.1785-1851) a clerk in the Navy Pay Office. John was a congenial man, hospitable and generous to a fault which caused him financial difficulties throughout his life. He inspired the character Mr. Micawber in *David Copperfield* (1849-1850). Charles had an older brother Frances, known as Fanny, and younger siblings Alfred Allen, Letitia Mary, Harriet, Frederick William known as Fred, Alfred Lamert, and Augustus Newnham.

As a prolific 19th Century author of short stories, plays, novellas, novels, fiction and non, during his lifetime Dickens became known the world over for his remarkable characters, his mastery of prose in the telling of their lives, and his depictions of the social classes, mores and values of his times. Some considered him the spokesman for the poor, for he definitely brought much awareness to their plight, the downtrodden and the have-nots. He had his share of critics like [Virginia Woolf](#) and [Henry James](#), but also many admirers, even into the 21st Century.

A champion for the poor, Dickens was greatly influenced in this regard by his childhood experience of watching his father imprisoned for a debt, and his subsequent need to work in a factory to help support his family.

Some of Dickens' best-known works include

- A Christmas Carol
- The Adventures of Oliver Twist
- The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby
- Barnaby Rudge
- David Copperfield
- Hard Times: For These Times
- A Tale of Two Cities
- Great Expectations
- The Mystery of Edwin Drood

## **Ebenezer Scrooge – the inspiration**

Scrooge has been a part of our modern vernacular for so long that few people question where he began. Dickens' diaries tell us that the character of Scrooge first emerged from a grave marker he came across in the Canongate Kirkyard in Edinburgh in 1841. The headstone marked the grave of Ebenezer Lennox Scroggie and called him a "meal man", as he was a corn merchant. In the low-lit cemetery, Dickens misread it to say that Scroggie was a "mean man", and that set his imagination reeling about a man who could be so terrible to have such an insult on his grave stone.

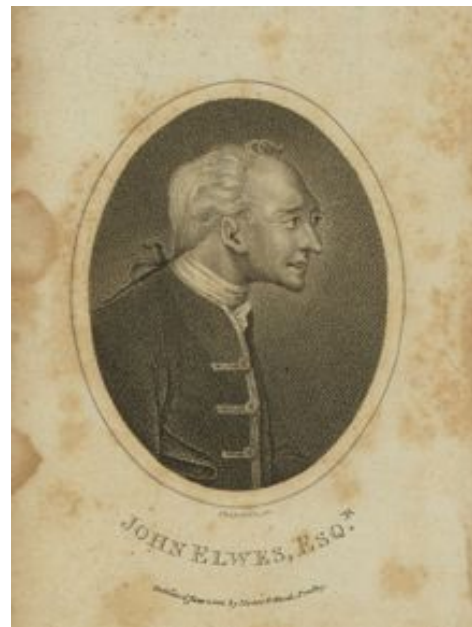
While the only concrete information we have on the source of Scrooge's miserly ways comes from that diary entry, there are other theories as to the penny-pincher's other character traits:

Scrooge's economic views may have come from demographer and political economist Thomas Malthus, who opposed poor laws (precursors to modern welfare) and believed that populations should naturally increase or decrease in response to environmental factors, without societal intervention.

He may have been based on Gabriel Grub, a minor character in Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers*, described as "an ill-conditioned, cross-grained, surly fellow", whose face had "such a deep scowl of malice and ill-humour as it was difficult to meet without feeling something the worse for.

The contradictory lifestyle of a wealthy man living like a pauper may have come from Jemmy Wood, owner of the Gloucester Old Bank. He was called the richest commoner in Her Majesty's dominions, and yet he was known for picking up pieces of coal that fell off the boats at the docks and walking everywhere to avoid paying a carriage.

The illustrations of Scrooge by John Leech bear a deep resemblance to John Elwes, an MP for Berkshire. He was called "Elwes the Miser", and his habit of going to bed at sunset to avoid wasting candles may have been the inspiration for Scrooge's view that "darkness is cheap."



## A Long Line of Scrooges

Ron Reed takes a place in a long line of actors who have portrayed the infamous Ebenezer Scrooge:



## Dickens' London



Charles Dickens would spend hours walking the streets of Victorian London, something that came through clearly in his vivid descriptions of the city.

The city that inspired Dickens' work was in the midst of the Industrial Revolution, and experiencing all the benefits and consequences of this.

The population grew from 1 million to 4.5 million people in 80 years. While fashionable neighbourhoods like Regent

and Oxford Street grew and thrived, so the poor and squalid regions grew dirtier and more crowded by the day.

Pollution, raw sewage, and unlit streets were the hallmarks of Dickens' London, and overcrowding combined with a lack of personal hygiene made lead to a quick spread of diseases.

The New Poor Law, enacted in 1834, was a reaction to the vast increase in poverty in London during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Previously, parishes were required to take care of the poor, but the new law allowed them to apply for aid in this work if they banded together and created regional workhouses. The workhouses were essentially a prison for the poor, separating families and removing the civil liberties of those who lived there. In fact, the poor of London did all they could to avoid such "relief".

In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens describes the London streets: *"It was market-morning. The ground was covered, nearly ankle-deep, with filth and mire; a thick steam, perpetually rising from the reeking bodies of the cattle, and mingling with the fog, which seemed to rest upon the chimney-tops, hung heavily above."*

## **The Creative Team**

Nicole Bach | Costume Designer

Kyla Ferrier | Stage Manager

Lauchlin Johnston | Lighting Designer

Kathleen Nisbett | Fiddler

Bryan Pollack | Set Designer

Ron Reed | Actor, Adaptor

Before founding Pacific Theatre in 1984, Ron received an MFA in acting from the California Institute of the Arts. He has been nominated for Jessie Awards for his performances in *Shadowlands*, *A Man for All Seasons*, *Mourning Dove*, *God's Man in Texas*, and *Cotton Patch Gospel*. Other favourite roles have included Charlie in *The Foreigner*, and John/Judas in *Godspell*. Ron is also a widely-produced playwright, with over fifty productions of his plays to date. *Book of the Dragon* won the Chalmers Canadian Play Award in 1997, and *Tent Meeting* was nominated for Toronto's Dora Mavor Moore Award.

Sarah Rodgers | Director

Sarah is an actor and a director. She received her BFA (acting) and MFA (directing) from UBC; directing highlights include: *Anything Goes* for Theatre Under the Stars; *Billy Bishop Goes To War* UBC, Arts Club Theatre/Persephone for which she received a Jessie Richardson award for Outstanding direction in Large Theatre; *The Seahorse* Arts Club Theatre;; *Rosmersholm* for United Players; *A Christmas in Wales* and *St. Joan* for Chemainus Theatre Festival; *The Foursome* for the Gateway. Sarah has directed some of her favourite shows at Pacific Theatre: *Elephant Man*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *Jesus My Boy*, *Godspell*. Sarah has had a special time guiding Ron in their unique curiosity of *A Christmas Carol*.