



CONTENT GUIDE • AGES 8 AND UP

Content Guide Information by Derek T. Pickens

“I WEAR THE CHAIN I FORGED IN LIFE,
I MADE IT LINK BY LINK, AND YARD
BY YARD; I GIRDED IT ON OF MY OWN
FREE WILL, AND OF MY OWN FREE
WILL I WORE IT.”

Charleston Stage, now celebrating its 45th Anniversary Season, is in residence at the Historic Dock Street Theatre. Charleston Stage is South Carolina’s largest resident professional theatre. More than a half million students have attended Charleston Stage’s fully professional productions at the Historic Dock Street Theatre over the past 45 years. Charleston Stage school shows feature dazzling scenery, stunning costumes, and casts of professional actors.

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**From the Book by Charles Dickens
Adapted by Julian Wiles**

SYNOPSIS:

Celebrate the warmth of the holidays with Ebenezer Scrooge, Tiny Tim and the spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Future in Charleston Stage's original and imaginative take on Dickens's immortal classic. It's the show that always puts you in the Christmas spirit, this year with four spectacular new musical production numbers. With Christmas card sets, hundreds of colorful costumes, a live orchestra and a professional cast, ring in this holiday season with this spectacular production filled with visual marvels and special effects—including flying spirits and a ravishing holiday musical score.

CHARACTERS:

Ebenezer Scrooge - The miserly owner of a London accounting firm. He's visited by three spirits

Fred - Scrooge's nephew, a kind hearted man

Caroline - Fred's fiancé, later his wife. Has a beautiful voice

Bob Cratchit - Scrooge's clerk, humble and dedicated, impoverished

Tiny Tim - Bob Cratchit's young son, crippled from birth

Mr. Wiggins - Scrooge's valet and butler.

Mrs. Tabor - Scrooge's cook and maid.

Jacob Marley - Scrooge's old business partner

Ghost of Christmas Past - First spirit to visit Scrooge

Ghost of Christmas Present - Second spirit to visit Scrooge

Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come - Last spirit to visit Scrooge

Young Ebenezer - Scrooge as a young man

Zebediah Hanks - One of Mr. Fezziwig's apprentices

Dick Wilkins - One of Mr. Fezziwig's apprentices

Mr. Fezziwig - Hat maker and one time employer of Scrooge

Mrs. Fezziwig - Fezziwig's wife

Belle - Daughter of Fezziwig, and one-time girlfriend of Scrooge

Mrs. Cratchit - Wife of Bob Cratchit

Cratchit Children - Peter, Martha, Belinda and Colin

Fan - Scrooge's sister, and Fred's mother.

Ensemble - Many characters including a schoolmaster, party guests, and carolers.

THEMES EXPLORED:

- Charity
- "Making your bed, and lying in it."
- Consequences
- Socioeconomic Status
- Redemption/Second Chances

AGES 8 AND UP



AUTHOR

Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens is much loved for his great contribution to classic English literature. He was the quintessential Victorian author. His epic stories, vivid characters and exhaustive depiction of contemporary life are unforgettable. His own story is one of rags to riches. He was born in Portsmouth, England on February 7 1812, to John and Elizabeth Dickens. The good fortune of being sent to school at the age of nine was short-lived because his father, inspiration for the character of Mr Micawber in *David Copperfield*, was imprisoned for bad debt. The entire family, apart from Charles, were sent to Marshalsea along with their patriarch.

Charles was sent to work in Warren's blacking factory and endured appalling conditions as well as loneliness and despair. After three years he was returned to school, but the experience was never forgotten and became fictionalised in two of his better-known novels *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*.

Like many others, he began his literary career as a journalist. His own father became a reporter and Charles began with the journals *The Mirror of Parliament* and *The True Sun*. Then in 1833 he became parliamentary journalist for *The Morning Chronicle*. With new contacts in the press he was able to publish a series of sketches under the pseudonym 'Boz'. In April 1836, he married Catherine Hogarth, daughter of George Hogarth who edited *Sketches by Boz*. Within the same month came the publication of the highly successful *Pickwick Papers*, and from that point on there was no looking back for Dickens.

As well as a huge list of novels he published autobiography, edited weekly periodicals including *Household Words* and *All Year Round*, wrote travel books and administered charitable organisations. He was also a theatre enthusiast, wrote plays and performed before Queen Victoria in 1851. His energy was inexhaustible and he spent much time abroad - for example lecturing against slavery in the United States and touring Italy with companions Augustus Egg and Wilkie Collins, a contemporary writer who inspired Dickens' final unfinished novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

He was estranged from his wife in 1858 after the birth of their ten children, but maintained relations with his mistress, the actress Ellen Ternan. He died of a stroke in 1870. He is buried at Westminster Abbey.

FUN FACTS

- Dickens was inspired to write *A Christmas Carol* in 1843 after he spoke at a charity night to raise money for the Manchester Athenaeum in England—an institution dedicated to “advancement and diffusion of knowledge.” The 31-year-old spoke alongside the young Benjamin Disraeli, who would later become prime minister of Great Britain. After their talk, Dickens went on a long nocturnal walk later and had the idea for his “little Christmas book.”
- He started the story in October 1843 and wrote obsessively for six weeks. As Dickens wrote, he wept, laughed, and wandered around London at night “when all sober folks had gone to bed.” He finished the novella at the end of November so it could be published in time for Christmas. *A Christmas Carol* hit the shops on December 17, 1843, and sold out in three days.
- Dickens was the first famous writer to give public readings of his work—and his first reading was *A Christmas Carol*. The reading took place in front of a crowd of 2000 people in the town hall of Birmingham, England, 10 years after the book was published. Dickens opened the reading by saying, “Ladies and gentleman—I have said that I bear an old love towards Birmingham and Birmingham men; let me amend a small omission, and add Birmingham women too. This ring I wear on my finger now is an old Birmingham gift, and if by rubbing it I could raise the spirit that was obedient to Aladdin’s ring, I heartily assure you that my first instruction to that genius on the spot should be to place himself at Birmingham’s disposal in the best of causes. I now have the pleasure of reading to you tonight *A Christmas Carol* in four staves.”
- Rather than simply read extracts from his stories, Dickens loved to perform them—so he created a special version of *A Christmas Carol* for exactly that purpose. He tore the pages out of an original book, and stuck them into a new, large leafed, blank paged book. Then he filleted the text, cutting out descriptive scenes to create a performance script. He added stage directions for himself all over the text. Such an annotated copy is called a prompt copy.

CONTENT WARNINGS

Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*, may not be suitable for all young students as it contains scary moments, including the appearance of ghosts, demons, and the grim reaper. There are scenes that depict funerals, as well as references to alcohol.

DOCK STREET THEATRE



For almost 300 years audiences have delighted in performances at the Historic Dock Street Theatre which stands on the site of the very first theatre building in America which opened its doors in 1736. The current building, originally The Planter's Hotel was built in 1803 and in 1937 was converted into the Dock Street Theatre know today. Charleston Stage presents over 150 performances at the Historic Dock Street Theatre playing to theatre goers from every state in the union and many foreign countries. The Dock Street Theatre, newly renovated in 2010, is currently owned and managed by the City of Charleston. Other

performing arts groups including Spoleto Festival USA perform here annually.

On February 12, 1736 the Dock Street Theatre opened with a performance of *The Recruiting Officer*. Built on the corner of Church Street and Dock Street (now known as Queen Street), the Historic Dock Street Theatre was the first building in America built exclusively to be used for theatrical performances. Flora, the first opera performance in America, took place at the Historic Dock Street Theatre.

The original Dock Street Theatre was probably destroyed by the Great Fire of 1740 which destroyed many of the buildings in Charleston's French Quarter. In 1809, the Planter's Hotel was built on this site and in 1835 the wrought iron balcony and sandstone columns of the Church Street facade were added. A number of notable persons worked and patronized the Planter's Hotel including the noted 19th Century actor Junius Brutus Booth (father of Edwin and John Wilkes Booth). Robert Smalls, an African-American Civil War hero, who stole a steamboat in the harbor and sailed it out past the Confederate-held Ft. Sumter and turned it over to the blockading Union Fleet, served as a waiter in the hotel's dining room prior to the war. Charleston's famed Planter's Punch was first introduced here.

After the Civil War, the Planter's Hotel fell into disrepair and was slated for demolition. But in 1935, after Milton Pearlstine made the property available to the City of Charleston and at the urging of Mayor Burnet Maybank and other notable citizens, the original building became a Depression Era WPA (Works Progress Administration) project. At that time, the present theatre was constructed within the shell of the

DOCK STREET THEATRE



Planter's Hotel. The hotel's grand foyer became the grand foyer of the theatre and the hotel's dining room now serves as the box office lobby. The beautiful woodwork and mantels of the second floor drawing room were salvaged from the Radcliffe-King Mansion (circa 1799) which stood at the corner of George and Meeting Streets and was razed to build the College of Charleston gymnasium, another WPA project. Modeled on eighteenth century London playhouses by Charleston architect Albert Simons, the present Dock Street Theatre's new stage house and auditorium were built in the hotel's courtyard. The local carpenters who were put to work as a part of this Depression era relief effort utilized locally grown and milled native black cypress for the beautiful warm wooden interior. Following this \$350,000 renovation, The Historic Dock Street Theatre's second grand opening took place on November 26, 1937. Notables in the audience included author DuBose Heyward (*Porgy*) who was named writer-in-residence.

The Historic Dock Street Theatre reopened for the third time on March 18, 2010 after a three year, \$19 million dollar renovation by the City of Charleston. This extensive full-scale renovation brought the historic theatre into the 21st century with state-of-the-art lighting and sound, modern heating and air conditioning, and new restrooms and seating. In addition, the theatre was made seismically secure and fully handicapped accessible. Extensive sound-proofing was added to ensure that outside noises no longer intruded on performances inside.

HAVE KIDS WHO'D LIKE TO TAKE THEATRE CLASSES?



Acting Classes

200+ Students Attend Acting Classes After School

Charleston Stage's TheatreSchool offers classes year round for students from kindergarten through high school at Charleston Stage's West Ashley Theatre Center. Acting classes for students of all ages and abilities are taught by members of Charleston Stage's Professional Resident Acting Company. Classes range from beginning classes to performance workshops and performance troupes. Classes culminate in mini-performances held at the West Ashley Theatre Center. Tuition scholarships are available for need-based students.

Register online today at CharlestonStage.com/Education!



ArtReach In-School Workshops

Bringing Professional Actors Into the Classroom

Charleston Stage's Resident Professional Actors provide dynamic workshops in area schools through a partnership with Engaging Creative Minds. Workshops use theatrical skills to teach academic subjects and can be combined with a school matinee performance experience. For information on booking ArtReach workshops, contact Rylee Coppel, Director of Education and Engagement, at (843) 225-3900 or rcoppel@charlestonstage.com.



TheatreWings High School Apprenticeships

A Tuition-Free Apprentice Program For Teens

The TheatreWings High School Apprentice Program is designed to allow talented young people the opportunity to work directly with theatre professionals and gain first-hand experience in professional theatrical production. Students explore stage management, lighting and sound, as well as set and costume design and construction. Designed for highly dedicated students, TheatreWings requires more than 100+ hours of apprenticeship each season. For more information, email TheatreWings Co-Coordinator Ravyn Meador or Caleb Garner at wings@charlestonstage.com.

For more information on our programs, call the Education Office at (843) 225-3900 or visit CharlestonStage.com/Education.