A Christmas Carol
A musical ghost story

PERFORMANCE GUIDE 2020

Developed by NSMT’s Education Dept.
Welcome!

We are delighted that you and your students will be joining us for our 30th Annual production of A Christmas Carol. While there are countless adaptations of this story, our version was uniquely developed solely for our theatre-in-the-round.

Live theatre is so special because the audience gets a first-hand, unedited view of the emotions the characters are going through. When we see actors live through these emotions in person rather than on screen, we immediately feel more connected to them. While this applies to theatre in general, it’s especially true of A Christmas Carol – a story which is actually about developing a sense of empathy.

We know that as teachers you are not only in the business of shaping minds, you are in the business of shaping people to become better human beings. We hope that our production of A Christmas Carol plays a small role in helping your students understand what it means to be empathetic and teaches them the importance of charity, goodwill and feeling connected to other people.

We hope you enjoy your trip to NSMT and find this guide to be a useful resource as you prepare for your visit. We look forward to seeing you soon. Until then, “honor Christmas in [your] heart, and try to keep it all the year.”

Enjoy the show!

KYLA MOULTON
Director of Education
Thank you for attending North Shore Music Theatre’s production of, *A Christmas Carol*.

**How to use this Guide:**

NSMT’s Education Department has prepared this performance guide to enrich your theatre-going experience. Whether you’re a teacher, group leader, or an avid theatregoer looking to further your musical experience, there’s something for everyone. In this guide, you’ll find information on the theatre, background on the show, activity resources, suggested activations, and more.

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History & Background

Since 1955, North Shore Music Theatre (NSMT) has become one of the most attended theatres in New England, with over 250,000 annual patrons.

Located in coastal Beverly, Massachusetts, NSMT is a 1500-seat regional theatre-in-the-round producing exceptional Broadway musicals, celebrity concerts, kids’ shows, and year-round education programs for all ages (eight and up). Under the new ownership of Bill Hanney in 2010, NSMT continues to be a catalyst for the arts on the North Shore and across the country—entertaining hundreds of thousands of theatre goers with productions created solely for our unique theatre in the round.

Fun Facts!

- NSMT was the first permanent stage in the country to be designed in the arena style—and remains one of the few professional theatres in the US performing in the round!
- None of our shows are tours! All NSMT productions are craft solely our theatre: from the casting professional in NYC and Boston, to set building, scenic/prop design, costumes, and more!
- NSMT produced the World Premiere of Memphis (2003) which went on to win four Tony Awards including Best Musical in 2010.
- No seat is more than 50 feet from the stage.
Theatre in the Round

The most common theatres across the country utilize the “proscenium” structure, consisting of a raised stage with rows of seats directly in front. Most schools that have an auditorium will find it is set up in proscenium. Most the theatres on Broadway are prosceniums, and many movie houses are designed in this fashion.

The arena stage, or ‘theatre in the round’ is vastly different from the proscenium and requires many different approaches to mounting a more immersive production. Traditional proscenium settings offer audiences a singular view of the play or musical. At NSMT, our audience is seated all around the stage and each section gives audiences a different view of the show. Fun fact: arena staging was a preferred method of the ancient Greeks.

NSMT uses a clock system to navigate our circular stage (please see reference map and worksheets on pages 23–24). Actors enter from backstage primarily through the 6 o’clock ‘breezeway’ (and walk to other aisles for their specific entrances), underneath the stage via our center lift, or through the VOM (either by moving platform or walking up the ramp).

**NSMT Vocabulary**

**Aisles:** walkways leading from the lobby to the stage that are used for entrances and exists by performers. Each aisle is named after a clock number. For example, when an actor enters from backstage at 6 o’clock, and walks onto the stage, the aisle ahead of them is 12 o’clock. The other aisles are 2, 4, 8, and 10 o’clock.

**Catwalk:** attached to the steel frame of the theatre building 18 feet above the audience, this walkway allows technicians to operate spotlights and flying scenery; connected to the catwalk is the truss, used to hold the lighting and sound equipment.

**Center Lift:** an 8’ x 8’ platform used to raise and lower pieces of scenery or actors through the center of the stage.

**Orchestra Pit:** a lowered section underneath the stage where NSMT’s orchestra plays.

**Slip Stage:** motorized platform that travels across the stage to move actors, reveal scenery, and allow crew to load props/actors beneath stage on center lift (primarily used during our annual production of *A Christmas Carol*).

**VOM:** from the Greek word, “vomitorium,” which refers to the exit area on either side of the Greek stage; it leads underneath the stage and is used for entrances and exits.

**The Bridge:** located at 12 o’clock, this flat ramp guides actors over the orchestra pit to the aisle, and is used heavily for entrances/exits.

**Satellite Stage:** platform used as additional performance space, located in the ‘stadium seating’ section of the audience. Another way NSMT’s immerses folks into the action.
Preparing Your Visit to NSMT & Theatre Etiquette

New to the Theatre?

Unlike movies and television, the interplay between actors and the audience during live theatre is what brings the show to life. Understanding your role as an audience member can help you enjoy the theatre more.

- Please place chaperones in appropriate seats to monitor your students at all times. Groups that disrupt the performance will be asked to leave the theatre.

- Plan to arrive at least 30 minutes before curtain time. Groups that arrive late will be seated at the discretion of the House Manager. If there is a possibility that your group may arrive after that time, please notify the Box Office at 978.232.7200.

- In preparing young people to attend NSMT, many make the mistake of telling them they must be completely quiet, thus denying them their rightful role. When the students are playing an active role in the performance, they discover the true excitement of theatre. Don’t be afraid to laugh aloud at funny moments or gasp during shocking moments, for example.

Encourage students to...

- Listen carefully.
- Respond as they feel (laugh, applaud, etc.) but please no talking.
- Remain seated during the performance. Actors and stage crew use the aisles, and we ask that everyone remain seated until the house lights are on.
- Turn off all cell phones and cameras.
- Not bring their iPods, recording devices, or selfie sticks.
- Remove their hats before entering the theatre.
STRUCTURE AND THEMES of A Christmas Carol

A Christmas Carol is divided into five sections which Dickens called “staves,” because “staves” are a part of musical notation and a “carol” is a song.

The first stave takes place on Christmas Eve. Each of the middle three staves revolves around a visitation of one of the three spirits—the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. The fifth stave is set on Christmas Day.

The three spirits carry out a thematic function. The Ghost of Christmas Past represents memory, which serves to remind Scrooge of a time when he still felt emotionally connected to other people. The Ghost of Christmas Present represents charity, empathy, and the Christmas spirit. Through these lessons, Scrooge is able to sympathize with and understand those less fortunate than him, like the Cratchits. The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come represents fear. The fear of death hints at imminent moral reckoning.

In A Christmas Carol, Dickens illustrates how self-serving, insensitive people can become charitable, caring, and socially conscious members of society through the intercession of moralizing lessons. Scrooge’s “Bah! Humbug!” attitude embodies everything that suffocates the Christmas spirit—greed, selfishness, indifference, and a lack of consideration for one’s fellow man. However, warmth, generosity, and goodwill overcome Scrooge’s bitter apathy as he encounters the ghosts and learns the ability to empathize.

In his Preface to A Christmas Carol, Dickens makes these themes clear by claiming:

I have endeavoured in this Ghostly little book, to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it.

Their faithful Friend and Servant, C.D.
December 1843
A Christmas Carol is divided into five sections which Dickens called “staves.” The set of five lines shown to the right are part of musical notation. Combined they are called a staff or stave (in the UK). Since a “carol” is a song, staves were a unique and apt way to divide the sections of this story.

SCENES

PROLOGUE: A theatre, 1860s

STAVE ONE: MARLEY'S GHOST
Christmas Eve, 1843.
Scene 1 – A London street;
  later, Scrooge's counting house
Scene 2 – The street;
  later, Scrooge's counting house

STAVE TWO: THE FIRST OF THE THREE SPIRITS
Scene 1 – Scrooge's bedchamber
Scene 2 – A country road
Scene 3 – A school
Scene 4 – The Fezziwig's warehouse
Scene 5 – A London Street

STAVE THREE: THE SECOND OF THE THREE SPIRITS
Scene 1 – Scrooge's bedchamber

THE INTERVAL
Intermission

STAVE THREE (Cont.)
Scene 2 – The Cratchit home
Scene 3 – Fred's home
Scene 4 – A wasteland

STAVE FOUR: THE LAST OF THE THREE SPIRITS
Scene 1 – Scrooge's bedchamber;
  later, a tavern
Scene 2 – A London Street
Scene 3 – At the entrance to a church
Scene 4 – The Cratchit home
Scene 5 – A churchyard

STAVE FIVE: CHRISTMAS DAY, 1843
Scene 1 – Scrooge's bedchamber;
  later, the street
Scene 2 – The street outside
Scrooge's chambers
Scene 3 – Scrooge's counting house

EPILOGUE: A theatre, 1860s
Musical Numbers

Throughout the play, instrumental arrangements of carols and original music underscore all scenic transitions, and several scenes with dialogue, much like a film's sound track. Additionally, original music and thematic underscoring have been composed for certain scenes or specific characters.

**We Wish You A Merry Christmas** — English traditional. The remnant of a closure much used by wassailers and other luck visitors, still in common use by modern doorstep carolers.

**Patapan** — Lyrics by La Monnoye. A traditional Burgundian carol, from the Renaissance.

**Apple Tree Wassail** — Based on a Somerset carol, this wassail reflects the early origins of the carol, and involves taking hands and dancing in a ring to bring good luck.

**The Coventry Shepherds' Carol** — This carol is from "The Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors," originally published in 1591, and refers to the Holy Innocents, whose feast day is December 28 (i.e., during the Twelve Days of Christmas), observed in commemoration of the slaughter of male infants in Bethlehem during Herod the Great's attempt to kill the infant Jesus. Original tune.

**God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen** — West Country traditional. Lyrics for the text used by the Narrator are adapted by Jon Kimbell, the text used when the boys sing is from William Sandys' Christmas Carols, Ancient and Modern (1833), where it is associated with another tune, said to have been more usual in the West Country.

**The Cold December** [El Desembre Congelat] — Although specific origins are unknown, this carol comes from Europe sometime in the 16th to 18th centuries. The popular English translations of this title are The Cold December and Cold December's Winds Were Stilled. In this production, we use variants on this melody for two scenes between Scrooge and Mrs. Dilber.

**A Dream Within A Dream, The Lullaby of Christmas Past** — Lyrics by Jon Kimbell and David James, after by a poem by Edgar Allen Poe. Music by James Woodland.

**Ding! Dong! Merrily on High** — Thoinot Arbeau (1520-95). Although this may seem to be the most traditional of carols, it is anything but. The tune is set in the Ionian mode (the modern major mode), which still had associations with hedonism and uninhibited enjoyment.

**Here We Come A Wassailing** — A well-known Yorkshire melody. There are many variations of this folksong, which is sung by the "waits" as they go caroling from door to door to bring luck for the New Year to their neighbors.
**The Boar's Head Carol** — A traditional English carol, c. 1500, probably from the West Country near Exeter. This carol has been sung at Queen's College, Oxford, since the 17th century, as the celebrated dish is borne into the dining hall.

**The Gloucestershire Wassail** — A traditional English carol. The word "wassail" comes from the Anglo-Saxon "wes hal," meaning "be hale," a greeting for good health. The wassailers traveled to houses singing with a wassail cup, which their hosts were expected to fill.

**I Saw Three Ships Come Sailing In** — English traditional. The text and melody used here, from Sandys' Christmas Carols, Ancient and Modern (1833), is one of many variants, of which the earliest is in Forbes' Cantus (1666 edition). They all derive from the Mediterranean odyssey of the supposed relics of the three magi, the 'Three Kings of Cologne,' the splendor of whose final voyage has remained vivid in European folk memory.

**In the Bleak Midwinter** — (Instrumental) This poem by Christina Rossetti, with its tune from the English Hymnal, is a special favorite of ours.

**Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day** — Lyrics adapted by Jon Kimbell. This melody is probably based on an 1833 secular song, but the interweaving of the two love motives is as ancient and widespread as the association of religion with the dance. The text goes back earlier than the seventeenth century.

**Isn't it Grand, Boys?** — An old Irish drinking ditty.

**The Little Child** — Lyrics: Jon Kimbell. Inspired by traditional Austrian lullaby, Still, Still, Still.

**Past Three O'Clock** — Traditional. Woodward and Wood published this ripe but well-loved piece of 'Olde Englishry' in The Cambridge Carol Book (1924), on which they collaborated. Although it looks like a romantic concoction, it has a genuine connection with the music of the London waits, who in the Middle Ages were employed to patrol the town each night, keeping watch and sounding the hours.

**Begone Dull Care** — (Instrumental) English Traditional. 1890. Richard Loveridge. This carol's origin cannot be traced beyond the reign of James II, but is widely believed to be older. The origin is to be found in an early French chanson.

**Simple Gifts** — (Instrumental) The melody is that of the well-known Shaker hymn.
THE CHARACTERS

described by the Author

(Not all characters are pictured below)

THE SCROOGES

Ebenezer Scrooge: a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone. A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner
Young Scrooge: a clever chap, bright of face and filled with great potential
Fred: Handsome nephew of old Scrooge, with a cheerful voice and sparkling eyes
Meg: Fred’s wife, very pretty with a dimpled, surprised look
Belle: Young Scrooge’s betrothed, a fair maiden, beaming and loveable
Fan: Scrooge’s sister, brimful of glee
Mrs. Dilber: Scrooge’s housekeeper and therefore a Christian martyr

THE CRATCHITS

Bob Cratchit: a clerk in the service of Ebenezer Scrooge and the father of a fine family
Mrs. Cratchit: Bob’s wife, poor in possessions but rich in family
Martha Cratchit: oldest of the Cratchit daughter’s
Peter Cratchit: poor but gallantly attired
Belinda Cratchit: second of the Cratchit daughters
Tiny Tim Cratchit: thoughtful and brave with his little crutch and his goodly heart
THE SPIRITS

Narrator: the teller of this ghostly tale
Jacob Marley: Scrooge’s first and only business partner; dead as a doornail
The Ghost of Christmas Past: first of the three, a strange figure—resplendent in the stars
The Ghost of Christmas Present: a jolly giant, glorious to behold
The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come: Scrooge’s nightmare of himself as a young man
Want and Ignorance: Two children, wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, and miserable
Pearlies: acrobatic street entertainers who perform for donations to help London’s poor; in our tale they act as extensions of the narrator, helping tell our ghostly tale

REVELERS, TOWNSFOLK, AND OTHERS

Mr. Fezziwig: Voluminous in his great jovial benevolence
Mrs. Fezziwig: one vast substantial smile
Joe: keeper of the Beetling Shop and Poulterer
Apparition: a ghostly appearance or a phantom

Cab: horse drawn carriage for public hire

Clerk: a person employed in an office or a shop to keep records, accounts, and files

Farthing: a bronze coin formerly used in Great Britain

Fettered: bound by chains and shackles at the feet

Half Crown: a silver coin formerly used in Great Britain

Humbug: something devoid of sense or meaning; nonsense

Mortal: human; the idea that man is subject to death

Old Scratch: Satan

Pantry: room or closet where food and dishes are kept

Parliament: a legislative body of the British government

Resolute: set in purpose or opinion

Shilling: a silver coin formerly used in Great Britain

Taper: a candlestick

Victuals: food supplies

Wassail: a salutation wishing health to a person

Workhouse: a poorhouse in which the poor were fed, lodged, and set to work
Pre-Show Activities

Review

Read A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens to your students. Review the story in class before going to the performance. During the review, discuss the Scenes and Characters found on pages 8 and 11 of this Teacher Guide.

(Reading and Literature Strand, Standards 7, 8, and 12)

Review the words and definitions of the Vocabulary on page 12 of this Teacher Guide.

(Language Strand, Standard 4)

Review the information about North Shore Music Theatre found on pages 3 and 4 of this Teacher Guide with your students. When you arrive at the theatre on the day of the show, have your students find these areas on the actual set.

(Theatre Strand, Standards 4 and 5)

Questions for Group Discussion

1. Is there a moral to this story? What is it?

(Language Strand, Standard 1; Reading and Literature Stand, Standard 8)

2. Discuss the theme of “goodwill” in the context of A Christmas Carol and in the context of today’s society. What examples of goodwill have the students observed or experienced? Why does the consciousness of the community increase at Christmas time?

(Language Strand, Standard 1; Reading and Literature Stand, Standard 11)

3. How is seeing the story acted out on the stage different from reading the story?

(Language Strand, Standard 1; Theatre Strands, Standards 5 and 10)

4. What were the similarities and differences between NSMT’s stage production and the original Dickens tale?

(Language Strand, Standard 1; Theatre Strands, Standards 5 and 10)

5. How does the music in the play support the story?

(Language Strand, Standard 1; Music Strand, Standards 5 and 10)
Complete the crossword puzzle below

Across
3. a poorhouse in which the poor were fed, lodged, and set to work
5. room or closet where food and dishes are kept
6. a silver coin formerly used in Great Britain
9. a candlestick
11. a ghostly appearance or a phantom
12. a bronze coin formerly used in Great Britain
13. something devoid of sense or meaning; nonsense
14. a person employed in an office or a shop to keep records, accounts, and files
15. food supplies

Down
1. a salutation wishing health to a person
2. human; the idea that man is subject to death
4. Satan
7. horse drawn carriage for public hire
8. bound by chains and shackles at the feet
10. a legislative body of the British government
NSMT’s Stage

THEATRE IN THE ROUND

Encourage your students to explore/brainstorm the differences between NSMT’s theatre in the round vs. the traditional proscenium staging, and how it can influence or impact both the development and experience of a show. [Note: catwalk/satellite stage not pictured]
Curriculum-based

1. Oral Presentations: Discuss the lessons learned by Ebenezer Scrooge in the story. Having your students assume the role of Scrooge, instruct them to prepare a speech on the importance of goodwill from Scrooge’s point of view. You may also do this activity from the point of view of the other characters.

(Language Strand, Standard 3; Reading and Literature Strand, Standard 18)

2. Book Report: Have students read another Dickens novel and prepare a written report or an oral report to share with the class.

Reading and Literature Strand, Standards 7, 8, and 12; Composition Strand, Standards 1923;

(Language Strand, Standard 3)

3. Research Project: The Christmas stories by Dickens reflected on the Anglo-Saxon holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. Have your students research how other cultures celebrate holidays. Create a classroom chart that lists various cultures and their religious holidays and discuss the similarities and differences.

(History Strand, Standards 3 and 5)

4. Research Project: In 1840, many children in England and the US were susceptible to disease and many children died very young or suffered great illness. Have students research the diseases that were prevalent in the 1840s. What has happened to these diseases? What illnesses are we concerned with today?

(History Strand, Standards 3 and 6)

5. Performance: Review the scenes in the play/story when Scrooge encountered the ghost of Jacob Marley and the relationship between Scrooge and Belle.

Create improvised scenes based on the following suggestions:

- a. Scrooge and Marley as business partners
- b. Scrooge sharing his “change of heart” with Marley’s spirit
- c. Scrooge and Belle reuniting after Scrooge’s “transformation”

(Reading and Literature Strand, Standards 18; Theatre Strand, Standards 1 and 2)
1. Who was Ebenezer Scrooge’s business partner?

2. What is Scrooge’s reason for not contributing money to the Gentlemen collecting for the poor?

3. Why does Scrooge’s nephew Fred come visit his uncle’s office on Christmas Eve?

4. Why does the Spirit of Jacob Marley visit Scrooge?

5. Where does the Ghost of Christmas Past take Scrooge?

6. Why does Scrooge’s sister Fan come to see young Ebenezer in school?

7. What does young Ebenezer give to Belle?

8. Why does Belle leave young Ebenezer?

9. Why was Martha late in coming home to the Cratchit house?

10. What is the condition of Tiny Tim?

11. How does Mrs. Cratchit feel about Scrooge?

12. What does the Ghost of Christmas Present show Scrooge about Tiny Tim’s future?

13. What does Scrooge’s nephew, Fred, say about Scrooge’s wealth?

14. Who does Scrooge see at the feet of the Ghost of Christmas Present?

15. What does the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come show Scrooge?

16. What does Scrooge promise the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come?

17. What does Scrooge give to the Cratchits on Christmas Day?

18. What does Scrooge promise to give the donation collectors upon seeing them on Christmas?

19. What does Scrooge ask Fred and Meg on Christmas Day?

20. What happened when Bob Cratchit arrived at work the day after Christmas?
Answers

1. Jacob Marley
2. Scrooge does not donate because he contributes to the workhouses and the prisons.
3. Fred comes to invite Scrooge to Christmas dinner.
4. The Spirit of Marley visits to warn Scrooge of his ill ways and to inform him of the visit from the three ghosts.
5. The Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge back to his childhood.
6. Fan comes to inform her brother that he is going home to stay.
7. Scrooge gives Belle a ring.
8. Belle leaves because he has placed his desire for money/profit before his love for her.
9. Martha is late coming home because she had to finish her work at the workhouse.
10. Tiny Tim has difficulty walking and uses a crutch.
11. Mrs. Cratchit despises Scrooge and calls him an “odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man.”
12. The Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge that Tiny Tim dies.
13. Fred says Scrooge’s wealth is of no use to Scrooge because he doesn’t use it to make himself comfortable.
14. Scrooge sees two children, a boy named “Ignorance” and a girl named “Want.”
15. The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come shows Scrooge his own grave.
16. Scrooge promises that he will change his life to be a more caring person.
17. Scrooge gives the Cratchits the largest goose at the poulter’s shop.
18. Scrooge promises to give the gentlemen money for the poor and make up for the years when he has not given.
19. Scrooge asks Fred and Meg if he is still welcome to have Christmas dinner with them.
20. Bob Cratchit is late and expects to be scolded by Scrooge. Scrooge pretends to chide Bob and then promises to raise his wages and help with Tiny Tim’s medical needs.
NSMT RESOURCES

nsmt.org

nsmt.org/contact – Contact & Getting to the Theatre

nsmt.org/kids – 2019 Kids Show Schedule

nsmt.org/school-shows – 2019 School Field Trip Shows

nsmt.org/group-tickets-10 – Group Sales (10+ Tickets)

nsmt.org/food – Food & Drink (Concessions & Restaurant) at NSMT