

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL: Sensory-Friendly/Relaxed Performance Guide

This guide is a summary of the sensory moments and potentially unsettling content in each act and scene.

During this play, you will experience music, changes in lighting, different sounds and shifting sets. Characters will be moving on and off set constantly.

House lights will be on but dimmed throughout the play.

For this performance, all strobe lights and stage-level fog have been removed, and the sound levels have been reduced.



*The cast of A Christmas Carol. Photo by Mikki Schaffner.*

### **Pre-show**

Pre-show announcements will be made by a Playhouse staff member.

## **Act One**

### ***Prologue***

It's Christmas Eve and the ensemble gathers to sing and tell that Ebenezer Scrooge had a business partner named Jacob Marley who died, and Scrooge continues to run the business. He is a miser; most everyone stays away from him, and he prefers it this way.

### ***Scene 1***

On the afternoon of Christmas Eve, Scrooge's nephew Fred drops by Scrooge's office to wish his uncle a Merry Christmas and invite him to Christmas dinner. Scrooge rebuffs the good wishes and the invitation. He then harshly rejects the donation request of two solicitors. Scrooge reluctantly agrees to let his clerk, Bob Cratchit, have Christmas Day off from work.

- He speaks to Fred dismissively and yells at him.
- The solicitors come to Scrooge's office, and he speaks cruelly to them about impoverished members of the community and sends them away.

### ***Scene 2***

On the way home, Scrooge encounters Carolers and he yells at them. Upon arriving at his destination, he sees Jacob Marley's face appear on the door knocker.

- A projection of Marley's ghostly face appears suddenly on the door.

### ***Scene 3***

Scrooge undresses for bed and rudely dismisses Mrs. Dilbert after she helps him. Marley's ghost appears, draped in chains appears on the bed. He tells Scrooge that his spirit has been roaming for the seven years since his death and in life he should have focused on mankind. Marley explains that Scrooge will be given a chance to avoid his fate by the visitation of three spirits. Marley disappears and Scrooge falls asleep.

- Marley speaks in a harsh tone, at times shouting.

### ***Scene 4***

The Ghost of Christmas Past enters followed by a flock of crows.

- The crows "caw," land on Scrooge, and peck him. The Ghost of Christmas Past calls them back to her.

### **Scene 5**

Scrooge and The Ghost of Christmas Past visit the schoolhouse where a lonely Boy Scrooge is going to be alone for Christmas and his sister Fan arrives to surprise him.

### **Scene 6**

Scrooge and The Ghost of Christmas Past venture to the Fezziwig's warehouse, where Young Scrooge serves as an apprentice. He and Dick Wilkins help Mr. Fezziwig set up the party. Scrooge meets his love interest, Belle.

- There will be caroling, music, dancing, joyous shouting, whooping and various activities in this scene.

### **Scene 7**

Scrooge and The Ghost of Christmas Past visit Scrooge and Dick Wilkins one year later. Dick is now a shopkeeper who has borrowed money from Scrooge, but Scrooge will not negotiate. Scrooge doesn't want to continue the journey but reluctantly follows.

- Scrooge speaks cruelly to Dick Wilkins.

### **Scene 8**

The Ghost of Christmas Past forces Scrooge to watch as Belle releases Young Scrooge from their engagement.

- Scrooge tries to escape The Ghost of Christmas Past; he yells and runs up and down the stairs.

## ***Intermission***

The house lights will go up and the theatre may become noisy. The house lights will dim when Act Two begins.

## **Act Two**

### **Scene 9**

The bell tower sounds TWO, Scrooge enters and through the darkness we hear The Ghost of Christmas Present. Then Ghost of Christmas Present is revealed surrounded by a feast, they talk and then journey through the streets.

- There are carolers and people going about their day.
- Scrooge speaks cruelly about the impoverished.

### **Scene 10**

Scrooge and The Ghost of Christmas Present arrive at the house of the Cratchit family. Bob arrives home from church with his youngest child, Tiny Tim. The family have scraped together a modest holiday meal and enjoy each other's company.

- Tiny Tim wears a leg brace and uses a crutch as a mobility device.
- Mrs. Cratchit speaks negatively about Scrooge's stinginess and cruelty.
- Scrooge asks Present what will happen to Tiny Tim. The Ghost of Christmas Present quotes his previous harsh words about the poor. Scrooge is upset to hear the child is fated to die before next Christmas if no one helps the family.

### **Scene 11**

The Ghost of Christmas Present leads Scrooge to two miners who are working as they sing a carol and fellowship. Shortly after, they arrive at a festive holiday party hosted by Scrooge's nephew Fred and his wife.

- There is singing and a game at the party. Fred, his wife and their guests speak about Scrooge in negative ways.

### **Scene 12**

The Ghost of Christmas Present ends his time with Scrooge on a dirty road warning him to beware of Ignorance and Want, the children of Mankind.

- Ignorance and Want appear as children in a homeless family.
- The Ghost of Christmas Present repeats Scrooge's earlier words about the impoverished back to him.

### **Scene 13**

The bell tower strikes THREE, The Ghost of Christmas Future, a phantom-like figure, appears and startles Scrooge. The silent figure shows Scrooge scenes of people coldly talking of someone's funeral, and others selling off a deceased man's possessions. Scrooge realizes that he might have been this man and asks to see anyone who might have shown any sort of kind emotion towards the dead man. He is shown a couple rejoicing that this man (to whom they owe a considerable debt) is gone.

- The Ghost of Christmas Future emerges as a monstrous puppet draped in rags. It glides ominously across the stage and floats around Scrooge as it guides him.
- Along with extended talk of death, there are also mentions of grave robbing and burglary.
- The indebted couple laugh loudly with malicious glee when talking about the deceased man.

### **Scene 14**

The Ghost of Christmas Future shows Scrooge the Cratchit family mourning Tiny Tim's death and vowing to always be kind to each other in his memory. Scrooge is then transported to a graveyard where he asks who the dead man is and whether they had witnessed *will* be or only *may* be.

Seeing his name on the gravestone, Scrooge vows to be a better person and experiences a nightmare of his memories.

- The Cratchits are overwhelmed with grief.
- The cemetery is dark and scary.
- During the nightmare, things move quickly, and voices are heard continuously; sometimes speaking over each other.

### **Scene 15**

Scrooge wakes in his own bed, alive and joyful! From his window, he learns from a passing boy that it's Christmas Day. He sends a large turkey to the Cratchit family before heading out into town.

### **Scene 16**

Scrooge encounters the solicitors from the day before and promises a large donation. Then he arrives and accepts Fred's invitation to dinner. The next day, he gets to the office early to catch Bob Cratchit arriving late.

### **Scene 17**

Bob is greeted by a changed Ebenezer Scrooge. There is a celebration!

- Scrooge pretends to be angry at Bob.

### **Curtain Call**

The Cast returns to the stage and sings "We Wish You a Merry Christmas."

### **THE END**

\*A special thank you to the Guthrie Theater for its contribution of content.