

CHARLES DICKENS' **A  
CHRISTMAS  
CAROL**

School Matinee Series Study Guide

# A CHRISTMAS CAROL

by CHARLES DICKENS

adapted by TOM CREAMER

adapted for audio by NEENA ARNDT, JESSICA THEBUS, and RICHARD WOODBURY

directed by JESSICA THEBUS

## CONTENTS

2	<i>A Christmas Carol</i> 2020 and the Storied History of Audio Dramas
4	A Note from Roche Schulfer
6	Discussion Questions for Video Excerpt 1: Collecting Donations   History and Social Studies
7	Discussion Questions for Video Excerpt 2: Marley's Ghost   ELA and Theatre
9	Discussion Questions for Video Excerpt 3: Merry Christmas, Bob!   ELA and Theatre
11	In the Recording Studio: Clips and Questions
12	The Science of Levitation
14	Goodman Theatre on <i>City Science</i>
15	From the Industrial Revolution in Dickens' London to the Information Revolution in Today's America
18	Charles Dickens, and How a Story Came to Be
21	Charles Dickens' House
22	Dickens' Time: A Global Perspective
23	Christmas Around the World
26	How The Consumer Stole Christmas
28	Building <i>A Christmas Carol</i>

**Production Managers** Liam Collier, Sam Mauceri, Elizabeth Rice

**Designers** Liam Collier, Anna Gelman

**Contributing Writers** Liam Collier, Elizabeth Gottman, William Landon, Sam Mauceri, Elizabeth Mork, Kelly Reed, Teresa Rende, Elizabeth Rice, Roche Schulfer.

This study guide is published by Goodman Theatre's Education and Engagement Department for participating schools and teachers in the School Matinee Series. Articles in this guide explore the underlying themes of this production and their connections to social and political movements throughout history and today. The views reflected in this study guide are held by the authors of the articles, not Goodman Theatre.

For more information about Education and Engagement at the Goodman, [click here](#).

# ***A Christmas Carol* 2020 and the Storied History of Audio Drama**

by SAM MAUCERI



*Before television became widely available in the United States in the 1950s, radio was the most reliable source of family entertainment. “Kindergarten of the Air” by ABC Archives is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0*

For many Chicagoans, a much-anticipated holiday tradition is getting dressed up, heading downtown, and watching Goodman Theatre’s *A Christmas Carol* amongst hundreds of other excited theatregoers. So what happens when COVID-19 prevents audiences from gathering at the theatre to celebrate the season? This year Goodman Theatre is adapting its beloved stage production to a new medium: the radio play. While this approach is an exciting first for the Goodman, it also represents a return to the long-established popular

tradition of audio dramas.

[Audio drama, audio play, audio theatre, radio play, and radio drama](#) are different names for a similar idea: a fictional, dramatized story that an audience experiences by listening. Audio dramas became popular with [the advent of radio in the early 1920s](#). While live theatre performed on stage was a popular form of entertainment, radio allowed people to enjoy exciting stories from the comfort of their own homes. Furthermore, radio, unlike theatre, was

available to audiences for free, a fact [that theatres feared would destroy their business](#).

While it was typical in the early days of radio to hear [excerpts of stage plays and other fiction read aloud](#), plays were soon written specifically for radio. The first radio play that was written for the medium was [A Comedy of Danger](#), broadcast in 1924 in Britain on BBC, closely followed by [The Wolf](#), broadcast in the U.S. that same year.

The most famous radio play of all time is perhaps [War of the Worlds](#) by Orson Welles

# While the current coronavirus pandemic has necessitated physical distancing to keep people safe, it has also prompted theatre artists to get creative in how we present our art to audiences.

[and the Mercury Theater](#), an adaptation of H.G. Wells' novel, [broadcast on October 30, 1938](#). The play was written as a fictional news report informing listeners that Martians had invaded New Jersey. [The program allegedly caused hysteria](#) among listeners in New Jersey, who reportedly did not hear the disclaimer at the beginning of the play and believed the story to be a real news program. However, [the truth of that hysteria has been debated since](#).

The 1930s introduced "[The Golden Age of Radio](#)", the period in which radio became embedded into the everyday lives of Americans, with [28 million American households owning a radio by 1939](#). Throughout World War II, [Americans relied on radio](#) for news on the war, as well as music and other entertainment. The Golden Age of Radio gave Americans countless [popular programs for the whole family](#) to enjoy together. However, when TVs became widely available to consumers in the 1950s, [radio fell from the top spot for family entertainment](#).

In the 21st century, a new medium has revolutionized and re-popularized the audio drama: the podcast. Non-fiction programs originally broadcast on the radio like *This American Life* and *Radiolab* [gained new fanbases](#) once they were released in podcast form, but podcasts truly broke into the mainstream in 2014 with [the true crime podcast Serial](#). In the wake of *Serial*'s ubiquitous success, [other investigative and true crime favorites](#) like *My Favorite Murder*, *S-Town*, and *Missing Richard Simmons* have gained popularity.

Alongside the surge in listenership for non-fiction podcasts, [fiction podcasts have also gained bigger audiences in recent years](#). Shows like *Welcome to Nightvale*, *Homecoming*, and *Hello from the Magic Tavern* demonstrate the broad range of genres achievable in an audio drama format, from sci-fi and fantasy to action-adventure.

Podcasts, like radio, have [the advantage of being free for listeners](#). There are also fewer

barriers for creators than in other mediums. Unlike authors who rely on publishers, and TV writers who rely on networks to buy their pitch for a new TV show, podcasters can create and broadcast their own content entirely independently on a relatively low budget if they so choose. In fact, anyone can make a podcast with minimal technology, as explained in [this guide for students from NPR on how to make your own podcast](#).

Podcasts have also been a space for independent creators to tell stories that feature more diverse casts of characters and actors than traditional media. Recent audio dramas like [The Two Princes](#) from Gimlet Media and [Apocalypse Untreated](#) by Gaby Dunn feature many queer and trans characters of color, who are largely played by actors who share those same identities. Whether you prefer a particular genre or enjoy hearing stories featuring characters you can personally identify with, there is an audio drama for everyone!

While the current coronavirus pandemic has necessitated physical distancing to keep people safe, it has also prompted theatre artists to get creative in how we present our art to audiences. In the Goodman's case, it has prompted us to return to a tradition of adapting theatre into audio drama. We hope that this holiday season you will enjoy the familiar story of *A Christmas Carol* presented in a medium that is both old and new.

# A Note From Roche Schulfer, "The Founder of the Feast"

by ROCHE SCHULFER

*Originally printed in Onstage+ for the 40th anniversary production of "A Christmas Carol"*



*A rehearsal in 1997 for the scene in which Scrooge visits the Cratchit family dinner. Photo by Lisa Ebright.*

With each passing year, more and more of our audiences have come to know Goodman Theatre as a major U.S. cultural organization with wide ranging productions and community programs. But this was not always the case. In 1978, the Goodman was only two years into its existence as an independent not-for-profit theater (instead of a department of the Art Institute of Chicago) and the pressure on the "new" Goodman to generate patrons and fill seats was enormous. To invigorate the theater's artistic direction that year, the new board of trustees, under Stanley Freehling's leadership, appointed Gregory Mosher as artistic director. I had worked with Greg as producer of the Goodman's Second Stage, where David Mamet's *American Buffalo* and *A Life in the*

*Theatre* received their world premieres, giving the Goodman an unprecedented level of local and national visibility.

Our immediate planning priority was how to attract an audience during the month of December, when people are preoccupied with holidays, family, and friends. As Greg and I discussed seasonal fare, we very quickly landed on Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*; we had both grown up with the Alistair Sim film version, and I remembered Marley's chilling ascent to Scrooge's chambers on my record player. The obvious appeal of this entertaining ghost story about forgiveness, redemption, and love for our fellow human beings was irresistible.

We had to do it. But it was not

easy, as not everyone thought it was a brilliant idea.

*A Christmas Carol* is an epic story, and at that time, it was the largest production that the Goodman had ever produced. It would have to run for three seasons to recoup its initial investment, and put a giant demand on our production resources and personnel. What's more, being a well-known and beloved story made the task even more daunting, as audiences would take their seats with high expectations. If it failed, the financial repercussions would be very serious for the Goodman. Fortunately, the decision was made to proceed.

We knew we needed an artist of significant talent and ability to play Ebenezer Scrooge. After all, the character is on stage for the

entire play, and largely carries the production. Besides stamina, he must make Scrooge as believable as the irascible miser as the warm and jovial figure he becomes at the end.

In 1978, William J. Norris was a charismatic Chicago actor doing incredible work with Stuart Gordon's legendary Organic Theatre—and much too young to play Scrooge as a conventional "old codger." But I felt strongly that his age would be an advantage to our production, turning Scrooge into a recognizable contemporary businessman. There was no question in my mind that Bill was up to the challenge, and he magnificently delivered an Ebenezer Scrooge who was at once terrifying, hilarious, and profoundly moving as he contemplated his failure with Belle and his later reconciliation with Fred. There was not a dry eye in the house.

It was Bill's performance that made the production a success from the outset, and helped establish *A Christmas Carol* as a new Chicago holiday tradition. The extraordinary Chicago actors who have followed in his footsteps include Frank Galati, Tom Mula, Rick Snyder, William Brown, Jonathan Weir and John Judd. This year, Larry Yando celebrates his 10th season in the role, having made a tremendous impact with his gruff, snide, and endearingly heartwarming performance.

Over 40 years, we have learned to expect the unexpected on stage and off—in-

cluding the memorable night when the young actor playing Tiny Tim initiated a food fight on stage during the Cratchit family dinner. Or the matinee when Scrooge's flying apparatus suddenly malfunctioned, leaving him suspended (and swinging) midair—until a cherry picker entered to bring him down. Then there was the time when the life-sized replicas of Scrooge and Christmas Present once used in the production disappeared from storage, leading to the evening TV news headline: "Who Stole Scrooge?"

People have asked how we keep *A Christmas Carol* fresh and alive? The answer is that for all of us at the Goodman, *A Christmas Carol* is much more than a holiday entertainment or diversion. We believe that Charles Dickens' "little Christmas story" promotes values that are universal and true everywhere in the world—compassion, understanding, love, empathy, forgiveness, and redemption. Presenting this story each year to thousands of people is an enormous privilege we take very seriously, and hope contributes in some small way to building a better society.

Since 1984, *A Christmas Carol* has featured a culturally diverse cast, becoming the highest profile Chicago production to take that step. It was not a completely popular decision at the time—but it gives me hope to know that its casting is now largely embraced by our community.

We have now seen *A Christmas Carol* create several generations of new theatergoers. Youth who

attended the early productions are now bringing their children (and grandchildren). From the outset, we wanted the production to be a family event—not a children's theater performance. To see audiences of parents, children, and relatives enthralled and engaged is totally inspiring. *A Christmas Carol* has been a key part of our School Matinee Series, the entry point for teachers working with us for the first time.

Did I know 40 years ago that all of this would take place? Well, no. But I was confident that we were producing *A Christmas Carol* for the right reasons, and that it would have an impact on audiences for a number of years. *A Christmas Carol* cannot stay the same—but we strive to only change it in ways we believe enhance the experience for the audience and all connected with it. To provide *A Christmas Carol* for Chicago over the past four decades is a highlight of my life in the theater, and I am grateful to all of the countless artists, professionals and patrons who make it possible.

Here's to the next 40 years of *A Christmas Carol* at the Goodman!



Roche Shulfer,  
Executive Director

# Discussion Questions for Video Excerpt 1: Collecting Donations

by SAM MAUCERI



Larry Yando, Penelope Walker, and Susaan Jamshidi in "A Christmas Carol" at Goodman Theatre. Photo by Liz Lauren.

The following questions were written to accompany [this excerpt](#) from the 2019 production of "A Christmas Carol." You may find them particularly useful in History or Social Studies classrooms.

1. In this scene, the wealthy Scrooge refuses to donate to the poor in his community. Does this hoarding of wealth remind you of any other characters from fiction? Of any real life figures from history or present day?
2. What are some examples of how economic inequality affects Americans today? What systems and people are responsible for perpetuating this inequality? Do you know of any initiatives or laws that have been proposed to alleviate economic inequality? For more information on income and wealth inequality today, check out [this video from Crash Course Economics](#).
3. In a recent survey from the [Pew Research Center](#), Americans with different political affiliations were asked whether they thought different factors "contribute a great deal to economic inequality". They were asked about factors like the tax system, problems with the education system, racial discrimination, and individual life choices. Which of these factors do you think contribute most significantly to economic inequality? Why?
4. How do you think wealth impacts Scrooge's world view? Which of the above factors do you think he would say contribute to economic inequality in his community?

# Discussion Questions for Video Excerpt 2: Marley's Ghost

by LIAM COLLIER



*Kareem Bandealy as Jacob Marley in "A Christmas Carol" at Goodman Theatre. Photo by Liz Lauren.*

The following questions were written to accompany [this excerpt](#) from the 2019 production of "A Christmas Carol." You may find them particularly useful in ELA and Theatre classrooms.

1. One of the most important jobs an actor has is to create a dynamic performance that keeps the audience engaged. In the excerpt provided, Larry Yando and Kareem Bandealy, who play Ebenezer Scrooge and Jacob Marley, both make several bold acting choices to do just that!

Pick one line delivered during this scene. How does the actor use his voice and body to keep the audience engaged in the story?

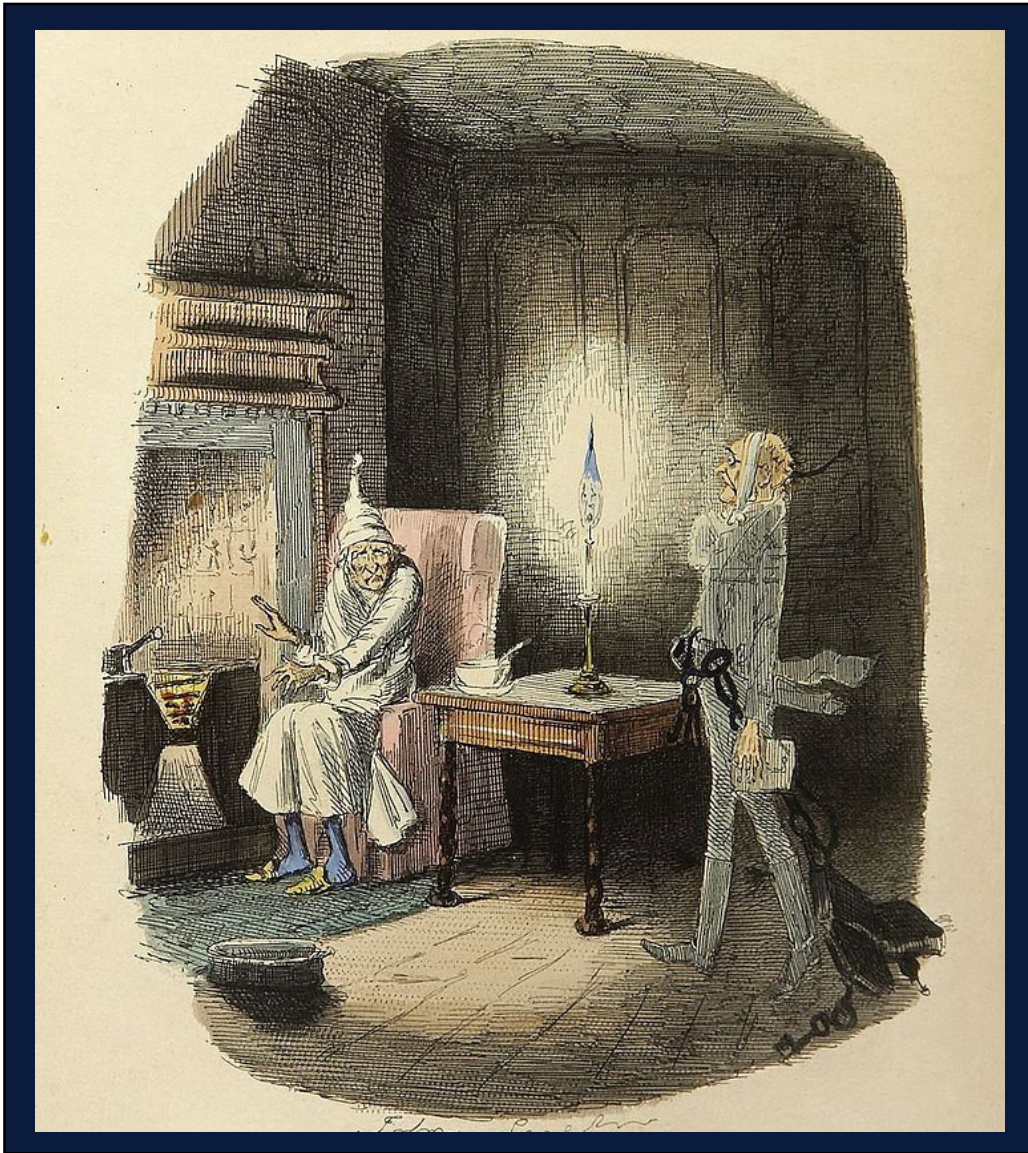
2. Take a moment to read Charles Dickens' description of Marley's Ghost from the original 1843 novella, *A Christmas Carol*:

*The same face: the very same. Marley in his pigtail, usual waistcoat, tights and boots; the tassels on the latter bristling, like his pigtail, and his coat-skirts, and the hair upon his head. The chain he drew was clasped about his middle. It was long, and wound about him like a tail; and it was made (for Scrooge observed it closely) of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel. His body was transparent; so that Scrooge, observing him, and looking through his waistcoat, could see the two buttons on his coat behind...*

*...though [Scrooge] looked the phantom through and through, and saw it standing*

*before him; though he felt the chilling influence of its death-cold eyes; and marked the very texture of the folded kerchief bound about its head and chin, which wrapper he had not observed before; he was still incredulous, and fought against his senses.*

2. Now take a look at the illustration below by cartoonist John Leech that was included alongside the 1843 manuscript. How faithful was Leech to Dickens' description? Do you feel that his illustration captures the overall tone of the passage above?



*John Leech's illustration of Marley's ghost, from Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol".*

3. Finally, compare both Dickens' description and Leech's drawing to the portrayal of Marley's Ghost at the Goodman. What similarities and differences do you notice?

Do you agree with the design choices that were made at the Goodman? If so, why? If not, what changes would you make?

# Discussion Questions for Video Excerpt 3: Merry Christmas, Bob!

by SAM MAUCERI

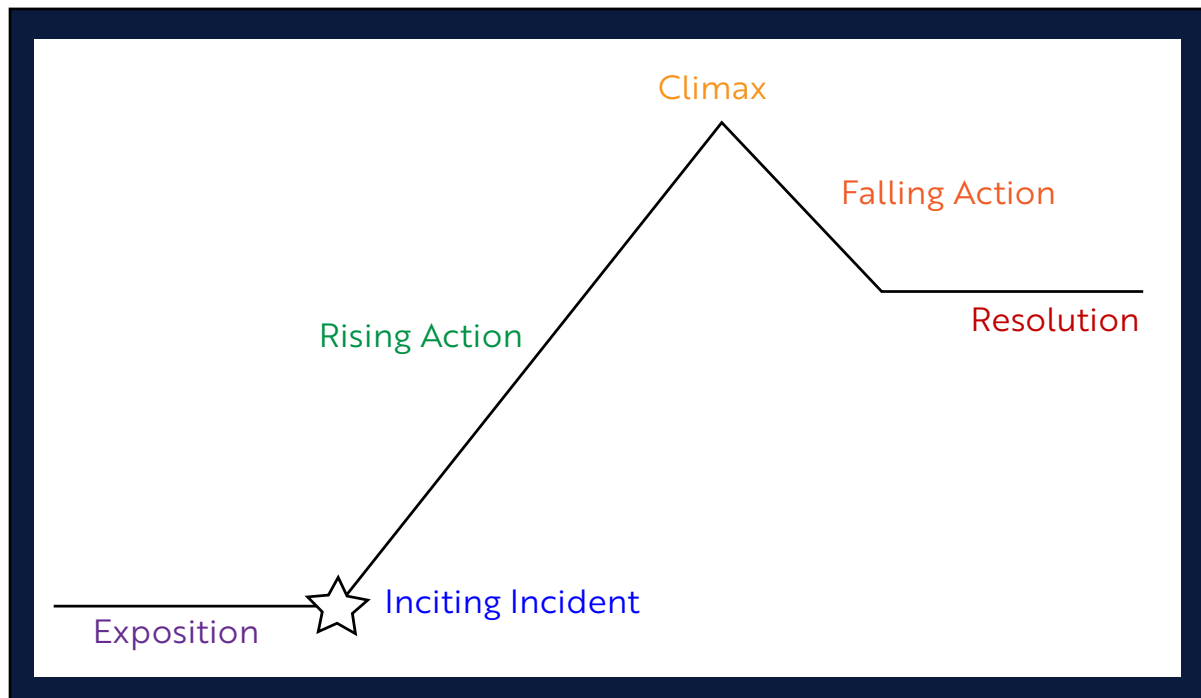


*Thomas J. Cox and Larry Yando as Cratchit and Scrooge in "A Christmas Carol" at Goodman Theatre. Photo by Liz Lauren.*

*The following questions were written to accompany [this excerpt](#) from the 2019 production of "A Christmas Carol." You may find them particularly useful in ELA and Theatre classrooms.*

1. This scene takes place once Scrooge has learned to be more generous. In this scene, Scrooge plays a joke on Bob Cratchit by pretending to be his old self, before revealing his change in character.
  - b. What adjectives would you use to describe Scrooge's character in the beginning of the scene?
    - i. What do you see the actor playing Scrooge doing physically to embody these adjectives?
    - ii. What do you hear the actor doing vocally to embody these adjectives?
  - c. What adjectives would you use to describe Scrooge's character in the later part of the scene?
    - i. What do you see the actor playing Scrooge doing physically to embody these adjectives?
    - ii. What do you hear the actor doing vocally to embody these adjectives?

2. Below is a picture of [Freytag's Pyramid](#). The pyramid is used to outline the major plot points that appear in most dramatized stories from beginning to end. In what section of the pyramid (and the play) do you think this scene takes place?



3. Over the course of a play, an audience typically expects to see the **protagonist** change in some way. This character's journey is referred to as a character arc. What are some elements that make a compelling **character arc**? What roles do a character's objective and the obstacles that prohibit the achievement of that objective play in creating a compelling character arc?

# In the Recording Studio: Clips and Questions

by SAM MAUCERI

*The following recordings have been made available in partnership with the employees represented by SAG/AFTRA and Stage Directors & Choreographers Society.*

Adapting *A Christmas Carol* into an audio drama demanded a unique rehearsal and production process. Once you've watched the video excerpts from the 2019 production of *A Christmas Carol*, check out these behind-the-scenes clips of recording sessions for the same three scenes in this year's audio drama.

- [Recording Session Clip 1: Collecting Donations](#)
- [Recording Session Clip 2: Marley's Ghost](#)
- [Recording Session Clip 3: Merry Christmas, Bob!](#)



*Richard Woodbury at a recording session for "A Christmas Carol - An Audio Play"*

1. What do you notice about the set-up of the room? What safety precautions are being taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19?
2. Who is in the room? What jobs do you think they're doing on the production? What other jobs that we can't see from the video might be needed to produce an audio drama?
3. Compare and contrast the acting styles between the video excerpts from the stage production and the clips of the recording session. What are the actors doing differently? How are they using their voices? How are they using their bodies?
4. Close your eyes and listen to the clip of the recording session. Do the characters sound different from one another? Are you able to understand the main plot points and emotions of the characters? How was the experience of listening to the audio drama scene different from watching the video of the scene on stage?



*Larry Yando at a recording session for "A Christmas Carol - An Audio Play"*

5. What adjustments were made to the script to make it suitable for an audio drama? Were additional lines or characters added to better tell the story through audio?
6. After this recording session, a sound designer will edit together the many scenes into one recording. Music and sound effects will also be added. What sounds and music do you think would enhance the scenes you just watched?

# The Science of Levitation

by KELLY REED

*This article was originally published in December 2013.*

This year, Jacob Marley's ghost is not playing around. In contrast to years past, the ghost heralding the apparitions of Christmas past, present, and future will appear on stage in fury of smoke and noise that is more spooky than magical. The changes to this scene made by Director Henry

Wishcamper are so big that the production crew built an entirely new set piece for Scrooge's bedroom. Matt Chandler, the Associate Production Manager for the Albert Theatre, oversaw the entire process of building this new piece. "We wanted to take a step in modernizing the unit while at the same time keeping it in the realm of the rest of the production," says Chandler. "We wanted

to tell the story in a more dramatic way, visually, than we have in years past." Although directors are constantly re-imagining the show like this, the production crew uses the same basic science and math concepts year after year to make changes to the set. The process of building the new "Scrooge Unit" started over a year ago, with designers discussing the artistic vision for the show with Wishcamper. After this, the designers drafted plans to bring that vision to life in the safest and most cost-effective way. Once Chandler approved the final plans, engineers and carpenters needed to translate them into a real, live set. Chandler talks about the excitement of using math and science skills in innovative ways to create theatre. "It's the science behind it that I have always been the most excited about," he says. "There's something about being able to take all of these different things and in the end you create one massive theatrical project. In theatre, you're always doing something different. There's always a different challenge, and there's always new technology."

One of the main challenges in constructing Scrooge's bedroom was that of levitation: during a pivotal scene, Scrooge's bed must rise off the floor and carry him, floating, into the air. After testing different **motor mechanics** and **simple machines**, they decided to



*Molly Brennan as the Ghost of Christmas Past in the 2019 production of "A Christmas Carol". Photo by Liz Lauren*

build a **cable drive system** to accomplish this. The system starts backstage, with motorized **winches** that rotate giant **drums**, each with grooves on the outside to catch the cable as it wraps around. The cables connect to a forklift-type apparatus, which sticks through the wall and under the bed, lifting it up when the motors are switched on. This machine lifts not only the bed but the actor moving (and jumping) on top of it. Since the bed needs to remain absolutely still, the crew needed to figure out how much weight in addition to the bed the lift would need to hold, as well as the **dynamic forces** acting on it as the actor jumped up and down.

Once they determined this, they could choose the right type of **casters** to achieve the proper amount of **torque** to get the cable moving. The

safety and the “look” of the scene both depend on the system starting and stopping smoothly, so the speed of the motors needed to accelerate and decelerate along a parabolic curve.

In the end, the engineers manipulated basic physics concepts—torque, **equilibrium**, acceleration, dynamic forces—to create the illusion of levitation. They used engineering techniques like simple machines, **automation**, and mechanics to build the systems that manipulate those concepts. When constructing the set piece as a whole, the production manager used math to calculate the total price of materials based on their current market price, after which carpenters used geometry to build a sturdy structure. By opening night, over 35 people will have contributed to the unit’s construction, mostly using the same concepts they

began learning in high school.

Despite the huge role math and science play in building a set, working on the backstage team does not mean you were a math geek in high school. “I hated math in high school, frankly,” says Chandler. “It wasn’t until I got to grad school and I was taking structural analysis and physics for the stage that it put [math & science] into a real context.” When physics and geometry are necessary to build an actual set piece, using them suddenly becomes less about word problems and more about treating them like the tools they are to create something spectacular. “When we sit here on opening night and think, ‘All of that work went into creating this one thing,’ it gives you that moment of ‘Awesome. I did something really, really cool.’”

## GLOSSARY

- **automation** - the use of various control systems for operating equipment with little to no human interaction
- **cable drive system** - for *A Christmas Carol*, it is a system comprised of metal cable, motorized winches, and pulleys, which attaches to the larger set piece and is custom-built to raise and lower Scrooge’s bed
- **caster** - a type of wheel designed to be mounted to a larger object in order to make that object easier to move
- **drum** - a cylindrical container, around which a cable can be wound
- **dynamics** - a branch of physics focusing on forces and torques and their effects on motion (as opposed to studying motion without reference to its cause)
- **equilibrium**- within physics, it is when the sum of all forces acting on an object equals zero
- **force** - any influence on an object that causes it to change in movement or direction
- **mechanics**- a type of mechanics concerned with the behavior of objects when subjected to forces, specifically those driven by motors
- **simple machine** - a device without a motor that changes the direction or magnitude of a force
- **torque** - the tendency of a force to rotate an object about an axis, fulcrum, or pivot
- **winch** - a device used to pull in, let out, or adjust the tension of a cable or rope.

## Goodman Theatre on *City Science*



Have you ever thought about how math and science apply to the arts? If you've never thought a theatre person needs to have a knowledge of advanced math and physics, think again!

In the episode of *City Science* provided at the link above, *City Science's* Professor Mike Davis explores how science is used in theatre through lighting, costume and scenic design. Presented in three parts, this episode goes behind the scenes to focus specifically on the science of the Goodman's *A Christmas Carol*. The artists and staff involved with the production provide explanations and hands-on demonstrations. As you watch, be sure to pay attention to how all the different elements of theatre are linked through science and design. Click the title to watch!

# From the Industrial Revolution in Dickens' London to the Information Revolution in Today's America

by TERESA RENDE

When Charles Dickens was born in 1812, Great Britain, and indeed the entire world, was entering a time of great change. From the mid-1800s onward, society moved toward an increasingly global economy. Improvements in transportation and communication resulted in more countries being able to sell their agricultural goods and raw materials at an international level. The industrial era was evolving quickly, and many countries sought to benefit immensely from it while others fell behind because of their inability to participate.

Britain's success in industrialization was unmatched by any nation. The success Britain held from the late 1700s through the 1800s actually pushed other countries out of the competition. Countries like China and India experienced periods of de-industrialization as certain industries, such as the textile markets, became obsolete when compared to the cheap, high quality, and swiftly produced British textiles. As such, these non-western countries suffered the plight of growing populations and decreasing household income. Furthermore, the

prosperity and technological advances of western nations allowed them to travel more often, meaning western folk were spreading new goods, religions and diseases abroad, while using their advanced weaponry to further their own agenda in foreign countries.

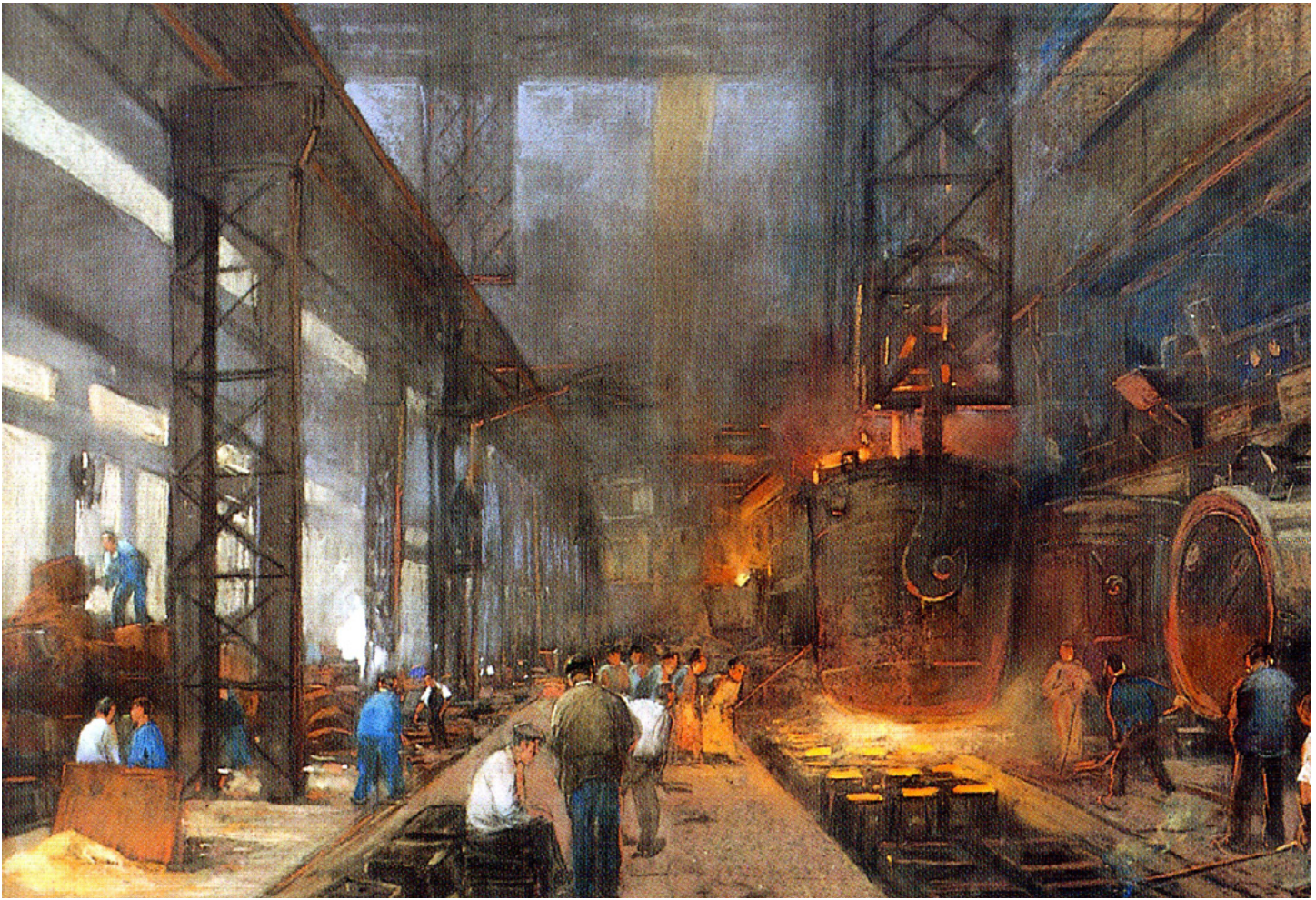
Emerging philosophies of free trade and "international peace" (influenced primarily by the prosperity that followed international trade), only added to the economic situation that aided a number of western nations. This is not to say that international peace served as the standard. There was, in fact, the same fancy for conquest that European nations had exhibited in the past.

As industrialization pushed on, the focus of conquest changed dramatically. Differing from the many Napoleonic battles of the late 1700s and early 1800s, conquest battles of mid-to-late 1800s were characterized by the overthrow of many less developed nations. Interstate battles still existed, but they were shorter and more internally isolated than were conquest and territorial battles of prior decades. Historian Paul Kennedy explains that, "In the year

1800, Europeans occupied or controlled 35 percent of the land surface of the world; by 1878 this figure had risen to 67 percent, and by 1914 to over 84 percent."

Changes in international banking and the concept of "credit" also gave advantages to certain nations during this period. The new practice of amassing resources in a short time and winning any given conflict quickly moved the focus away from long-term military mobilization. Simply being a "wealthy nation" was not enough to ensure success. Instead, a country had to have a well-balanced economy with healthy credit, international trade, and, most importantly, a national stake in industrialization. The combination of these varied factors made Britain more powerful than any nation in the world.

Of course, industrialization brought with it many horrors, even for Britain. One of the major themes of *A Christmas Carol* is the pitiable life of Britain's poorest citizens. The people working in the factories that made Britain such an industrial powerhouse were, themselves, often powerless and penniless. The children "ignorance" and "want," in *A*



Herman Heyenbrock's "The Casting of Iron in Blocks" depicts the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution. Public Domain - US.

*Christmas Carol* speak to the especially sour situation poor children faced in London in the 1800s and the seemingly endless cycle of poverty. While there were free schools in London in the 1800s, they were known as "Ragged Schools," free institutions, run through charity, in which the poorest children received religious instruction and a rudimentary education. These did little more than prepare the children for a life of labor themselves, and many children couldn't attend these schools as, until child labor laws were enacted, they were expected to work as soon as physically able. Compulsory education wasn't enacted in

London until 1870, the year Dickens died.

In America, Common Schools developed in the late 1700s and continued on through most of the 1800s, giving way to a more regional education system in the 1900s. America's public schools were based off the Prussian common school system, the Prussian belief being that all children needed a certain set of basic academic skills to live in an industrialized world, and that the nation would benefit if all people had these basic skills. The Kingdom of Prussia was one of the first countries in the world to introduce tax-funded and compulsory

primary education, though post-primary education (what we would now think of as high school) was only available to the very wealthy in those times. The basic skills often taught in American common schools included "the three Rs" (reading, [w]riting, and [a]rithmetic), history, geography, and math. Championed by Massachusetts' Horace Mann in 1830s, common schools sprang up across the nation, first in the north, then nationwide, throughout the 1800s. Compulsory education laws follow at the state level, eventually becoming a federal mandate in 1918. The public school system that developed in America was intended to

give every child the basics, but much like London, the system was not developed such that every child has the opportunity to become a scholar or an academic.

Seth Godin, an American author and tech entrepreneur, describes it fantastically in his education manifesto *Stop Stealing Dreams*:

"A hundred and fifty years ago, adults were incensed about child labor.

Low-wage kids were taking jobs away from hard-working adults. Sure, there was some moral outrage about seven-year-olds losing fingers and being abused at work, but the economic rationale was paramount. Factory owners insisted that losing child workers would be catastrophic to their industries and fought hard to keep the kids at work—they said they couldn't afford to hire adults. It wasn't until 1918 that nationwide compulsory education was in place.

Part of the rationale used to sell this major transformation to industrialists was the idea that educated kids would actually become more compliant and productive workers. Our current system of teaching kids to sit in straight rows and obey instructions isn't a coincidence—it was an investment in our economic future. The plan: trade short-term child-labor wages for longer-term productivity by

giving kids a head start in doing what they're told.

Large-scale education was not developed to motivate kids or to create scholars. It was invented to churn out adults who worked well within the system. Scale was more important than quality, just as it was for most industrialists."

Godin poses that the American education system is failing our students because it is succeeding in its original intention: to produce predictable, obedient, testable, factory workers in a nation that no longer depends on factory jobs. We still have systems that constantly test students' ability to memorize facts and data, despite student access to the internet which can pull up facts instantaneously. We've experienced a complete shift in economy, from one that produced things to one that produces thoughts, and yet we haven't adjusted our education system to match it. Godin continues,

"The next century offers fewer new long-lasting institutions (we're seeing both organized religion and the base of industry fading away), to be replaced instead with micro organizations, with individual leadership, with the leveraged work of a small innovative team changing things far more than it ever would have in the past. The six foundational elements (competition, the scientific

method, property rights, medicine, consumption, and jobs) are taken for granted as we build a new economy and a new world on top of them.

Amplified by the Web and the connection revolution, human beings are no longer rewarded most for work as compliant cogs. Instead, our chaotic world is open to the work of passionate individuals, intent on carving their own paths. That's the new job of school.

Not to hand a map to those willing to follow it, but to inculcate leadership and restlessness into a new generation.

We've moved far past the industrial revolution and into the information revolution, what do you think is next for the education revolution?

# Charles Dickens, and How a Story Came to Be

edited by ELIZABETH MORK and WILLIAM LANDON

Charles Dickens was born the second of eight children in the town of Portsmouth, England on February 7th, 1812. His father, John Dickens, worked as a clerk in the Naval Pay office which forced him and his family to move constantly. As a result, young Charles' early years were spent in various cities in England - including London.

The family moved to London just before Charles' 12th birthday. Charles received some basic formal education at a private school before tragedy struck. His father was very irresponsible with the family's finances, and constantly spent more money than he earned. Soon after moving into their new home, John Dickens was arrested for outstanding debt. The entire family, except for Charles, was sent to Marshalsea Debtor's Prison; a prison specifically for individuals and their family members who were unable to pay back their debt.

Charles began to work ten hour days at Warren's Boot-Blackening Factory. At the age of 12, he spent his days applying labels to jars of shoe polish, earning only six shillings per week— the equivalent of earning \$26 per week today— the majority going to support his family.

After the family had been imprisoned for three months,

John Dickens declared himself an "Insolvent Debtor," one who has insufficient funds to get out of debt. This enabled him to release his family from jail. John removed Charles from the warehouse and promptly sent the adolescent to private school where he did extremely well.

Three years later, when he was fifteen, Charles began working as a clerk in a law office. Unhappy with the position, Charles left the profession of clerk to become a journalist, and wrote most about parliamentary debates and campaign elections. He also penned humorous sketches for magazines in his free time. As his popularity grew, these sketches were compiled and published in his first book, *Sketches by Boz* (1836). They were very well received by both critics and the public. He followed this success with his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-37), which was released in monthly installments (as were many of Dickens' works, including *A Christmas Carol*). To this day, none of his novels have gone out of print in England!

As a result of his days working in the factory, Dickens was also very interested in social reform. Throughout his works, Dickens retains empathy for the common working man and skepticism of the upper classes. Unfortunately, his climb

to success took a significant downturn during the next few years. *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840), his follow-up to *Nicholas Nickleby*, was less than successful, and *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) did even worse in sales.

During 1842 he toured the United States, where he enjoyed favor in all of his travels. He was keenly disappointed, however, by the social issues he identified in America. He upset his hosts by condemning slavery, in the spirit of the social issues he took to heart. This distaste was evident in his travelogue *American Notes*, written that same year, which was highly critical of the new nation. By the fall of 1843 Charles Dickens had lost social and financial favor.

The author was in need of a new source of inspiration. Considering Dickens' own personal history and fierce dedication to exposing the conditions of the poor, it is not altogether surprising where he found this muse.

## How *A Christmas Carol* Came to Be

*"In the little world in which children have their existence, whosoever brings them up, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt, as injustice."* - Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*



*"Charles Dickens in his Study" by William Powell Frith*

## The Impact of the Industrial Revolution

In 1834, the year when Charles Dickens began writing *A Christmas Carol*, the Industrial Revolution was in full swing. With a mix of positive and negative results for the needy population of England. The Revolution caused a huge amount of low-paying, low-skill jobs to grow within the cities. Manufacturers began hiring children in large numbers for these positions due to the fact these unprotected workers would do the job for little pay, leading to huge profits for the company. No

laws protected children in the workplace. Some children were forced by their parents into the factories before the age of seven. These young workers often labored for more than 12 hours a day. Horrifyingly dangerous and unsanitary conditions were common.

Enraged by the situation of the poor, Dickens continually chronicled these atrocities and searched for ways to change them.

## Ragged Schools: Ignorance and Want

Dickens' interest in education's

potential to save children from poverty rapidly grew. In the fall of 1843, Charles personally went to several institutions known as "Ragged Schools," schools that were a direct product of the industrial revolution, which provided free education to inner city children searching for answers. One school in particular Dickens described as "more than a 'ragged' place". He recalls that the children were filthy and dressed in tatters. Some had already succumbed to the pressures of poverty by becoming pimps and thieves – many had lost their innocence. The children's schoolrooms were in an equally depressing state. He wrote to a friend about the experience, "On Thursday night I went to the Ragged School; an awful sight it is. I have very seldom seen in all the strange and dreadful things I have seen in London and elsewhere, anything so shocking as the dire neglect of soul and body exhibited in these children."

In a piece for the *Examiner*, he wrote, "Side by side with Crime, Disease, and Misery in England, Ignorance is always brooding." Thus the germinating image of *A Christmas Carol* was not that of the ghosts, Scrooge, or even Tiny Tim, but the two "monsters," the allegorical children Ignorance and Want. Dickens had intended a tract on education for the poor, but he now decided to write a story that, he announced with justifi-

able hyperbole, would hit his readers over the head like a "sledge-hammer." And this is exactly what it achieved.

Charles wrote non-stop for the six weeks following his visit. He notes that while writing *A Christmas Carol* he often "wept and laughed and wept again." At times his agitation was so great that he would "walk about the back streets of London fifteen and twenty miles many a night when all sober folks had gone to bed." During these six weeks, he was able to turn out the story of the Christmas of 1843 in the form of *A Christmas Carol*. It was, in some ways, a push for a new literary hit as well as a cry for the public's attention to a vast and deadly problem. He worked tirelessly to get the story into print by that Christmas, and put a lot of his own money into the publication process to do so.

### Financial Problems

Response to *A Christmas Carol* was immediate and positive. A remarkable 6,000 copies were sold on the day of its publication. However, due to the book's moderate price and beautiful but expensive packaging, profits were lower than Dickens originally thought and of which he was in need. In 1844 he complained to a friend, "Such a night as I have passed! The first 6,000 copies show a profit of 230 pounds! And the last four will yield as much more. I had set my heart and

soul upon a thousand. What a wonderful thing it is that such a great success should occasion me such intolerable anxiety and disappointment!"

### A Universal Success?

*A Christmas Carol's* popularity turned the public eye back to Dickens' work, dramatically increasing the sales of his future novels. He became one of England's most beloved writers, and was similarly admired later in other countries, such as the United States. America had not been ready for a new Dickens book following the perceived injury of *American Notes*, but still, Dickens revisited America in 1867. He came for a speaking tour, during which he read excerpts from his books and acted out all of the characters. On the night before tickets went on sale in New York, a line of people stretched half a mile down the street and by morning more than 5,000

eager audience members were in line waiting. *A Christmas Carol* was the book most often requested.

### The End of An Author's Life

Charles Dickens died from a stroke on June 8th, 1870 at the age of 58. He was mourned by peers, friends, family, and the public at large. Charles Dickens is buried in the distinguished Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey, where his grave marker still stands today. The inscription on his tombstone reads: "He was a sympathizer to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed; and by his death, one of England's greatest writers is lost to the world". A story circulated after his death. A man tells of when he was in a tobacco shop and a laborer came in and flung two pence on the counter for his shag. The shop keep asked him why he looked so wretched. "Charles Dickens is dead," he replied, "We have lost our best friend."



*The grave of Charles Dickens in Westminster Abbey*

# Charles Dickens' House

To learn more about Charles Dickens the man, visit the Dickens Museum website for a virtual tour! The Charles Dickens Museum gives a photographic tour of the author's former home at 48 Doughty St., London. [Click here](#) for the interactive tour!



Left: Paige Collins (Martha Cratchit), Penelope Walker (Mrs. Cratchit), Phillip Cusic (Peter Cratchit), Skye Sparks (Belinda Cratchit), Ron Rains (Bob Cratchit), Amaris Sanchez (Emily Cratchit), and Larry Yando (Ebenezer Scrooge). Right: Larry Yando (Ebenezer Scrooge), Aaron Lamm (Boy Scrooge), Emma Ladji (Fan) and Travis A. Knight (Ghost of Christmas Past). Photos by Liz Lauren.

Above: "[Charles Dickens Museum London](#)" by [Siobhan Doran](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

# **Dickens' Time: A Global Perspective**

by WILLIAM LANDON and ELIZABETH RICE

Click the title to see a timeline that details important events in Charles Dickens' life as well as happenings in Great Britain and around the world. As you look over the timeline, consider how Dickens' life relates to what was happening elsewhere.



*Jasmine Bracey as the Ghost of Christmas Present. Photo by Liz Lauren*

# Christmas Around the World

by ELIZABETH RICE



*An enormous, floating Christmas tree adorns the waterfront near, Rio de Janeiro, the capital of Brazil. "Christmas tree 2015 at the Rodrigo de Freitas lagoon at Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil" by alobos life is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)*

Christmas is a holiday both unique and familiar to many. Cultures all across the globe share similar traditions, especially with the influx of world travel and immigration, while maintaining local customs at the same time. For many Christian countries, the Advent season is a prevalent lead up to the Christmas celebration, while the Epiphany (January 6) is often the more important holiday. Perhaps the most common custom across the board is spending the holiday with friends and family. In *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens highlights many of the Christmas customs in Victorian England. How do they compare to

the traditions of some countries across the world? How do they compare to your own family's traditions?

## Ethiopia

For many Ethiopians, Christmas, or Leddat, is a purely religious holiday. Ethiopian Orthodox Christians follow their own calendar, close to the Julian calendar, and therefore celebrate Christmas on January 7th rather than December 25th. Leddat is not the most important holiday. In fact, many people call it Genna, after the ball game many play only once a year, during Christmas afternoon. Christmas celebrations include processions with religious ob-

jects from churches carried through the street for the community to see. Many participate in an all night vigil on Christmas Eve, singing and praying. On Christmas morning, they attend mass where religious dances are performed. Ethiopians do not exchange gifts during Christmas.

## Mexico

The Christmas season begins in on December 16 in Mexico with Las Posadas. Posada is the Spanish word for inn. During the nine days leading up to Christmas, a procession winds its way through town with a statue of Mary

and Joseph. They recreate Mary and Joseph's journey in Bethlehem, searching for an inn. The procession knocks on doors and are turned away by the inhabitants, symbolizing the way Mary and Joseph were turned away. After the initial refusal, the procession is welcomed in to a party. This goes on until Christmas Eve.

The procession is automatically invited in but told that the only room in the "inn" is in the stable. The statues are then placed in a Nativity scene and statues of the Baby Jesus and shepherds are added. Adults will then hang piñatas filled with sweets and small toys for children to take turns breaking open with sticks. At midnight,

families will attend Misa de Gallo, or Midnight Mass. Misa de Gallo translates into Mass of the Rooster because legend has it that was the first animal to announce the birth of Christ at Midnight. In Mexico, children generally receive their gifts on the Epiphany, January 6th, the day the three kings, or Magi, brought their gifts to Jesus. It is known as El Día de los Reyes or Three Kings' Day.

## Sweden

In Sweden, the Christmas season begins with St. Lucia's Day on December 13th. The eldest daughter of the family dresses in a white gown and red sash and wears a wreath with candles on her head as she brings her family special buns for breakfast. While there are many stories of how this custom originated, one suggests that it commemorates St. Lucia who helped Christians hiding from danger during ages of persecution. She would go to their hiding places at night by lighting the way with candles on her head. Swedes often use straw to decorate their houses during the holiday. This reminds them that Jesus was born in a stable. Often, there will be a straw goat that guards the Christmas tree and protects the family from evil. Christmas dinner often consists of a smorgasbord of ham, pickled pigs feet and dried codfish. For dessert, they bake pepparkakor, cookies very similar to gingerbread.



Since the 1970s, Kentucky Fried Chicken has been [a staple of Christmas dinner in Japan](#). As of 2019, Christmas sales of KFC in Japan account for nearly five per cent of annual revenue. *"Ah. The jolly fat man with the... hold on..."* by [Robert Sanzalone](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

## Philippines

Occupied by both Spanish and American forces over the course of its history, Filipinos mix customs from both these cultures along with rituals of their indigenous people to create unique Christmas rituals. Like in Mexico, the Christmas season begins on December 16th with the first of a series of early morning masses called Misa de Gallo. Not to be confused with Midnight Mass, Filipinos attend mass starting at 4am for the nine days leading up to Christmas. Bells ring, bands play, and firecrackers are lit to remind everyone to go to church. They will also attend a Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. Gift giving, Christmas carols, Santa Claus,

and nativity scenes are essential parts of the Filipino Christmas, just like they are in the U.S. When decorating for the holiday, fresh flowers are often used in this tropical country. The most important decoration is the parol, a star-shaped paper lantern lit with a candle or electric light.

## Poland

Close to 90% of Poles identify as Roman Catholic, thus many follow Catholic rituals during the Christmas season. Traditionally, Poles will fast on Christmas Eve until the first star is sighted in the night sky. Before the Wigalia, or vigil, meal, many families will share an oplatek among them. Similar to the communion wafer at church, the father of the house-

hold will break the oplatek and share the pieces with all present, bidding members to be at peace with one another. Carp, pike, almond soup, beet soup, poppyseed cake, and ginger cake are all familiar dishes that can be served at the Christmas Eve dinner.

## Australia

Australians share many of the same traditions as England and the U.S. However, Christmas falls during the summer there, since Australia is located in the Southern Hemisphere. Many families spend the holiday at the beach or barbecuing outdoors. Santa Claus can even be seen sunbathing and surfing.

### No wonder Santa can get it done all in one night. He has help!

Not all, but many countries have some sort of Santa Claus figure. While not all are jolly fat men, most have beards, wear red and bring gifts to good little children. The following is a comprehensive list of the Santa Clauses of the world and what countries they hail from.

- **Christkindel:** or Christ Child, who brings gifts for children in southern Germany
- **Kriss Kringle:** United States, based off of the German Christkindel, or Christ Child, who brought gifts for children, brought over by German immigrants.
- **Père Noël:** France
- **Father Christmas:** England
- **Papai Noel:** Brazil
- **St. Nicholas:** France, Netherlands, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia
- **St. Basil:** Greece
- **Grandfather Frost:** Russia
- **Jultomten:** Sweden
- **Weihnachtsmann:** northern Germany
- **Hoteiosho:** Japan, a Buddhist god of good fortune said to have eyes on the back of his head to watch all the good children
- **Babbo Natale:** Italy
- **Julemand:** Denmark, Female Versions of Gift Givers
- **Baboushka:** Russia, baboushka means grandmother in Russian
- **La Befana:** Italy

# How the Consumer Stole Christmas

by ELIZABETH GOTTMANN

The word "Christmas" literally means "Christ's Mass". It originated as a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, a birth that many still celebrate today. What Christmas has come to mean however, is much different. How the birth of Jesus Christ became a secularized celebration of spending can be explained through a rapid progress of marketability and consumer spending combined with the adaptation of Pagan symbols and Dutch folk tales. How this evolution shifted the holiday was surely a complicated and tedious process, but there are some specific changes that occurred that can be seen as landmarks of this Christmas transformation.

One may assume that Christmas has always been a celebration that has taken place in the United States, this though is very untrue. The U.S. became a sovereign nation in 1776 after the signing of the Declaration of Independence; Christmas did not become a national holiday until president Ulysses S. Grant declared it so in 1870, about one hundred years later. Christmas traditions however, had been brought over by Europeans many years prior. In Europe, the folk tales of a Sinterklaas had been told for a long time. He would ride in on a horse and visit houses, children would leave carrots in their shoes for Sinterklaas's horses to enjoy and he would



*An onlooker watches a Ronald McDonald balloon at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, which kicks off the Christmas season in the United States. "[A sense of wonder at the Macy Parade](#)" by [terryballard](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#) and has been cropped.*

leave presents (mainly some kind of candy) in the shoes in return. Sinterklaas was also said to have a group of playful helpers. When Christianity reached the Netherlands, Sinterklaas's folk tale was celebrated and associated with the bishop Saint Nicolas. Saint Nicolas was said to have left money in the chimneys of women who were without a dowry, which was essential in marriage arrangements at the time. These tales combined and created America's modern Santa Claus. A man with a group of elf helpers that brought presents to children through a chimney. Instead of the carrots for the horse, it became cookies for Santa.

No more horses either, magical reindeer added to fantasy. When Santa reached the U.S., however, his image was still of a thin, basic looking man. Images of Saint Nicolas, too, were of a statuesque bishop who didn't always wear a red robe. Our modern image of Santa came to be the same way many of our modern images are generated, through artists.

In the 20th century, as writers and artists such as Washington Irving, Clement Clark Moore, Thomas Nast, and Katherine Lee Bates began to artistically create Santa's home, wife, workshop and overall story, one man would cement the image of Santa into our minds forev-

er. Haddon Sundblom would create the image of Santa Claus we know today to be used as a marketing campaign for Coca-Cola. The friendly, plump and jolly face was seen enjoying a Coke. Wearing a red coat with white trim (Coca-Cola's trademark colors). Coke sales sky rocketed and it did not take long for more companies to jump on the bandwagon. Soon images of Santa were everywhere. The epicenter of this Christmas market was New York and for good reason. New York, formerly named New Amsterdam when it was first settled by the Dutch, was engulfed in Dutch traditions and folklore. Most importantly, Sinterklaas, the model for the modern Santa Claus. Big stores like Gimbel began having Santa characters taking requests

from eager children as their parents shopped. Santa became the grand finale in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Things such as the Yule log, Christmas tree, and mistletoe began to become symbols for the season, traditions also brought over by the Dutch and other European nations. Soon a medley of secularized carols and Christmas specials became season staples. Before long, everyone had somebody to celebrate on Christmas, and it was not (necessarily) Jesus Christ.

The transformation of Christmas into a more secular consumer holiday is not all negative, though! In present-day America, many of the messages associated with Christmas are accessible to

those not wishing to partake in a religious celebration. Messages that encourage time spent with family, charity and peace are told through the lens of Christmas; it has become a time of family and friend togetherness, regardless of religious affiliation. Those wishing to celebrate Christmas in a more traditional, religious way still do so. A main success that Christmas accomplishes is bringing people together in a loving and joyous way. It is a time for all people to come together and bask in the things that connect us. The joy of Christmas time is a transcendent feeling that, even with a little bit of marketing coercion many are proud to celebrate.



*A 1931 advertisement for Coca-Cola helped established Santa's signature look.  
"Coca-Cola Santa 1931" by [wavelab.be](http://wavelab.be) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)*

## Building *A Christmas Carol*

[Click here](#) to view a gallery of 360 degree images of the load-in of the 40th Anniversary Production of *A Christmas Carol*, and see how the magic is made.



Larry Yando as Scrooge. Photo by Liz Lauren

PATRICIA HYDE/  
KOMAREK-HYDE-  
MCQUEEN FOUNDATION

School Matinee Series Sponsor

POLK BROS  
FOUNDATION  
A FOUNDATION FOR CHICAGO FAMILIES

Major Support of the  
School Matinee Series

THE  
CROWN  
FAMILY

WALTER E.  
HELLER  
FOUNDATION

School Matinee Series Sponsors

PEOPLES GAS  
NATURAL GAS DELIVERY

Support of the School Matinee Series

**BANK OF AMERICA** 

Major Corporate Sponsor

**WBEZ91.5**

Chicago's NPR news station

**VOCALO**

Broadcast Partners

Linda and Dennis Myers & Family  
**Ghost of Christmas Present**

Jeffrey W. Hesse and Julie Conboy Hesse  
**Cratchit Family Dinner Sponsors**

Sallyan Windt  
**Share the Joy Sponsor**

Ms. Jean Kralka  
Robert and Kathleen Frye  
David Dziedzic  
**Friends of Tiny Tim Sponsors**

The Edith-Marie Appleton Foundation/  
Albert and Maria Goodman  
Roger and Julie Baskes  
Joan and Robert Clifford  
David and Alexandra Fox  
Alice and John Sabl  
Kimbra and Mark Walter  
**2021 Season Sponsors**

Carol Prins and John Hart  
**Albert Season Sponsors**

The Michael A. Sachs Family Foundation  
**Education Season Sponsor**

THEATRE  
**GOODMAN**