A CHRISTMAS CAROL

From the Novella by CHARLES DICKENS
Adapted by TOM CREAMER
Directed by STEVE SCOTT

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The Magic of Bah, Humbug!

BY WILLA J. TAYLOR

I have seen some version of *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens’ tale of the redemptive power of Christmas joy, since I was five. It was a holiday tradition in my family. The Saturday after Thanksgiving marked the official beginning of the Christmas season: Daddy would put up the lights to outline our house; Mama and I would go pick out a tree. That night, after decorating and singing carols, we would huddle in front of the television to watch “Scrooge”, a 1951 film adaptation starring Alistair Sims.

By the time I was in my teens public theaters in Dallas (where I grew up) were desegregated, and we started attending the annual production of *A Christmas Carol* at Dallas Theatre Center. But the movies continued to play a significant part in our holiday reverie. In the 1970’s, I fell in love with a new musical version of “Scrooge” starring Albert Finney. It remains my favorite film adaptation to this day.

I have worked on high school, college and community theater productions. I have even seen it performed in Greek. I watched Patrick Stewart – Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the Starship Enterprise – act out all the parts in a one-man version that is, without a doubt, one of the best productions I’ve ever seen. And I have watched any number of celluloid Scrooges – Susan Lucci, Bill Murray, Cecily Tyson, Jim Carrey and, of course, Kermit and the Muppets.

But every year around October I become a little like Scrooge. As we gear up to rehearsals for yet another production of *A Christmas Carol*, I find myself a bit jaded. The theater collectively goes into ACC mode – the sets and props come out of storage to be buffed and polished; actors who perennially do the show are in the halls running lines; the coffin – the most macabre set piece – is stashed in the loading dock. Ads appear on cabs and buses. The commercials run on radio and television. And the requests for tickets start pouring in. It is a Victorian Christmas in the building but it’s still warm outside. It’s not even Halloween. Why are we getting ready for Christmas when I haven’t even had Thanksgiving dinner?

Our production opens just after Thanksgiving, and during the first Wednesday matinee, I go down to the theater just to make sure everything is running smoothly. I only intend to stay for a scene but I find myself sitting through the entire show, crying at the end and awed by the magic of the production and the power of the story.

Charles Dickens’ novella, written in just six weeks and published in 1843, is the ultimate tale of transformative power of love and joy. The change in Scrooge from a miserable uncharitable miser to a generous Uncle Ebenezer is a tale all too relevant today. His realization that all his material wealth is nothing without a richness of spirit is a message with resonance in a world obsessed with material things. It reminds us of our responsibility to humankind, of our obligations to eradicate want and ignorance from this world, and of our ability to give of ourselves to others less fortunate. These are the lessons of this 167-year old story, lessons I hope I can live by in this joyous season and in the year to come.
This year we celebrate the 35th anniversary of *A Christmas Carol* at The Goodman. We spoke with director Steve Scott last year about his experiences and reflections during the 2011 production.

LESLEY GIBSON: Do you want to start by describing your history with *A Christmas Carol* at The Goodman?

STEVE SCOTT: I began working with *A Christmas Carol* while I was still the director of education. I used to go out and lecture to a lot of groups about *A Christmas Carol*. I would tell them the background of the story and the history of the story onstage and offstage, so I was thoroughly indoctrinated into *A Christmas Carol* before I took over as director, which I did in 1989. I directed four productions of *A Christmas Carol* from 1989 to 1992. Since then, I have been involved each year as the producer of the show. I think it is one of the best things we do and it certainly has become a tradition for the whole city. It was really wonderful when I got the chance to direct it once more this year.

LG: What do you do as the producer?

SS: I basically oversee things like the adaptation of the story. We are still using the same adaptation that we have used for many years, which was by our former dramaturg Tom Creamer. But every year that is refreshed a little bit; things are added and rephrased. The technical production also changes slightly every year. I work with the production department on that and the production director. And the casting of the show also changes. Although our casting director takes the lead, I kind of oversee that and certainly give my opinion as we go along with the casting.

LG: How is your perspective different with this 20-year break?

SS: Well, it’s interesting since I haven’t done it in 20 years. Certainly directing the show, you are going to become much more involved in it than if you were a producer. My perspective now has changed, certainly since I’m older and in some ways perhaps more cynical and perhaps more Scrooge-like, I think. I am even more affected now than I was before by the transformation that Scrooge makes and the kinds of things he learns, which, I think, is really at the heart of the show. I would hate to identify myself as Scrooge incarnate, but in some ways I think as you get older, you do become a little inured to the holiday season. I think it’s even more important as you get older to come back to this story and see how you are reflected in what Scrooge is and how maybe that isn’t so good.
LG: This is the same translation that we have been doing for a while. How is it going to be different from recent productions of the show?

SS: Even though it’s the same story, I think different directors bring different emphases to various facets of the story. One of the things that I really enjoyed doing before, and want to do again now, is to heighten the emotional journey through the story. To me, *A Christmas Carol* is like an emotional rollercoaster. It’s joyous and happy at one moment, very sad and tragic at another moment, then really, really scary. I think the audience gets on at the beginning, and it’s like a ride through a theme park almost where you see lots of different things coming at you very, very quickly and you respond viscerally to it. Really, it’s trying to get back to that visceral response that we’ve had with the production in the past.

LG: How do you plan on using some of the more fantastical production elements?

SS: Certainly something we are always reinvestigating is how the ghosts appear and how to make those sequences scary and more impactful. We have a couple of tricks we are going to try this year on how to establish the ghosts and make them truly terrifying creatures. We’re also renovating some elements of the set so that there is a greater disparity between the feeling of Scrooge and his counting house and all the other places that he visits, especially the Fezziwig scene, which is the site of the happiest moments of his youth. Interestingly, his counting house is in the same building that Fezziwig’s offices were, but we are trying to go for a larger contrast there to see what has happened, what’s decayed through the years and where Scrooge ended up. And, we are looking at a couple of other elements to make the story a little warmer, the family sequences a little fuller and richer—just kind of broadening the emotional context of the show.

LG: What is your opinion on cast diversity and how did that affect your casting of *A Christmas Carol* this year?

SS: *A Christmas Carol* is a staple of The Goodman’s season and a tradition for many Chicago area families. As a director, I hope to not only present Dickens’ beautiful story, but to show the timelessness of its message of charity by having the production reflect the world we live in today; the community onstage should reflect our community. A diverse cast is paramount in achieving this, and it adds a beautiful authenticity to the play. This is true for all Goodman productions, and any play I direct outside of The Goodman as well. Theater is all about telling stories—and those stories are made rich by finding a variety of voices to tell them. As the American theater progresses, inclusiveness—both for artists and audiences—is essential to make it thrive.

LG: Are there any big surprises?

SS: There are some big surprises, but I’m not going to tell you what they are. You are going to have to come and see that.

LG: Why do you think this story still resonates with people after 160 years? How does it stay relevant and meaningful?

SS: I think the story resonates now even more than it did in the past, because not only does it contain all these wonderful theatrical elements, it is a story where we can all see ourselves reflected in whatever stage of life we are in. I think young people can see themselves in the Cratchit family and the Cratchit children. Parents see themselves in the same way. I think we all do, especially as life gets tougher and especially in the last few years as people have been suffering a great deal because of various economic hardships. I think we all need to come back to the idea that it isn’t really money that matters, and it isn’t the kind of material possessions that we have that matter; it’s really ourselves and how we are tied to each other. In a world where we tend to be more and more fractionalized, it’s really important and really refreshing and comforting to come back to that.
realization every year. We all are together on this journey through life. It’s important to reaffirm that and reaffirm what that really means to us.

LG: Why do you think it is important for us to continue to do this year after year?

SS: It’s important that we do it for the reasons I just said. I think it’s an important story to revisit. It has become a tradition, I think, in a city where almost all of the holiday traditions that we’ve seen have kind of gone away. A Christmas Carol still remains. I think it is one of those events that one loves to experience with one’s loved ones: family, friends. It has become a hallmark of the whole season of rebirth and reinvestigation and kind of beginning anew. I think it’s important that we do it for the audiences who love to see it every year. But, I think it is an important kind of social message, too, that we are bringing audiences, and I think that’s important to go back and revisit every year for the people who come but also for the artists involved in the show. I think a lot of the people, certainly at The Goodman, feel the same way about the production and view the coming of A Christmas Carol as a major event in their lives, not just in their professional lives.

LG: Do you think it is different directing A Christmas Carol from any other show?

SS: Oh, very much so. It’s very different from directing any other show because there are certain elements in the production that need to be preserved. They are things that audiences have come to expect over some 30-odd years, so you have to preserve those but refresh them so they don’t just become set pieces. The structure of it is relatively the same each year. When you are directing other shows, you are usually starting from scratch and building from the ground floor. Here you are kind of taking something that has already been established and trying to put your own imprint on it in whatever ways you can, which is an interesting challenge. I think in some ways it’s more fulfilling than directing other shows because you have such a rich tradition of things to draw upon. There have been so many wonderful directors attached to this production who have put their imprint on it and so many actors that have been involved with it; it has such a rich history that it’s wonderful to be able to pull from all of that. It really is a great deal of fun, although it is a different kind of challenge for a director.

LG: What is most fun about it?

SS: What is most fun about this? I think certainly in the past, the thing that I’ve enjoyed the most about directing A Christmas Carol, aside from the audience response which is always very gratifying, is if you do the show the right way, there is a real family feeling that builds up with the cast, the crew and the people who are working on the show. It’s a much closer bond than you get with any other production; through the rehearsal and the performance period, you really grow together. It makes the Christmas celebration mean a lot more when you have all of these people who are really part of your family that year to celebrate with. That’s the thing I enjoy the most. It is a very moving experience to get to know all these people in this context and work with them in the most significant part of the year for everybody.
Casting A Christmas Carol
BY JAMES MCCAFFREY

Every year, A Christmas Carol employs the talents of a cast nearly 30 actors. Assembling such a large and specific cast (which spans a range of ages, sizes and ethnicities) is no small feat and requires a great deal of time, creative energy and organizational planning, which eventually lead to the gathering of a terrific group of actors that bring the magic and power of Dickens’ tale to audiences every night.

The casting process begins with creative meetings. The director, casting director and casting coordinator all sit down to discuss how the director envisions each individual role. The casting director then asks very specific questions in the hopes of detailing the vision of the director further (How old are these characters? What is this character’s ethnicity? What sort of energy should this character convey to the rest of the cast? etc.).

Once the casting director has a specific idea of how the director envisions the cast, he/she compiles an extensive list of actors for every role that he/she feels meets the director’s vision. The casting director then checks the interest and availability of said actors for the project and reaches out to them to schedule auditions, either directly or through their agents. If the director finds what he/she is looking for in the auditions, the casting director makes offers to the selected actors (whether directly to the actor or through their agent or manager) to be a part of the production. If the offer is accepted, the actor joins the cast.

Another tool used by casting to help assemble the cast is to hold an open call. An open call is a type of audition where absolutely anyone can audition, no matter what his/her experience level might be. This has been a tradition of the casting process for A Christmas Carol for years, and it is used to locate the talented younger actors who play the child roles in the show. Hundreds of young actors attend the call every year, and those who are lucky enough to fit the director’s vision in just the right fashion are offered roles. Most years, more than 150 children audition!

Nontraditional casting also has been a staple of The Goodman’s production of A Christmas Carol for years. As defined by the Actors’ Equity Association, nontraditional casting (sometimes known as color-blind casting or integrated casting) is “the casting of ethnic minority and female actors in roles where race, ethnicity or sex is not germane.” In the case of A Christmas Carol, race, ethnicity and gender are not absolutely essential to the development of the play, and casting nontraditionally allows the themes of A Christmas Carol (redemption, forgiveness, charity, community and social responsibility) to transcend boundaries such as race, gender or sex. For example, the Cratchit family is cast nontraditionally, with a family of all different ethnicities, sizes and shapes, with the hope that audiences will gain a deeper understanding of the universal themes of the story.

There is a lot of organization, time, effort and creative energy that goes into the creative process. However, it always pays off when the cast is finally assembled to tell a wonderful and magical story that moves audiences every year.

Tania Richard (Mrs. Cratchit) and Francesca Mereu (Emily Cratchit) in rehearsal for A Christmas Carol. Photo by Liz Lauren.
Charles Dickens was born the second of eight children in the town of Portsmouth, England, on Feb. 7, 1812. His father, John Dickens, worked as a clerk in the Naval Pay office, a job that 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 Debtors Prison—a prison specifically for individuals and their family members who were unable to pay back their debt.

Charles began to work 10-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, meaning 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 15, Charles began working as a clerk in a law office. Unhappy with the position, Charles left the clerk profession 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 has gone out of print in England!

Due to his days working in the factory, he also was 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 followup to *Nicholas Nickleby*, was less than successful, and *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) did even worse in sales. During 1842 he toured the U.S., 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; it 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*
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. The results were a mix of positive and negative on the needy population of England. The revolution caused a huge number 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 7. 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, which were a direct product of the Industrial Revolution and 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 justifiable hyperbole, would hit his readers over the head like a “sledge-hammer.” And this is exactly what it achieved. Charles wrote nonstop 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 15 and 20 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 U.S. 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 9, 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 shopkeep asked him why he looked so wretched. “Charles Dickens is dead,” he replied. “We have lost our best friend.”

Poet’s Corner at Westminster Abbey, where Charles Dickens is buried.
London geography was determined by the Thames. The great river ran from west to east through the city after a dogleg north past Westminster—so, too, did the city itself, its two great thoroughfares being Fleet Street and Oxford Street.

At its core was the old City of London—known as the City as the century wore on—an entity consisting of the roughly square mile making up the area that had once been inside the old walls of the medieval city of London, bounded by the Thames on the south, the Inns of Court and Temple Bar on the west and the Tower in the east with its seven gates (Newgate of prison fame being one), which had all been torn down save for “that leaden-headed old obstruction,” as Dickens calls it at the beginning of *Bleak House*, “appropriate ornament for the threshold of a leaden-headed corporation, Temple Bar.”

Within the City lay the Royal Exchange (the change upon which Scrooge’s word in *A Christmas Carol* is said to be so good), which was a gathering place for merchants in different trades, and the Bank of England, the financial nucleus of the nation, together with the financial offices and activities that naturally clustered around them. In fact, the term “the City” also was used to denote the financial heart of England in the way that Wall Street is used to describe the financial heart of the U.S. In Jane Austen’s day, it was still customary for some merchants to live in the City, but as railroads were thrust through it and commuting became more feasible, even poor clerks began commuting to work from fringe or suburban areas the way we are told that Bob Cratchit does from Camdentown. In the first 80 years of the 19th century, in fact, the resident population in the City dropped from 128,000 to 50,000, while Greater London as a whole mushroomed from a million to more than 4.5 million people.

The fancy area of London was the West End, which lay west of Temple Bar and London’s center, Charing Cross. At the historic core of the West End lay what had once been the royal city of Westminster, with its palaces of St. James and Whitehall, along with Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. The Treasury building was here, along with Downing Street, the Foreign Office and the Horse Guards (Army headquarters). These had now become part of the larger, expanded London, and adjacent to this nerve center of government and royalty the ultrafashionable West End residential area of Mayfair (and, later, Belgrave Square and the unfashionable Chelsea farther south) grew up. Mayfair was the location of the posh men’s clubs on Pall Mall, the exclusive shops on Bond Street and the fancy houses on the ritziest residential street in the city, Park Lane, overlooking the great greensward of Hyde Park on Mayfair’s western border. All were within a short distance of the new royal residence, Buckingham Palace.

Such was London. But what was it like to live in? The fog in London was very real. Just why it was the color it was, no one has ever been able to ascertain for sure, but at a certain time of the year—it was worst in November—a great yellowness reigned everywhere, and lamps were lit inside even during the day. In November, December and January, the yellow fog extended out some 3 or 4 miles from the heart of the City, causing “pain in the lungs” and “uneasy sensations” in the head. It has been blamed in part on the coal stoves.

At 8 o’clock in the morning on an average day over London, an observer reported the sky began to turn black with the smoke from thousands of coal fires, presumably for morning fires to warm dining rooms and bedrooms and to cook breakfast. Ladies going to the
opera at night with white shawls returned with them gray. It has been suggested that the black umbrella put in its appearance because it did not show the effects of these London atmospherics. The fog was so thick, observed a foreigner at mid-century, that you could take a man by the hand and not be able to see his face, and people literally lost their way and drowned in the Thames. In a very bad week in 1873, more than 700 people higher than the normal average for the period died in the City, and cattle at an exhibition suffocated to death.

There were problems underfoot as well as in the air. One hundred tons of horse manure dropped on the streets of London each day, and a report to Parliament said that “strangers coming from the country frequently describe the streets of London as smelling of dung like a stableyard.” Originally, many streets were not paved; by midcentury, however, the dust from the pulverized stone with which London streets were paved coated furniture in good weather and turned to mud when it rained. An etiquette book advised gentlemen to walk on the outside of the pavement when accompanying a lady to ensure that they walked on the filthiest part of it, and every major street had a crossing sweeper like Jo in *Bleak House*, who for a penny swept the street before you made your way across it on rainy days so your boots did not become impossibly filthy. Nor was the Thames any better. London sewage, some 278,000 tons daily at mid-century, as well as pollutants from the factories along the river’s banks, was dumped untreated into the water, presumably helping to fuel the cholera epidemics that swept the City in the early part of the century. The smell was bad enough in the summer of 1858 to cause Parliament to end its session early.

There was what we would surely call noise pollution, too—the incessant sound of wheels and horses’ hooves clacking over the pavement, the click of women’s pattens on the sidewalks in the rain, the bell of the muffin man and the cries of the street peddlers selling such items as dolls, matches, books, knives, eels, pens, rat poison, key rings, eggs and china, to say nothing of the German bands, the itinerant clarinet players and the hurdy-gurdies.

The children who added their din to that of the costermongers remind us that London was an overwhelmingly young city, as we are apt to realize when we read, say, *Oliver Twist*, a city of multitudinous street Arabs, young costermongers, crossing sweepers like Jo or the mud larks who scavenged the bed of the Thames all playing in the streets or crying their wares, holding horses for gentlemen, fetching cabs for theatergoers on rainy nights, carrying packages or opening cab doors or doing cartwheels or handstands in the street in the hope of earning a ha’penny or penny. There was no compulsory school until 1880, and children younger than 14 made up 30 to 40 percent of the population.

*A cobblestone street. Courtesy of New York Public Library.*
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 such as 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.
Dickens’ Time: A Global Perspective
BY WILLIAM LANDON AND ELIZABETH RICE

The timeline below 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.

1812
Charles Dickens is born at Landsport, Portsmouth on Feb. 7.

1814
Congress of Vienna, a year-long meeting to determine the future of Europe, convenes.

1809-1811
Bolivia and Venezuela declare independence from Spain, beginning wars against that country.

1822
Dickens and his family move to London. Due to limited finances, he can no longer attend school.

1824
Dickens’ father and family are arrested for debt; he begins working at Warren’s Blacking warehouse. He resumes schooling after his family is released from prison.

1833
Dickens meets Catherine Hogarth, daughter of a Morning Chronicle music critic. Dickens works at the Morning Chronicle from 1833-1836.

1834
The Poor Law Amendment Act in Britain is passed under the belief that if a person was poor, it was his/her fault. It established workhouses, which were notorious for their dangerous conditions.

1836
Dickens and Hogarth marry on April 2.

1842
Dickens and his wife go on a six-month American tour. His account of the trip, American Notes, criticized slavery and angered many Americans.

1833
Slavery is abolished in the British Empire.

1842
British East India Company defeats the Qing Dynasty in the First Opium War, forcing China to tolerate smuggling of opium from British India into China.
1853 Dickens gives his first staged reading of *A Christmas Carol* before 2,000 people at a benefit for the Birmingham and Midland Institute, a pioneer of adult scientific and technical education.

1853

1861 The American Civil War begins.

Following the Crimean War, the Emperor of Russia abolishes serfdom, or “enforced labor.”

1864 Taiping Rebellion in China ends; death toll is an estimated 20 million civilians and soldiers.

1869 Exhaustion and illness force Dickens to return home from an English tour of *A Christmas Carol*, after delivering 74 of a planned 100 readings.

1870 On June 9, after a day of work on his novel in progress, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Dickens dies. He had presented a total of 444 readings of *A Christmas Carol* in Great Britain and the United States.

1865 American Civil War ends; death toll is an estimated 620,000 soldiers and undetermined number of civilians; Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution abolishes slavery in the United States.

1848 Seneca Falls Convention for women’s rights organized in New York; Manifesto of the Communist Party published in Germany.

1900
In Victorian England, strict social rules determined interactions between men and women. Some of these might play into relations in *A Christmas Carol* and may differ by class, but many, as you will see below, span social status. Think about it: Are any of these rules, or variations of them, still followed in the U.S. today? Which?

**The Gentleman**

1. In riding horseback or walking along the street, the lady always has the wall.

2. Meeting a lady in the street or in the park whom you know only slightly, you wait for her acknowledging bow. Then and only then may you tip your hat to her, which is done using the hand farthest away from her to raise the hat. You do not speak to her or to any other lady unless she speaks to you first.

3. If you meet a lady who is a good friend and who signifies that she wishes to talk to you, you turn and walk with her if you wish to converse. It is not “done” to make a lady stand talking in a street.

4. In going up a flight of stairs; you precede the lady (running, according to one authority); in going down, you follow.

5. In a carriage, a gentleman takes the seat facing backward. If he is alone in a carriage with a lady, he does not sit next to her unless he is her husband, brother, father or son. He alights from the carriage first so he may hand her down. He takes care not to step on her dress.

6. At a public exhibition or concert, if accompanied by a lady, he goes in first in order to find her a seat. If he enters such an exhibition alone and there are ladies or older gentlemen present, he removes his hat.

7. A gentleman is always introduced to a lady—never the other way around. It is presumed to be an honor for the gentleman to meet her. Likewise (and it is the more general rule of which this is only a specific example), a social inferior is always introduced to a superior and only with the latter’s acquiescence.

8. A gentleman never smokes in the presence of ladies.

**The Lady**

1. If unmarried and younger than 30, she is never to be in the company of a man without a chaperone. Except for a walk to church or a park in the early morning, she may not walk alone but should always be accompanied by another lady, a man or a servant. An even more restrictive view is that “if she cannot walk with her younger sisters and their governess, or the maid cannot be spared to walk with her, she had better stay at home or confine herself to the square garden.”

2. Under no circumstances may a lady call on a gentleman alone unless she is consulting that gentleman on a professional or business matter.

3. A lady does not wear pearls or diamonds in the morning.

4. A lady never dances more than three dances with the same partner.

5. A lady should never “cut” someone—that is to say, fail to acknowledge his or her presence after encountering him or her socially, unless it is absolutely necessary. By the same token, only a lady is ever truly justified in cutting someone: “a cut is only excusable when men persist in bowing whose acquaintance a lady does not wish to keep up.” Upon the approach of the offender, a simple stare of silent iciness should suffice; followed, if necessary, by a “cold bow, which discourages familiarity without offering insult” and departure forthwith. To remarks: “Sir, I have not the honor of your acquaintance” is a very extreme measure and is a weapon that should be deployed only as a last resort.
Contemporary Etiquette
BY AENEAS HEMPHILL

Etiquette doesn’t just refer to those old Victorian customs. The idea of politeness and its practice comes from a desire to ensure others are treated with respect in social situations. What this looks like changes based on the prevailing values of the time. With our current technology, we have an unprecedented capacity to share across cultures and generations. Some rules have become more flexible, others have been made irrelevant, but all the while, we are developing a set of norms that fits for the complexity and variance we see every day. In this sense, the customs we create aren’t so much for show as they are an attempt get at an ethical way of interacting with others. For this reason, the rules might be more subtle and often less formal or restrictive. Think about the kind of etiquette you encounter on a day-to-day basis. Where do these rules come from? What do they mean? Are they actually helpful or just annoying? What new types of etiquette would you like to see that you don’t often? Below are some examples, collected from conversations I’ve had around The Goodman.

In-Person

- Holding the door has become so prevalent that not doing so can be considered rude. This is especially the case when the person behind doesn’t have a free hand or would have difficulty getting the door him- or herself. A quick “thank you” will do for acknowledging the favor.

- Physicality still makes up a significant part of etiquette. A person’s eye contact, posture or quality of voice can all affect how others see him or her. The strength of a handshake may make or break an interview. It might be more appropriate in some situations to give a high-five or a bump. Many also have different criteria for who they hug and under what circumstances. Even the amount of space between people tells a story.

- On public transit, it is appreciated if those who are young and able give up their seat to older riders who might have more difficulty when no other seats are available. Those in priority seats also are technically required to do so.

- If the train is so crowded that the exit is blocked, often the most acceptable way of creating space is stepping out of the train temporarily until the other riders have exited. Attempts to create space within the train might lead to more confusion and irritation.

- On escalators, those willing to stand and ride stay on the right. Those in a rush pass on the left. Failure to keep these divisions can lead to major frustration for those wanting to pass, especially when one can hear a train coming.

The Jackson Blue Line CTA Station in Chicago, Illinois. Photo courtesy of Will (Flickr user, “InfoMofo.”)
In Writing

• Without facial expressions or voice, misunderstanding can easily occur. Emoticons can be one solution, but these are tricky. They can help the reader understand the intention of a message, but they can also mislead. In addition, a smiley-face has no place in professional correspondence.

• Email is very useful in professional situations and can be less intrusive than a phone call. This can be formal or casual, depending on the intended reader. Email communication can be frustrating if the other person does not check often or has the tendency to procrastinate. With the increasing prevalence of smartphones, many assume the person they’re contacting is always connected to their email, but this is not always the case.

• Texting can be the preferred form of communication in certain situations. It allows quick responses but also does not occupy a person’s time the way that a phone call would. It can be less of an interruption, which is especially useful if you know the person you are communicating with is busy. Texting is often casual, but many still value good spelling. Overused shorthand can make texts indecipherable. Another perk of texts is expected response time. This depends on the situation, but it seems that people will allow a greater amount of time to respond to a text, but it seems to be a smaller window than with an email. It can be strange to get a text back the next day, or even a few hours after, depending on the content. Also, not everyone is on an unlimited plan. If someone pays per text, a text novel can be more considerate than sending multiple small texts.

Social Media

• On Facebook, the very act of friending and defriending can have real implications. Although some feel that whatever is on your wall is your responsibility, the news feed has a way of making everyone’s business your own. This election, an extraordinary number of political statuses probably drove some people to reconsider their friendships. Others see it as an accessible forum for discussion or argument with their peers. Notions of civility and dignity always apply, as nothing on Facebook is truly private.

• Twitter often can seem like an amplified news feed. Since tweets have the potential to reach a wide group of followers, practicing good tweeting, retweeting and replying etiquette can go a long way. For instance, tweets were designed for a specific purpose and with a specific character limit. If the message is too long for a tweet, it is best not to send multiple tweets. Many will see this as clogging their feed. Similarly, when replying to another person’s tweet, it is best to tag it so that the conversation stays between those directly involved, rather than all followers. Often Twitter etiquette comes down to determining what is the important information and how can it be best sent without inconveniencing others.
The writing of *A Christmas Carol* in 1843 took place at a time when what are now central Christmas traditions were being established. In the 1840s Prince Albert introduced the German Christmas tree to the English celebration, and in the same years Christmas cards became popular greetings to send friends and family. One of Dickens’ best gifts to the holiday is a simple phrase we still use today. Scrooge’s nephew Fred’s cry of “A Merry Christmas, Uncle!” was the first use of this standard holiday greeting. As Dickens’ granddaughter Monica pointed out, “When you say, ‘Merry Christmas,’ you are quoting Charles Dickens.”

Just as Scrooge’s persona is wrapped up in humbug, Charles Dickens’ is intertwined with Christmas. In one of Dickens’ obituaries it was reported that a young girl, upon hearing that Dickens was dead, asked, “Then will Father Christmas die too?” J.W.T. Ley noted in the 1906 Christmas issue of *The Dickensian*, “Beyond question, it was Charles Dickens who gave us Christmas as we understand it today.”

**Carolining**
The Victorians loved music, and Christmas was no exception. They revived older carols and hymns from the medieval period and also created new pieces that were both secular and religious. Their interest in parlor singing sparked the use of cheerful, easily sung music in their Christmas celebrations. Musicians collected old Nativity carols and wrote new ones to suit the tastes of the time. During Christmas Mass, popular music such as “O Holy Night” and Handel’s “Messiah” filled the churches. Today’s Christmas carolers might sing in the cold with hopes of being invited inside for hot chocolate and cookies, but in Dickens’ time many carolers sang to keep from starving. This form of begging was illegal; it was a last resort for families struggling to stay out of the poorhouse. Dickens might well have considered the irony between the joyous nature of the carols themselves and the pitiful situation of the people he heard singing them in the London streets when he titled his book *A Christmas Carol*. The singing of carols by waifs is an English tradition. Waifs were originally watchmen who patrolled the streets of the older walled cities, keeping guard against dangers such as fire as well as singing out the hours of the night. During the holiday season they would include some carols for people along the way, but many complained about the nighttime disturbances.

**The Christmas Tree**
The Christmas tree can truly be called a Victorian innovation. The custom of a lighted tree began in Germany and German settlers brought the idea to America. However, it wasn’t until Prince Albert wedded Victoria and brought the Christmas tree with him that the tree gained popularity. By 1847, the trees at Windsor
Castle were laden with presents as well as wax candles. The tradition spread as English citizens followed the royal example. The trees and other decorations were removed on Twelfth Night (Jan. 6). To do so before or after was considered bad luck.

Christmas Cards
John Calcott Horsley designed the first Christmas card in 1843. Only 1,000 cards were printed that first year and they were expensive. By 1870, postage was reduced and a cheaper color lithography was used for printing. Thus began the real spread of the Christmas card — it reached the U.S. early that decade. Popular designs included Christmas feasts, church bells, snowbound mail coaches and turkey and plum puddings. Popular designs today include traditional elements as well as pop culture and other contemporary references.

Food
Christmas dinner was a grand affair! Goose, chicken, turkey or a joint of roast beef took center stage on the table. Christmas pudding, made with beef, raisins and prunes, was mixed on Stir-up Sunday, the Sunday before Advent, in order for the mixture to mature. All present in the house took turns stirring the pudding with a wooden spoon (in honor of the Christ child’s wooden crib). The stirring had to be done in a clockwise direction for luck. Mince pies were another traditional dish. They were sweeter, made with mincemeat, fruit and spices, and had to be eaten for the 12 days of Christmas to ensure 12 months of luck in the coming year. Each one had to be baked by a different person.

The famous plum pudding that Mrs. Cratchit makes was not made from actual plums but raisins. At this economic level, the copper—the pot used to boil the pudding—would have been used the rest of the year for the Cratchit family laundry. Poorer families such as the Cratchits ate goose instead of turkey, as it was much cheaper. Goose clubs—places geese were raffled off just before the Christmas holiday—were very popular with the working classes.

History of Humbug
In Dickens’ time, the word humbug was a common and witty expression used to proclaim a hoax, trick or deception. A 1751 paper noted humbug as “a black-guard sound, made use of by most people of distinction! It is a fine make-weight in conversation and some great men deceive themselves so egregiously as to think they mean something by it!” The word’s origins are unknown, but Scrooge’s use of “Bah! Humbug!” to belittle Christmas and Marley’s Ghost would have marked him as a man of fashion, albeit a grumpy one.

Dickens’ conjunction of Scrooge and “humbug” acknowledged the word’s popularity and made use of his readers’ associations of humbug with the model businessman of England’s Industrial Age, interested only in hard economic fact and with no time for useless sentiment. Today, the word humbug has slipped out of popular usage, but it remains a symbol of Scrooge and his cantankerous manner. John Irving sums it all up in an article on A Christmas Carol when he states, “Ebenezer Scrooge is the original Bah-Humbug man.”

To learn more about Christmas traditions around the world, visit: http://education.goodmantheatre.org
How to Celebrate the Reason
BY ELIZABETH GOTTMANN

It’s hard to escape the commercial imagery and appeal of Christmas. Undoubtedly, getting presents, drinking eggnog and singing “Frosty the Snowman” are all fun things to do. Yet there are those who wish to celebrate a more traditional Christmas. One of the main differences in celebrating a more spiritual Christmas versus a more “Santa-esque” Christmas is the time of year in which you begin celebrating. The Christmas season in America generally begins on Thanksgiving. As Thanksgiving has nothing to do with Christmas in origin, Thanksgiving’s association with Christmas has been its position as the start of the Christmas shopping season. During this shopping season, we decorate and throw parties; the Christmas season then ends on, well, Christmas, after all the presents have been handed out and the big dinner is done. To a more religious group, though, the Christmas celebration actually begins on Christmas.

In my family, we begin the celebration with midnight Mass on the night of Christmas Eve. About an hour before midnight, the entire congregation gathers in a dimly lit church and sings spiritual Psalms. As midnight approaches and the church bells ring, a statue of the infant Christ is placed in the manger to symbolize birth and the Mass begins. Celebratory songs are sung and everyone is joyous in the holiday that has now begun.

The next morning instead of waking up and rushing to open presents, my family once again returns to church. We still give each other gifts, but the tradition is much different. About a week before Christmas, we gather up in the car and drive to the local dollar store. We all scatter and find the most perfect gifts we can for one another; each person picks out one present per family member. On Christmas Eve night, we open our gifts and laugh together as some people open packages of electrical tape or a loofah. It’s never about the quality of the gift; it’s simply about being together. The Christmas celebration continues until the Epiphany, which can be celebrated as the day the three Magi visited Christ. During Epiphany, we mark our doors in chalk as a blessing and walk around our home burning incense, sprinkling holy water and saying prayers. The date of Easter is officially announced at church and we begin to spiritually prepare for the next season. These are the Christmas memories and traditions I hold dear to my heart and that I celebrate with my community. Not everyone has to celebrate Santa or go shopping to have Christmas cheer. For some, like me, a spiritual celebration is more of a gift than anything wrapped under the tree.
Charles Dickens called it a “ghostly little book,” and that wasn’t far from the truth. The famous spirits in *A Christmas Carol* helped to serve the messages of the novella and have become a major part of our modern interpretations of the tale. The four ghosts have undergone various interpretations as the story has been produced for stage, film and television. Although the spirits of Jacob Marley and the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Christmas Yet to Come might appear differently dozens of times, their message and purpose remain the same. Charles Dickens was not the first writer or storyteller to make use of a ghostly presence, either. He most likely was influenced by centuries of earlier English storytellers. Shakespeare’s powerful ghosts and spirits come to mind—Hamlet’s Ghost and The Tempest’s Ariel, among others, served as intervening forces in the lives of the mortals in his plays. And it wasn’t just Shakespeare! Ghosts and spirits have been used in storytelling in Western and Eastern cultures for hundreds of years. They can be found in everything from American folk tales to ancient Asian and European religious texts. Why are they a part of so many cultures, and what could their purpose be?

When you think of many ancient American, African or Asian indigenous cultures, you might think of a “witch doctor” or “medicine man.” They are shaman, spiritual healers thought to be able to travel between the physical and spiritual worlds. They heal by maintaining the balance between those two worlds. It is in part because of these powerful social figures—calling on their connection to the ancestors to rid a patient of illness or negative energy—that many of these cultures have such a close connection to ghosts and spirits.

Christianity takes a different stance on these beliefs; Catholic and Protestant priests are thought to have communication with the spiritual world, and Christians believe Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and others all share a profound reverence for the dead, placing a great importance on the role of ancestors and the soul.

As such, ghosts can be connected to the concept of an afterlife. This is, however, not the only way in which ghosts appear. Many Native American and Southeast Asian folk stories, for instance, use ghosts as benevolent or malicious nonhuman forces. Spirits also can be manifestations of an environment, such as a forest spirit, as well as the immortal form of ancestors who have died recently or long ago. Some are spirits of those who have passed away, but others, as they’re found in belief systems and folk religions, are special beings who existed before humans and will exist after them. They serve a similar purpose to Dickens’ Christmas ghosts: they know more than mere humans and can do things that humans cannot. Although you can look into just about any religion and find evil spirits who are sent to harm and harass humankind, there are many who serve as guardians. And the idea of the guardian spirit isn’t just confined to worshippers in Bali or India: No doubt you’ve watched a holiday film or a TV episode that features a character’s guardian angel.

But the ghost stories told around a campfire are the stories of people who died of sad or mysterious
circumstances with unfinished business, and they horrify the living. They serve another purpose as well. Think of Scrooge’s first reaction to the ghost of Jacob Marley or his visit with the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. Ghosts remind Scrooge that we don’t live forever. We might see them as a reminder of death or a representation of the unknown. They might be strange and we don’t necessarily understand who they are or what they want. Regardless of their purpose, they can be frightening because of one question that might plague him: How can something exist that is no longer living?

Ghosts are frequently used as warnings. Parents might tell a ghost story about a haunted forest or an old haunted house, in an effort to scare children away from that place. Native Americans craft ghost stories about swamps to prevent people from wandering into them and drowning. Colonial Americans, well aware of the dangers of the new American wilderness, used folklore to scare their children and friends away from the “haunted” woods.

Ghosts and spirits are supernatural. They don’t follow the rules of what we think of as the natural world. They have powers; they do not die. Ghosts and spirits, whether human, angel, demon or something else, all have one thing in common: They are our attempt to find ways to explain the unexplainable, whether it be why nature behaves the way it does or what happens to people after death. For many living in modern society, this is the stuff of myth and legend. For others, ghosts are as real as any human being. Dickens used them as sentient metaphors to explore a person’s past, present and future, as well as to look at why society behaves the way it does. He wanted these spirits to allow people to look at their actions and the world around them from an outside view. What do your ghosts do for you?

Haunted Chicago

Halloween has passed, but Chicago is still full of ghost stories. It is a city of the Great Fire, of theater fires, of mobsters and gangs, and of colonial battles with American Indians. Many consider it to be the most haunted city in the Midwest. Think about places around Chicago that are spoken of as haunted. Maybe you have heard stories about these places. Choose one and do some further research. Why do you think this place might be seen as haunted? Who believes it, and is there proper evidence one way or the other? Do you believe in ghosts? Finally, can you think of any other Christmas ghost stories? What about ghost stories around other holidays?
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 in American culture and media, 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 complex and layered process, but certain events are landmarks of this Christmas transformation.

One might assume that Christmas has always been a celebration that has taken place in the U.S., but this 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 100 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’ horses to enjoy and he would leave presents (mainly some kind of candy) in the shoes in return. Sinterklaas also was said to have a group of playful helpers. When Christianity reached the Netherlands, Sinterklaas’ 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 who 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 were much more fantastical. When Santa first reached the U.S., his image was that of a thin, normal-looking man. Images of Saint Nicolas were of a statuesque bishop, who didn’t always wear a red robe. Our modern image of Santa came to be the same way that 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 forever. While working on a marketing campaign for Coca-Cola, Haddon Sundblom would create the image of Santa Claus we know today. The friendly, plump and jolly face was seen enjoying a Coke and wearing a red coat with white trim (Coca-Cola’s trademark colors). Coke sales skyrocketed 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, named New Amsterdam when it was first settled by the Dutch, was a hub of Dutch traditions, folklore and Sinterklaas, the model for the modern Santa Claus. Big stores such as Gimbel began having Santa characters take present requests from eager children as their parents shopped. Santa became the grand finale in the Macy’s Christmas Day parade. The Yule log, Christmas tree and mistletoe became 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 staples of the season. 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. Now, 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 market coercion, many are proud to celebrate.
Theatre Etiquette
With Santa Claus

What should I wear?

Definitely dress nicely but comfortably; try business casual. No tank tops, ripped jeans, etc. Baseball caps or hats must be moved once you enter the theatre. The Goodman is air-conditioned so be sure to bring an extra sweater or dress warmly.

What should I bring?

Only what you really need. Electronic devices such as PSP, Nintendo DS, smart phones, and laser pointers are not permitted during the show. If it makes noise or is distracting, please refrain from having it out in the theatre. A purse, bag, or backpack is fine. School supplies are not necessary. Remember that you are here to sit back, watch and enjoy, so don’t bring anything you don’t need.

(Please remember):

No smoking, and no eating or drinking while inside the theatre.

What if I need to leave the theatre during the show?

Only if it is an emergency. Otherwise, it’s very disrespectful. Make sure to use restrooms before the show, or wait until intermission.

Have respect for other audience members. This means no talking during the performance, no feet on seats, and no kicking. (For your safety and others’!)
How should I respond to what’s going on on the stage?

Honestly but appropriately. If you find something funny, then laugh—but don’t laugh for five minutes straight or laugh so hard that you need to leave the theatre. Theatre is very different from watching a movie at home. Always remember that you are in a room full of people who are there to watch the performance. They can hear your responses just as well as you can hear theirs. Most important, the actors can hear and see you. They will appreciate any appropriate feed back but might be extremely offended if it is inappropriate. Whether you enjoy the play or not, you owe respect to the actors for having given it a try.

What to do during Intermission:

Most plays have a 15 minute intermission. This gives you time to stretch your legs, walk, use the restroom, get water and discuss the play with your friends.

We do ask that if you are sitting on the main floor that you remain downstairs and if you are sitting in the mezzanine that you remain upstairs. There are restrooms on both floors. When intermission is over, the lights in the lobby will flash several times; that is your cue to get back to your seat because the performance is about to begin!

What to do after the show:

There will be a post-show discussion immediately following the performance. Members of the cast will come out on stage and answer your questions. Feel free to ask anything that’s on your mind about the show, but please remember to be respectful.

What to do before the show:

When your class arrives, your teacher will let the Education staff know how many people are in your group. It is a good idea to arrive at least 15-20 minutes before the performance. If you are late, often you will not be allowed to enter the show until after intermission. Once your group is called, an usher will lead you to your seats and hand you a program.

Please promptly sit where you have been assigned. Remember that the show needs to begin on time and everyone needs to be seated.

And remember the Golden Rule of Theatre-going:

Theatre artists are paid professionals. When you enter a theatre, you are entering their work space. Respect their work as you would have them respect yours.

Enjoy the Show!
As a patron of the theatre, it is important to know how to read your ticket and find your seat. Generally, seats for all performances in the Goodman’s Albert Theatre are assigned seating, so be sure to know how to be able to find your seat. When you come with your school, you will be ushered to a section where you and your fellow students can sit and enjoy the play together.

Below is a seating chart—a map of all the seats in the Albert Theater—and an explanation of how to read your ticket. If you have any problems, ask an usher for help. They’re here for you!

**Goodman’s Albert Theatre**
After you have seen the show and discussed your responses in the classroom, it's time to let us know what you thought! Your response letter plays an important role at Goodman Theatre. All of the letters we receive are forwarded to our artists, and you may get a response!

Pick one of the artists involved with A Christmas Carol whose work was particularly memorable to you—an actor, designer, the playwright or the director—and write that artist a letter describing your experience at the show and your feedback about his or her work. Be honest and ask any questions that are on your mind.

Send us your letter within one month of seeing the show, and we'll forward it on to that artist!

Important information to include:

• Your name, age and school
• Your mailing address (where a response may be sent)

Here is a great student letter we received in response to Animal Crackers:

Dear Cast and Crew,

I would have to say that every single one of you have done a superb job in this play. All the effort you have put forth into this play has resulted in a memorable experience for all of us. I thought it was clever that the actors, actresses and the orchestra interacted with the audience. From viewing the original film of Animal Crackers, I think the cast played in the play and the original cast of Animal Crackers very similar! This play might have been the first encounter of the Marx brothers for many teenagers and children and I believe that the crew and cast of Animal Crackers proved that early comedy can also be entertaining and memorable!

The director’s vision of the play was a rather conscious one. Exposing the Marx brothers to the vast majority of people who never knew about them and bringing back nostalgic memories to the older audience was a great idea. This play was actually my first play and a first trip to Goodman Theatre. I myself, as a young adult, finally realized that plays are enjoyable and gratifying. The play had all the elements of emotion and slapstick comedy which made it a great one. The technical aspects as well as the props were amazingly set to follow each scene. My favorite scene had to be the scene where Harpo and Rivelli tried to clear up the misunderstanding of “The Flash.” I though the script was very flowing and comfortable. Was there any improv involved? I did not find any negative aspects of this play. I have found the play and the ambiance of Goodman Theatre very positive. I give Animal Crackers two thumbs up.

Sincerely,
A CPS student

Send your letters to:
Education and Community Engagement
Goodman Theatre
170 North Dearborn Street
Chicago, IL 60601
Or email us at: education@goodmantheatre.org

Goodman Theatre Education & Community Engagement is also online! Check us out on Facebook:
http://www.facebook.com/goodmaned
Or Twitter:
http://twitter.com/GoodmanEd
Or on our blog at:
http://education.goodmantheatre.org/blog/

We love hearing your thoughts, so don’t be afraid to drop us a line, comment, tag us in a note, @reply, or retweet us. Also check out our online educational resources for more information regarding the play you’ve seen, or anything else you’d like to know about how our programs (and theatre) work!

Keep checking in for updates online!