

# HUMBUG!

## A Musical “Christmas Carol”

Based on the words of Charles Dickens,  
the songs of Gilbert and Sullivan and Traditional Carols

by

Fraser Charlton

### Dramatis Personae

Narrator.....	SPEAKING
Scrooge.....	BARITONE
Bob Cratchit.....	NON-SINGING
Fred.....	TENOR
Bess.....	SOPRANO
Mr. Hope.....	BARITONE
Mrs. Charity.....	CONTRALTO
Jacob Marley.....	BASS
Ghost of Christmas Past.....	SOPRANO
Mr Fezziwig.....	BASS
Belle.....	SOPRANO
Young Scrooge.....	TENOR
Ghost of Christmas Present.....	BARITONE
Mrs Cratchit.....	CONTRALTO
Peter Cratchit.....	SPEAKING
Belinda Cratchit.....	SPEAKING
Martha.....	SPEAKING
Tiny Tim.....	SPEAKING
Clara.....	CONTRALTO
Topper.....	BARITONE
Ignorance ( <i>boy</i> ).....	SILENT
Want ( <i>girl</i> ).....	SILENT
Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come.....	SILENT
Joe.....	BARITONE
Mrs. Dilber.....	CONTRALTO
Boy in Street.....	SPEAKING

*These 24 parts need not be played by 24 principals! Obvious multiple parts which could be played by the same actor include Ghost of Christmas Present & Fezziwig, Hope & Joe, Charity & Mrs Dilber, Fred & Young Scrooge, Bess & Belle, and Peter & Boy in Street.*

## *Humbug!*

### **Act I**

*The Chorus enters dressed as Victorian Carol Singers, perhaps with lanterns and their music in books. You may wish them to enter through the audience. When not singing, they retreat to the sides of the performing space, sitting if possible (and extinguishing their lanterns!). The narrator should be to one side of the stage, and may be standing at a lectern or sitting in an armchair with a glass of Madeira. If male, he might dress as Charles Dickens, recalling the author's wildly successful readings of the story. There is a reasonable amount of narration, so it should be someone with a good voice and presence.*

#### **Song 1: Chorus**

*Music: Traditional*

God rest ye merry, gentlemen  
Let nothing you dismay  
Remember, Christ, our Saviour  
Was born on Christmas day  
To save us all from Satan's power  
When we were gone astray  
O tidings of comfort and joy,  
Comfort and joy  
O tidings of comfort and joy  
From God our Heavenly Father  
A blessed Angel came;  
And unto certain Shepherds  
Brought tidings of the same:  
How that in Bethlehem was born  
The Son of God by Name.  
O tidings of comfort and joy,  
Comfort and joy  
O tidings of comfort and joy  
Now to the Lord sing praises,  
All you within this place,  
And with true love and brotherhood  
Each other now embrace;  
This holy tide of Christmas  
All other doth deface.  
O tidings of comfort and joy,  
Comfort and joy  
O tidings of comfort and joy

#### **Narrator**

Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it. (*Enter SCROOGE, who sits at his desk. The scene is his counting house. BOB sits at another desk*) Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, and sole mourner. Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster.

#### **Song 2: Scrooge.**

*Music: 'A pattern to professors', The Grand Duke*

A pattern to professors on all matters of economy,  
I don't indulge in levity or compromising *bonhomie*,  
But dignified formality and monet'ry autonomy,  
Above all other virtues I particularly prize.

## *Humbug!*

I never join in merriment – I don't see joke or jape any –  
I never tolerate familiarity in shape any –  
This, joined with an extravagant respect for tuppence-ha'penny,  
A keynote to my character sufficiently supplies.

*(Speaking.)* Observe. My breakfast!

*He produces an extremely meagre breakfast – e.g. he takes out his wallet and removes a slice of ham, which he elaborately consumes on a plate, licking it clean.*

That incident a keynote to my character supplies.

I weigh out tea and sugar with precision mathematical –  
A single biscuit to each guest - my orders are emphatical  
Extravagance unpardonable, any more than that I call -  
You'll end up in the poor house if you pander to excess.  
For profit is the goal of life, I state with all humility -  
Precision is my passion and accounting my facility:  
Equity or revenue, expense or liability!

And if you wish to know the means I measure my success:

*(Speaking.)* Observe. My cash box.

*He produces a cash box and counts the money with increasing delight.*

They glisten and they're golden and they measure my success!

**Narrator** Once upon a time - of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve - old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather: foggy withal. The door of Scrooge's office was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, Bob Cratchit, who was copying letters and trying to warm himself at a candle.

*Enter FRED and BESS.*

**Fred** A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!

**Narrator** It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him, accompanied by his wife, so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

**Scrooge** Bah! Humbug!

**Fred** Christmas a humbug, uncle? You don't mean that, I am sure.

**Scrooge** I do. Merry Christmas! What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

**Bess** What right have you to be dismal? You're rich enough.

**Scrooge** Bah! Humbug. What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money and a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer? If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with Merry Christmas on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart! Much good Christmas has ever done you!

**Fred** There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited. I have always thought of Christmas time as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!

*BOB applauds. Becoming immediately sensible of the impropriety, he pokes the fire.*

**Scrooge** (To BOB) Let me hear another sound from you, and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation.

**Bess** Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us to-morrow.

**Scrooge** I'll see you in Hell first!

**Fred** I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute, but I'll keep my Christmas humour to the last. So A Merry Christmas, uncle!

**Scrooge** Good afternoon!

**Bess** And A Happy New Year!

**Scrooge** Good afternoon!

*FRED and BESS leave the counting house and sing the following song in the street outside.*

## *Humbug!*

### **Song 3: Duet – Fred & Bess**

*Music: 'On a tree by a river a little tom-tit', The Mikado*

**FRED** There once was a man, and his favourite phrase  
**BESS** Was "Humbug, bah, humbug, bah, humbug!"  
**FRED** From the morn to the night, to the end of his days  
**BESS** Always "Humbug, bah, humbug, bah, humbug!"  
**FRED** To the sick, to the healthy, the old or the young  
No distinction of class was observed by his tongue:  
Simply ask his opinion, - the trap will be sprung  
You'll hear "Humbug, bah, humbug, bah, humbug!"  
**BESS** When this man was a toddler, the first thing he said  
**FRED** Was "Humbug, bah, humbug, bah, humbug!"  
**BESS** If naughty and smacked, not a tear did he shed  
**FRED** He'd say "Humbug, bah, humbug, bah, humbug!"  
**BESS** When at school, he was always the king of debate:  
Whatever the subject, he'd rise to the bait,  
With a sigh and a shake of his head, he would state:  
**FRED** It's "Humbug, bah, humbug, bah, humbug!"  
**FRED** But of all of the times that you'll hear him declare:  
**BESS** "Humbug, bah, humbug, bah, humbug!"  
**FRED** It is Christmas that fills him with greatest despair  
**BESS** All is "Humbug, bah, humbug, bah, humbug!"  
**FRED** You may give him the finest gift you could conceive  
You may sing him a carol on Christmas Eve  
You may ask for a handshake, but all you'll receive  
**BESS** Is "Humbug, bah, humbug, bah, humbug!"

*Exit FRED and BESS. Enter MR HOPE & MRS CHARITY, charity collectors.*

**Narrator** Scrooge's clerk, Bob Cratchit, in letting Scrooge's visitors out, had let two other people in. They were kindly persons, pleasant to behold, and now stood in Scrooge's office. They had books and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.

**Hope** Good afternoon! At this festive season of the year, Mr Scrooge, it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute - hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.

**Scrooge** Are there no prisons?

**Charity** Plenty of prisons.

**Scrooge** And the workhouses? Are they still in operation?

**Hope** They are. I wish I could say they were not.

**Scrooge** Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course. I'm very glad to hear it.

**Charity** A few of us are endeavouring to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. What shall I put you down for?

**Scrooge** Nothing!

**Hope** You wish to be anonymous?

**Scrooge** I wish to be left alone. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned: they cost enough: and those who are badly off must go there.

**Charity** Many can't go there; and many would rather die.

**Scrooge** If they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Good afternoon!

### **Song 4: Trio – Scrooge, Hope & Charity**

*Music: 'There's no one by', Haddon Hall*

**HOPE** To what you state we make reply –  
**CHARITY** We know just what your views imply –  
**BOTH** So let us plainly say –

## *Humbug!*

**HOPE** If you could make the world anew, —  
**CHARITY** All pleasures you would bid adieu  
**BOTH** If you but had your way!  
**HOPE** Like Joshua, you'd stop the sun —  
**CHARITY** The thing is very simply done —  
**BOTH** If you but had your way!  
**HOPE** You'd put an end to heat and light —  
**CHARITY** And bring about eternal night —  
**BOTH** If you but had your way!  
**HOPE** You'd supervise the plants and flowers —  
**CHARITY** Prescribe them early closing hours —  
**BOTH** If you but had your way!  
**HOPE** You would forbid the rose to smell —  
**CHARITY** You'd re-instate the curfew bell —  
**BOTH** If you but had your way!  
**HOPE** No man, in influenza's throes,  
**CHARITY** Should be allowed to blow his nose —  
**BOTH** If you but had your way!  
**HOPE** No cock should crow, no bird should sing, —  
**CHARITY** Nobody should do anything —  
**HOPE** Without your license, sealed and signed: —  
**CHARITY** For you would dominate mankind —  
**BOTH** If you but had your way!

**SCROOGE** I was not, through some freak of earth,  
Consulted at the planet's birth —  
Though I'd a lot to say!  
Had I been on creation's scene,  
A great improvement there'd have been —  
If I'd but had my way.  
But somehow I was clean forgot,  
That's why you make things piping hot —  
And you the piper pay.  
You'd tax me up and tax me down,  
You'd tax the country, tax the town, —  
If you but had your way.  
You'd tax me hip, and tax me thigh, —  
And send the rate-book through the sky, —  
And cry, hurray, hurray!  
And what becomes of industry,  
Upon whose shoulders this must be,  
You neither know nor care!  
I only know, as sure as shot —  
Who pays his way and bears his lot —  
A lot will have to bear.  
I only know, your lack of sense  
Is inconceivably immense!  
And now, I hope, you plainly see  
That you are bigger fools than me —  
Now get upon your way!

*Exit HOPE & CHARITY, bustled out by SCROOGE.*

**Narrator** Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the good persons withdrew. Scrooge resumed his labours with an improved opinion of himself until, at length, the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived.

**Scrooge** You'll want all day off tomorrow, I suppose?

**Bob** If quite convenient, Sir.

**Scrooge** It's not convenient, and it's not fair. Don't you think me ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work?

**Bob** It is only once a year.

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- Scrooge** A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December! Be here all the earlier next morning!
- Bob** I promise I will, sir.
- Narrator** The office was closed in a twinkling, and the clerk ran home to Camden Town as hard as he could pelt, to play at blindman's buff. Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; and went home to his gloomy suite of rooms.

### **Song 5: In the bleak midwinter – Chorus**

*Music: Holst – specifically NOT Darke!*

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,  
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;  
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,  
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.  
Our God, Heav'n cannot hold Him, nor earth sustain;  
Heaven and earth shall flee away when He comes to reign.  
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed  
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.  
What can I give Him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;  
Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.

*During this chorus, Scrooge has his lonely dinner, and then makes his way home through the cold, lonely streets.*

- Narrator** Scrooge soon reached his front door. Now, it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large, and yet Scrooge saw not a knocker, but Marley's face. (*This could be mimed, or done using special effects.*) It had a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar and, though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless. As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again.
- Scrooge** Bah, humbug!
- Narrator** He closed his door, and locked himself in. He put on his dressing-gown and slippers, and his night-cap; and sat down before the fire to take his gruel. His glance happened to rest upon a bell that hung in the room. As he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing (*FX: bells ring*). It soon rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house, succeeded by a clanking noise, deep down below, coming up the stairs, straight towards his door.
- Scrooge** It's humbug still! I won't believe it.
- Narrator** His colour changed though, when, without a pause, it came on through the heavy door, and passed into the room before his eyes. Upon its coming in, the dying flame leaped up, as though it cried, "I know him! Marley's Ghost!".

*Enter MARLEY.*

### **Song 6a: Marley & Scrooge**

*Music: 'Beware!', Ruddigore*

- MARLEY** Beware! beware! beware!
- SCROOGE** Gaunt vision, who art thou  
That thus, with icy glare  
And stern relentless brow,  
Appearest, who knows how?
- MARLEY** Here you see the shade  
Of the former Jacob Marley  
Before my time has come to fade  
I come to you to parley!
- SCROOGE** Alas, poor ghost!
- MARLEY** The pity you  
Express for nothing goes:

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We spectres are a jollier crew  
Than you, perhaps, suppose!

**CHORUS** We spectres are a jollier crew  
Than you, perhaps, suppose!

### **Song 6b: Marley.**

**MARLEY** When the night wind howls in the chimney cowl, and the bat in the moonlight flies,  
And inky clouds, like funeral shrouds, sail over the midnight skies-  
When the footpads quail at the night-bird's wail, and black dogs bay at the moon,  
Then is the spectres' holiday-then is the ghosts' high-noon!

**CHORUS** Ha! ha!  
Then is the ghosts' high-noon!

As the sob of the breeze sweeps over the trees, and the mists lie low on the fen,  
From grey tomb-stones are gathered the bones that once were women and men,  
And away they go, with a mop and a mow, to the revel that ends too soon,  
For cockcrow limits our holiday-the dead of the night's high-noon!

**CHORUS** Ha! ha!  
The dead of the night's high-noon!

And then each ghost with his ladye-toast to their churchyard beds takes flight,  
With a kiss, perhaps, on her lantern chaps, and a grisly grim "good-night";  
Till the welcome knell of the midnight bell rings forth its jolliest tune,  
And ushers in our next high holiday-the dead of the night's high-noon!

**CHORUS** Ha! ha!  
The dead of the night's high-noon!  
Ha! ha! ha! ha!

*SCROOGE and MARLEY sit.*

**Scrooge** Who are you?

**Marley** In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.

**Scrooge** I don't believe in you.

**Marley** Why do you doubt your senses?

**Scrooge** Because a little thing affects them. You may be an undigested bit of beef or a blot of mustard. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are! (*MARLEY cries out and shakes his chains. SCROOGE falls on his knees.*) Mercy! Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?

**Marley** It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is doomed to wander through the world and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!

**Scrooge** You are fettered. Tell me why?

**Marley** I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you? Or would you know the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It is a ponderous chain!

**Scrooge** Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob.

**Marley** I have none to give. A very little more, is all permitted to me. I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. You will be haunted by Three Spirits.

**Scrooge** I - I think I'd rather not.

**Marley** Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first to-morrow, when the bell tolls one. Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ceased to vibrate. For your own sake, you remember what has passed between us.

**Narrator** The apparition walked backward from him towards the window, and floated out upon the bleak, dark night. Scrooge closed the window. Being much in need of repose, he went straight to bed, without undressing, and fell asleep upon the instant. When he awoke, it was so dark, that looking out of bed, he could scarcely distinguish the

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transparent window from the opaque walls of his chamber. Suddenly the church clock struck a deep, dull, hollow, melancholy ONE (*FX: Single bell chime*). Light flashed up in the room upon the instant, and the curtains of his bed were drawn aside by a strange figure....

*Enter GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST (hereafter, GHOST PAST). She is described by Dickens thus: "It was a strange figure-like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man. It wore a tunic of the purest white; and round its waist was bound a lustrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand and, its dress was trimmed with summer flowers."*

### **Song 7: Chorus**

*Music: 'Iolanthe!', Iolanthe*

#### **CHORUS**

Ebenezer!  
From thy fitful slumber thou art summoned!  
Come to our call-  
Come, come, Ebenezer!  
Ebenezer! Ebenezer!

#### **ALL**

Come to our call, Ebenezer!  
Ebenezer, come!

**Scrooge** Are you the Spirit whose coming was foretold to me?

**Ghost Past** I am!

**Scrooge** Who, and what are you?

**Ghost Past** I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

**Scrooge** Long past?

**Ghost Past** No. Your past. The things you will see are but shadows of the things that have been; they shall have no consciousness of us.

**Scrooge** May I then make bold to enquire what business brings you here?

**Ghost Past** Your welfare! Rise and walk with me! (*SCROOGE holds back, but eventually follows her towards the window during the song.*)

### **Song 8: Come away cries the fairy voice**

*Music: "Come away," sighs the Fairy Voice', The Emerald Isle*

**GHOST PAST** Come away, come and walk with me  
Come and share your Christmas Memories  
Again you'll hear, you'll smell, you'll taste, you'll see,  
Come, come away!

**GIRLS** "Come away, come and walk with me,  
"Come away! Come away!"

**MEN** Come and share your Christmas Memories!

**ALL** Come away, come and walk with me, etc.

**Narrator** As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and were now in the busy thoroughfares of a city. It was made plain enough, by the dressing of the shops, that here too it was Christmas time again. The Ghost stopped at a certain warehouse door and went in, to find an old gentleman in a Welch wig, sitting behind a high desk. (*This is FEZZIWIG, who has now entered, surrounded by CHORUS who are his employees.*)

**Ghost Past** Do you know this place?

**Scrooge** Know it! I apprenticed here! That's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it's Fezziwig alive again!

**Fezziwig.** (*Lays down pen and looks at clock*) No more work to-night. It's Christmas Eve! Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here! (*The CHORUS get busy!*)

**Narrator** Clear away! There was nothing they wouldn't have cleared away, or couldn't have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking on. It was done in a minute. Every movable was packed off, as if it were dismissed from public life for evermore; the floor was swept and watered, the lamps were trimmed, fuel was heaped upon the fire; and the



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warehouse was as snug, and warm, and dry, and bright a ball-room, as you would desire to see upon a winter's night. In came a fiddler with a music-book and in came all the young men and women employed in the business. There were dances, and there were forfeits, and more dances, and there was cake, and there was negus, and there was a great piece of Cold Roast, and there were mince-pies, and plenty of beer.

### **Song 9a: Chorus**

*Music: 'Now to the banquet we press', The Sorcerer*

Now to the party we press;  
Now for the punch and the pies;  
Now for the mustard and cress,  
Now for the fish and the fries!  
Now for the beer of our host,  
Now for the rollicking bun,  
Now for the boiled and the roast,  
Now for the frolics and fun!  
**WOMEN** The punch and the pies, the fish and the fries!  
**MEN** The rollicking bun, and the frolics and fun!  
The rollicking, rollicking bun!

### **Song 9b: Fezziwig**

*Music - "Be happy all", The Sorcerer*

**FEZZIWIG** Be happy all - the feast is spread before ye;  
Fear nothing, but enjoy yourselves, I pray!  
Eat, aye, and drink - be merry, I implore ye,  
For once let thoughtless Folly rule the day.  
Eat, drink and be gay,  
Banish all worry and sorrow,  
Laugh gaily today,  
Weep, if you're sorry, tomorrow!  
Toil, sorrow, and plot,  
Fly away quicker and quicker -  
Come, drink up the lot -  
There's nothing to pay for this liquor!  
**CHORUS** We're as happy can be  
When drinking good wine that is free,  
Ha! Ha!  
When drinking good wine that's free!  
**FEZZIWIG** Pain, trouble, and care,  
Misery, heart-ache, and worry,  
Quick, out of your lair!  
Get you all gone in a hurry!  
Drain the bottomless cup -  
Shun what the Puritans tell us -  
Come, drink it all up -  
There's plenty more left in my cellars!  
**CHORUS** We're as happy can be  
When drinking good wine that is free,  
Ha! Ha!  
When drinking good wine that's free!

**Ghost Past** A small matter, to make these silly folks so full of gratitude. He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four perhaps.

**Scrooge** It isn't that, Spirit. The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune. I-I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now!

**Ghost Past** My time grows short, Quick!

**Narrator** The Spirit took Scrooge to a drawing room, where he saw again himself. (*Enter YOUNG SCROOGE and BELLE.*) His face had not the harsh and rigid lines of later years; but it had begun to wear the signs of care and avarice. There was an eager,

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greedy, restless motion in the eye, which showed the passion that had taken root, and where the shadow of the growing tree would fall. He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young girl: in whose eyes there were tears.

**Belle** It matters little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve.

**Young Scr'ge** What Idol has displaced you?

**Belle** A golden one.

**Young Scr'ge** This is the even-handed dealing of the world! There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!

**Belle** You fear the world too much. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you. Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and content to be so. You are changed. When it was made, you were another man.

**Young Scr'ge** I am not changed towards you. Have I ever sought release from our engagement?

**Belle** In words, no. Never.

**Young Scr'ge** In what, then?

**Belle** In a changed nature; in an altered spirit; in everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight. But if you were free to-day, to-morrow, can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl; or, choosing her, do I not know that your repentance and regret would surely follow? I do; and I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!

### **Song 10: DUET – BELLE & YOUNG SCROOGE**

*Music: 'There was a time', The Gondoliers*

**BELLE** There was a time-  
A time for ever gone-ah, woe is me!  
It was no crime  
To love but thee alone-ah, woe is me!  
One heart, one life, one soul,  
One aim, one goal-  
Each in the other's thrall,  
Each all in all, ah, woe is me!

**BOTH** Oh, bury, bury-let the grave close o'er  
The days that were-that never will be more!  
Oh, bury, bury love that all condemn,  
And let the whirlwind mourn its requiem!

**BELLE** Dead as the last year's leaves-  
As gathered flowers-ah, woe is me!  
Dead as the garnered sheaves,  
That love of ours-ah, woe is me!  
Born but to fade and die  
When hope was high,  
Dead and as far away  
As yesterday!-ah, woe is me!

**BOTH** Oh, bury, bury-let the grave close o'er, etc.

*Enter FEZZIWIG.*

**Fezziwig** Ah! Here are the young lovers! Come and join us in a last carol before we retire for the night! (*To others*) What d'ye say? 'Ding Dong Merrily'? Then it shall be!

*CHORUS surround them and start singing. YOUNG SCROOGE and BELLE join in with little animation, not touching or catching each other's eye.*

## *Humbug!*

### **Song 11: Chorus**

*Music: Traditional*

*Note: 4 verses are played, but only 3 verses are sung fully – for the final verse, dialogue is spoken until the final ‘Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis’ is sung’*

Ding dong merrily on high,  
In heav'n the bells are ringing:  
Ding dong! verily the sky  
Is riv'n with angel singing.  
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

E'en so here below, below,  
Let steeple bells be swungen,  
And "Io, io, io!"  
By priest and people sungen.  
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

Pray you, dutifully prime  
Your matin chime, ye ringers;  
May you beautifully rime  
Your evetime song, ye singers.  
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

*Belle reaches for Young Scrooge, but he turns away; Belle exits, leaving Young Scrooge alone with his older self and the Spirit. The following dialogue is said over the music for the 4<sup>th</sup> verse, the chorus remaining silent until the last line.*

**Scrooge** (Over music) Spirit! Show me no more! Remove me from this place!

**Narrator** (Over music) Scrooge was conscious of being exhausted, and overcome by an irresistible drowsiness; and, further, of being in his own bedroom. He had barely time to reel to bed, before he sank into a heavy sleep.

**CHORUS** (*Singing*) Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

## ***End of Act I***

## *Humbug!*

### **ACT II**

*As at the opening of the first Act, The CHORUS enter singing and surround SCROOGE, who is in bed, asleep.*

#### **Song 12: Chorus**

*Music: Traditional via Arthur Sullivan*

It came upon the midnight clear,  
That glorious song of old,  
From angels bending near the earth,  
To touch their harps of gold:  
"Peace on the earth, goodwill to men  
From heavens all gracious King!"  
The world in solemn stillness lay  
To hear the angels sing.  
Still through the cloven skies they come,  
With peaceful wings unfurled;  
And still their heavenly music floats  
O'er all the weary world:  
Above its sad and lowly plains  
They bend on hovering wing,  
And ever o'er its Babel sounds  
The blessed angels sing.  
For lo! the days are hastening on,  
By prophets bards fore-told,  
When, with the ever-circling years  
Comes round the age of gold;  
When peace shall over all the earth  
Its ancient splendours fling,  
And the whole world give back the song  
Which now the angels sing.

**Narrator** *(A bell strikes once)* Awaking in the middle of a prodigiously tough snore, and sitting up in bed to get his thoughts together, Scrooge found himself in his own bedroom. There was no doubt about that. But it and his own adjoining sitting room, into which he now shuffled in his slippers, had undergone a surprising transformation...

#### **Song 13: Chorus**

*Music: 'Iolanthe!', Iolanthe*

**CHORUS**

Ebenezer!  
From thy fitful slumber thou art summoned!  
Come to our call-  
Come, come, Ebenezer!  
Ebenezer! Ebenezer!

**ALL**

Come to our call, Ebenezer!  
Ebenezer, come!

**Narrator** A great light was there, and the walls and ceiling were so hung with living green, that it looked a perfect grove. Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see: who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn, and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door. *(Enter THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT)*

## *Humbug!*

### **Song 14: GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT and CHORUS.**

*Music: 'For the merriest fellows are we,' The Gondoliers*

For the merriest fellow am I, tra la,  
Who flies in the Christmas sky, tra la;  
With loving and laughing,  
And quipping and quaffing,  
I'm jolly till morning is nigh, tra la-  
With loving and laughing, etc.

With sorrow I've nothing to do, tra la,  
And care is a thing to pooh-pooh, tra la;  
Come fill up your glasses,  
Ye lads and ye lasses,  
And drink to the old and the new, tra la-  
Come fill up your glasses, etc.

**Ghost Pres** Come in! Come in. and know me better, man! I am the Ghost of Christmas Present, look upon me!

**Scrooge** Spirit, conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. Tonight, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.

**Ghost Pres** Touch my robe!

**Narrator** The room and its contents vanished instantly, and they stood in the city streets upon a snowy Christmas morning. The poulterers' shops were still half open, and the fruiterers' were radiant in their glory. In the grocers', the blended scents of tea and coffee were so grateful to the nose, the raisins were so plentiful and rare, the almonds so extremely white, the candied fruits so caked and spotted with molten sugar as to make the coldest lookers-on feel faint and subsequently bilious. In fact, everything was good to eat and in its Christmas dress!

Perhaps it was his own kind, generous, hearty nature, and his sympathy with all poor men, that led the good Spirit straight to Scrooge's clerk's; for there he went, and took Scrooge with him, holding to his robe; and on the threshold of the door the Spirit smiled, and stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling with a sprinkling of his torch.

*The Cratchits' home. MRS CRATCHIT is cooking, when PETER and BELINDA burst in.*

**Peter** Mother! Mother! We've been outside the baker's!

**Belinda** We smelt the goose – and it was ours! We know it!

*They dance around the table singing 'Sage and Onion! Sage and Onion!'*

**Mrs Cratchit.** What has ever got your precious father then. And your brother, Tiny Tim! And Martha warn't as late last Christmas Day by half-an-hour!

### **Song 15: Mrs Cratchit and Children**

*Music: 'Now Harken to my Strict Command', Princess Ida*

**Mrs Cratchit** Now hearken to my strict command  
On every hand, on every hand—

**Chorus:** To your command,  
On every hand,  
We dutifully bow.

**Mrs Cratchit** When Martha, Tim and pa come here,  
Give 'em good cheer, give 'em good cheer.

**Chorus:** When they come here  
We'll give 'em a cheer,  
And we will show you how.  
Hip, hip, hurrah! hip, hip, hurrah!  
Hip, hip, hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!  
We'll shout and sing  
Let praises ring,  
And we'll curtsy and we'll bow !

## *Humbug!*

Then shout ha! ha! hip, hip, hurrah!  
Hip, hip, hip, hip, hurrah!  
Sing to Tiny Tim and his good papa,  
Hurrah, hurrah!

**Mrs Cratchit** But if they miss our Christmastime,  
They'll rue their crime, they'll rue their crime!

**Chorus:** They'll rue their crime,  
This Christmastime,  
As sure as quarter-day!

**Mrs Cratchit** If absent when the goose we carve  
We'll let them starve, we'll let them starve!

**Chorus:** The goose we'll carve  
And let them starve -  
And this is what we'll say:  
Hip, hip, hurrah! hip, hip, hurrah!  
Hip, hip, hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!  
We'll sing along  
Our Christmas song,  
In the old familiar way!  
We'll shout ha! ha! hip, hip, hurrah!  
Hip, hip, hip, hip, hurrah!  
Without Martha, Tim or our bad papa,  
Hurrah, hurrah!

**Belinda** Here's Martha, mother!

*Enter MARTHA.*

**Mrs Cratchit.** Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!

**Martha** We'd a deal of work to finish up last night and had to clear away this morning,  
mother!

**Mrs Cratchit.** Well! Never mind so long as you are come. Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and  
have a warm, Lord bless ye!

**Peter** There's father coming,

*Enter BOB and TINY TIM. They are greeted with great enthusiasm. PETER and BELINDA  
exit to the kitchen.*

**Mrs Cratchit.** And how did little Tim behave in church, Bob?

**Bob** As good as gold, and better. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw  
him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to  
remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see.

**Narrator** *(The following is acted out.)* At last, the dishes were set upon the table, and Master  
Peter and Belinda returned with the goose in high procession. Oh! There never was  
such a goose. Its tenderness and flavour, size and cheapness, were the themes of  
universal admiration. Eked out by apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a  
sufficient dinner for the whole family; yet every one had had enough, and the  
youngest Cratchits in particular, were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows! And  
then Mrs Cratchit entered: flushed, but smiling proudly: with the pudding, like a  
speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quarter of ignited  
brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top. Oh, a wonderful  
pudding! At last the dinner was all done, and all the Cratchit family drew round the  
hearth.

**Bob** A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!

**Tim** God bless us every one! *(During the following, the CRATCHITs continue their  
Christmas celebrations silently)*

**Scrooge** Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live.

**Ghost Pres** I see a vacant seat, in the poor chimney-corner, and a crutch without an owner,  
carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will  
die.

**Scrooge** Oh, no, kind Spirit! Say he will be spared.

## *Humbug!*

- Ghost Pres** What does it concern you? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.
- Bob** Mr Scrooge! I'll give you Mr Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!
- Mrs Cratchit.** The Founder of the Feast indeed! I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it. Still, I'll drink his health for your sake and the Day's, not for his. Long life to him. A merry Christmas and a happy new year! He'll be very merry and very happy, I'm sure!
- Narrator** They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being water-proof. But they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time; and when they faded, and looked happier yet in the bright sprinklings of the Spirit's torch at parting, Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny Tim, until the last. (*Exit the CRATCHIT family. Enter FRED, BESS, ELIZA and TOPPER, celebrating*) It was a great surprise to Scrooge, as the scene vanished, to hear a hearty laugh. It was a much greater surprise to recognize it as his own nephew's, and to find himself in a bright, dry, gleaming room, with the Spirit standing smiling by his side, and looking at Fred, his wife Bess, his sister Clara and his friend Topper with approving affability!
- Fred** Ha, ha! He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live! And he believed it too!
- Bess** More shame for him, Fred!
- Fred** He's a comical old fellow, that's the truth: and not so pleasant as he might be. But who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence? He loses a very good dinner, that's what!
- Narrator** After tea, they had some music. For they were a musical family, and knew what they were about, when they sung a Glee or Catch, I can assure you: especially Topper, who could growl away in the bass like a good one.

### **Song 16: MADRIGAL**

*Music: 'When the budding bloom of May', Haddon Hall*

- TOPPER** When the budding bloom of May  
Paints the hedgerows red and white,  
Gather then your garlands gay;  
Earth was made for man's delight!
- CLARA** May is playtime —  
**BESS** June is hay time —  
**FRED** Seize the day time —  
**TRIO** Fa la la!
- Carol now the birds of spring!  
Let our hearts in chorus sing!
- CHORUS** Ere the golden day is pale,  
Dawns the silver orb of light;  
Sweetly trills the nightingale,  
Earth was made for man's delight!  
Fa la la!  
Earth was made for man's delight!
- TOPPER** When the leaves of autumn sigh,  
Nearer death and further birth!  
Time enough for hearts to cry,  
Man was only made for earth!
- CLARA** Youth is pleasant —  
**BESS** Grasp the present —  
**FRED** Moons are crescent —  
**TRIO** Fa la la!
- Time enough for hearts to sigh!  
Now the noonday sun is high!
- CHORUS** Day in cloth of gold is gay,  
Robe of silver wears the night;

## *Humbug!*

All creation seems to say,  
Earth was made for man's delight!  
Fa la la!  
Earth was made for man's delight!

**Narrator** (*As they act out blind man's buff*) But they didn't devote the whole evening to music. There was first a game at blind-man's buff. Of course there was. And I no more believe Topper was really blind than I believe he had eyes in his boots. My opinion is, that it was a done thing between him and Scrooge's nephew; and that the Ghost of Christmas Present knew it. The way he went after Clara was an outrage on the credulity of human nature. He wouldn't catch anybody else. And when at last, he caught her; when, in spite of all her silken rustlings, and her rapid flutterings past him, he got her into a corner whence there was no escape; then his conduct was the most execrable! (*TOPPER attempts to kiss CLARA*)

### **Song 17: DUET. — TOPPER & CLARA**

*Music: 'Hoity-toity, what's a kiss?', Haddon Hall*

<b>TOPPER</b>	Hoity-toity, what's a kiss? It's not very shocking Do not take the thing amiss! As there's no one looking!
<b>CLARA</b>	Hoity-toity, what's a kiss? Kissing goes by favour!
<b>TOPPER</b>	And when the kiss Is a stolen bliss — The sweeter is the savour!
<b>CLARA</b>	Upon my word, I never heard A statement more surprising! Aren't you afraid Of with a maid Your conscience compromising?
<b>BOTH</b>	Upon a light And starry night, We might consult the latter; But when the maid Is in the shade, It's quite another matter.
<b>TOPPER</b>	Hoity-toity, who's afraid? When there's no one looking! I could ne'er resist a maid, When she shows her stocking!
<b>CLARA</b>	Hoity-toity, man, be mum! Have you been a-drinking?
<b>TOPPER</b>	My joy hath come From the Isle of Rum — And guess what I've been thinking?
<b>CLARA</b>	Behave thyself, Thou wicked elf, Thy conduct is past bearing; I think we both Should take an oath, Frivolity foreswearing.
<b>TOPPER</b>	<b>CLARA</b>
Oh, hist and whist! Now, don't resist! Why make so great a clatter? There's none to see, So what the d—, The Devil doth it matter?	Oh, hist and whist, Now, do desist, Or I'll create a clatter! Do set me free, And let me be, And cease your silly chatter.



## *Humbug!*

- Narrator** Uncle Scrooge had imperceptibly become so gay and light of heart while watching the entertainments, that he would have drunk to the entire company and made a speech. But the whole scene passed off and he and the Spirit were again upon their travels. (*Exit FRED and friends.*) Far they went, and much they saw, and many homes they visited, but always with a happy end. It was a long night, if it were only one night. It was strange, too, that while Scrooge remained unaltered in his outward form, the Ghost grew older, clearly older.
- Scrooge** Are spirits' lives so short?
- Ghost Pres** My life upon this globe, is very brief - it ends tonight. Tonight at midnight. The time is drawing near.
- Scrooge.** Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask, but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself.
- Narrator** From the foldings of the Spirit's robe, it brought two children; wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable. (*Enter IGNORANCE and WANT.*) They knelt down at its feet, and clung upon the outside of its garment.
- Scrooge.** Spirit! are they yours?
- Ghost Pres** They are Man's. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased.
- Scrooge** Have they no refuge? Have they no resource?
- Ghost Pres** Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses? (*A bell chimes twelve times.*)
- Narrator** The bell struck twelve. Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it not. As the last stroke ceased to vibrate, he remembered the prediction of old Jacob Marley, and lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming, like a mist along the ground, towards him. In the very air through which this Spirit moved, it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.

### **Song 18: Chorus**

*Music: 'Iolanthe!', Iolanthe*

**CHORUS**

Ebenezer!  
From thy fitful slumber thou art summoned!  
Come to our call-  
Come, come, Ebenezer!  
Ebenezer! Ebenezer!

**ALL**

Come to our call, Ebenezer!  
Ebenezer, come!

- Scrooge** (*kneeling*) I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come? (*The GHOST indicates this is so*) Oh, Ghost of the Future! I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear your company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?
- Narrator** It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them.
- Scrooge** Lead on! Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!
- Narrator** They scarcely seemed to enter the city; for the city rather seemed to spring up about them, and they were in an obscure part of the town, where iron, old rags, bottles, bones, and greasy offal, were bought. A scrofulous rascal sat smoking his pipe. Scrooge and the Phantom came into the presence of this man, just as a woman with a heavy bundle slunk into the shop.

*JOE is discovered sitting behind a desk. Enter MRS. DILBER.*

*Humbug!*

**Song 19: DUET — JOE and MRS DILBER**

*Music: 'Things are seldom what they seem', H.M.S. Pinafore*

**MRS D** Morning Joe, I hope you're well:  
I've got plenty things to sell,  
From a body, newly cold,  
Very rich and very old.

**JOE.** You've been blessed -  
They're the best

**MRS D** He was quite a wicked screw,  
Hoarded money, as they do,  
Had no fam'ly, all alone,  
Shrunk to naught but skin and bone.

**JOE.** All the same,  
Such a shame!

**MRS D** Though his gown was patched and torn,  
Though his shoes were holed and worn,  
Though a fortune he did save -  
Poor he went unto the grave!

**JOE** Give 'em here,  
Let me peer!

**BOTH** Taking from the dead ain't thieving,  
Who needs cash when you've departed?  
Lonely folk with no one grieving  
Make us feel so tender-hearted!  
What we do is hardly stealing,  
We are not bereft of feeling -  
Surplus goods is what we're dealing.  
There's no room  
In a tomb!

**JOE** Take that bundle off your back  
Let me see inside your pack -  
Blankets and a pewter mug,  
Rather fancy bedroom rug -

**MRS D** Don't complain -  
I've cleaned the stain!

**JOE** Here we have his workday suits,  
Box of buttons, pair of boots.  
Splendid shirt, without a patch,  
Collar, studs and cuffs to match!

**MRS D** Off his back,  
In my sack!

**JOE** Sheets and towels, a writing case,  
Sugar tongs, some antique lace,  
Silver teaspoons hardly scratched,  
Curtains with the rings attached!

**MRS D** Down they came -,  
It's no shame!

**BOTH** Taking from the dead ain't thieving,  
Who needs cash when you've departed?  
Lonely folk with no one grieving  
Make us feel so tender-hearted!  
What we do is hardly stealing,  
We are not bereft of feeling -  
Surplus goods is what we're dealing.  
There's no room  
In a tomb!

**Scrooge** Spirit! I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way, now. (*Exit JOE and DILBER. Enter DEAD SCROOGE on bed – or mime it?*)  
Merciful Heaven, what is this!

## *Humbug!*

- Narrator** The scene had changed, and now he almost touched a bed: a bare, uncurtained bed: and on it, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of this plundered man.
- Scrooge** Oh, Spirit, let me see some tenderness connected with a death or this dark chamber will be for ever present to me.
- Narrator** But the Ghost conducted Scrooge to Bob Cratchit's house; the dwelling he had visited before; and found the mother and the children seated round the fire. (*We discover the CRATCHITS in their home*) Quiet. Very quiet. Belinda was as still as a statue in one corner, and sat looking up at Peter, who had a bible before him. The mother and her daughter were engaged in sewing. But where was Tiny Tim?
- Mrs Cratchit.** Your father should be home soon. It must be near his time.
- Peter** Past it rather - but I think he has walked a little slower than he used to, these few last evenings, mother.
- Mrs Cratchit.** I have known him walk with - I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed.
- Belinda** And so have I, often.
- Mrs Cratchit.** But he was very light to carry, and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble: no trouble. And there is your father at the door!
- Enter BOB. The family make a fuss of him as he sits.*
- Mrs Cratchit** You went today, then, Robert?
- Bob** Yes, my dear. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child! My little child!

### **Song 20: Coventry Carol**

*Music: Traditional*

Lully, lullay, Thou little tiny Child,  
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.  
Lullay, thou little tiny Child,  
By, by, lully, lullay.

O sisters too, how may we do,  
For to preserve this day  
This poor youngling for whom we do sing  
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.

Herod the King, in his raging,  
Charged he hath this day  
His men of might, In his own sight,  
All young children to slay.

That woe is me, poor child for thee!  
And every morn and day,  
For thy parting neither say nor sing,  
By, by, lully, lullay.

- Scrooge** (*Exit the CRATCHITS.*) Spectre, something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how. Tell me what man that was whom we saw lying dead?
- Narrator** The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come conveyed him, as before - though at a different time, he thought: indeed, there seemed no order in these latter visions, save that they were in the Future - into the resorts of business men, but showed him not himself.
- Scrooge** This court through which we hurry now, is where my place of occupation is, and has been for a length of time. I see the house. Let me behold what I shall be, in days to come.
- Narrator** The Spirit stopped; the hand was pointed elsewhere.
- Scrooge** The house is yonder. Why do you point away?
- Narrator** He joined it once again, and wondering why and whither he had gone, accompanied it until they reached an iron gate. A churchyard. Here, then, the wretched man whose name he had now to learn, lay underneath the ground. The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to One.

## *Humbug!*

- Scrooge** Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point, answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?
- Narrator** Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood. Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, Ebenezer Scrooge.
- Scrooge** Am I that man who lay upon the bed?  
*GHOST points from the grave to SCROOGE, and back again.*
- Scrooge** No, Spirit! Oh no, no! I am not the man I was. I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!
- Narrator** In his agony, he caught the spectral hand. It sought to free itself, but he was strong in his entreaty, and detained it. The Spirit, stronger yet, repulsed him. Holding up his hands in a last prayer to have his fate reversed, he saw an alteration in the Phantom's hood and dress. It shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost. Yes! and the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best and happiest of all, the time before him was his own, to make amends in!
- Scrooge** I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future! The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley! Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob; on my knees!

*Enter MARLEY, dressed as before, but much happier!*

### **Song 21: Duet – Scrooge and Marley**

*Music: 'When I go out of door', Patience*

- SCROOGE** I've learned my lesson well,  
I heard the spirits tell  
My fate did appal me;  
What doom would befall me  
When tolled the final bell!  
If I did not repent,  
My selfishness lament,  
This wretched old sinner  
Would grow ever thinner  
And twisted and sour and bent!
- BOTH** A miserly old man,  
A solit'ry old man,  
A grinding and grating, society-hating,  
A feared and loathed old man!
- MARLEY** I once thought just as you,  
A sinner through and through:  
Despising the poor,  
Always asking for 'more',  
Bidding charity tins adieu!  
But when I lay a-dead  
Stretched out upon my bed  
My ghost life was tougher  
My soul learned to suffer  
With boxes and chains of lead!
- BOTH** A miserable old ghost,  
A sorry and shamed old ghost —  
A suffering bearing, a misery sharing,  
A full-of-regret old ghost!
- SCROOGE** Conceive me if you can,  
A sociable old man,  
A tolerant type always smoking a pipe  
With a pint of black and tan!

## *Humbug!*

**MARLEY** A slap on the back old man  
A 'pull up a chair' old man,  
A cheerfully chatting, small children a-patting  
A friend to the world old man

**SCROOGE** A flaming plum pudding old man  
A hot mince pies old man  
An ivy and holly, a tubby and jolly,  
A mistletoe kiss old man!

**MARLEY** A turkey and stuffing old man  
A carols and cakes old man,  
An incense and myrrhing, a happy New Yearing  
An au-ld lang syne auld man

**BOTH** Conceive me/him, if you can  
A generous, kind old man —  
A charity giving, a virtuous living,  
A totally changed old man!

**Narrator** He was checked in his transports by the churches ringing out the lustiest peals he had ever heard. Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. Golden sunlight; heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. (*FX: Church Bells*) Oh, glorious. Glorious! (*Enter BOY under his window, perhaps played by PETER.*)

**Scrooge** (*To BOY*) What's to-day?  
**Boy** Eh?  
**Scrooge** What's to-day, my fine fellow?  
**Boy** To-day? Why, Christmas Day.  
**Scrooge** It's Christmas Day! I haven 't missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. Now, my fine fellow, do you know the poulterer's, in the next street?  
**Boy** I should hope I did!  
**Scrooge** An intelligent boy! A remarkable boy! Do you know whether they've sold the prize Turkey that was hanging up there?  
**Boy** It's hanging there now.  
**Scrooge** Is it? Then go and buy it, and tell 'em to bring it here, that I may give them the direction where to take it. Come back with the man, and I'll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes, and I'll give you half-a-crown! (*Exit BOY at a run.*) I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's! He sha'n't know who sends it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim!

*Re-enter BOY, carrying turkey.*

**Narrator** Scrooge chuckled as he recompensed the boy and chuckled even more as he paid for the turkey *and* for a cab to carry it to Camden Town. He then dressed himself in his best, and at last got out into the streets. The people were by this time pouring forth (*The stage fills with CHORUS, including HOPE and CHARITY.*), as he had seen them with the Ghost of Christmas Present; and walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded every one with a delighted smile. He had not gone far, when coming on towards him he beheld the persons who he sent away from his counting-house the day before. It sent a pang across his heart to think how these good folk would look upon him when they met; but he knew what path lay straight before him, and he took it.

**Scrooge** How do you do? I hope you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you. A merry Christmas to you!  
**Hope** Mr Scrooge?  
**Scrooge** Yes, that is my name, and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon. And will you have the goodness to accept a donation —(*Whispers in Charity's ear*)  
**Charity** Lord bless me! My dear Mr Scrooge, are you serious?  
**Scrooge** If you please, not a farthing less. A great many back-payments are included in it, I assure you. Will you come and see me?  
**Charity** We will!

## *Humbug!*

**Scrooge** I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you!

**Narrator** He went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows: and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk - that anything - could give him so much happiness. In the afternoon he turned his steps towards his nephew's house. He passed the door a dozen times, before he had the courage to go up and knock. But he made a dash, and did it. (*Enter FRED*)

**Scrooge** Fred!

**Fred** Why bless my soul! Who's that?

**Scrooge** It's I. Your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?

**Narrator** Let him in! It is a mercy he didn't shake his arm off. He was at home in five minutes. Nothing could be heartier. (*Enter BESS, TOPPER and CLARA.*) His niece looked just the same. So did Topper when he came. So did Clara when she came. Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, won-der-ful happiness!

### **Song 22: Quintet -**

#### **Fred, Scrooge, Bess, Topper and Clara**

*Music: 'If Saphir I choose to marry', Patience*

**FRED** Uncle Scrooge has changed direction -  
Uncle Scrooge has change his ways!  
We embrace him with affection  
On this day above all days!

**SCROOGE** Let us drink to loved ones missing  
Let us drink to those more near  
Let us drink to reminiscing -  
Let us drink to Christmas Cheer!

**ALL** Let us drink to reminiscing -  
Let us drink to Christmas Cheer!  
Let us drink to loved ones missing  
Let us drink to those more near  
Let us drink to reminiscing -  
Let us drink to Christmas Cheer!  
Let us drink to reminiscing -  
Let us drink to Christmas Cheer!  
Let us drink to reminiscing -  
Let us drink to Christmas Cheer!

**TOPPER** If one man can change his status,  
Then my duty now is clear  
Pray, don't leave a long hiatus -  
Clara, marry me, my dear!

**CLARA** This is quite unprecedented:  
Farewell to my single life!  
I could not be more contented -  
Clara shall be Topper's wife!

**ALL** She could not be more contented  
Clara shall be Topper's wife!  
This is quite unprecedented,  
Farewell to her single life!  
She could not be more contented  
Clara will be Topper's wife!  
She could not be more contented  
Clara will be Topper's wife!  
She could not be more contented  
Clara will be Topper's wife!

## *Humbug!*

**BESS** Such a day of signs and wonders!  
Topper is to Clara bound,  
Uncle Scrooge no longer thunders -  
Happiness is all around!

**SCROOGE** My old life is unlamented  
My new life has just begun  
From now on I am contented -  
Merry Christmas Every One!

**ALL** From now on he is contented  
Merry Christmas Every One!  
His old life is unlamented  
His new life has just begun  
From now on he is contented -  
Merry Christmas Every One!  
From now on he is contented -  
Merry Christmas Every One!  
From now on he is contented -  
Merry Christmas Every One

*EXEUNT ALL except SCROOGE, who returns to his office.*

**Narrator** Oh, Scrooge was early at the office next morning. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had set his heart upon. And he did it; yes he did! The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was full eighteen minutes and a half, behind his time.

*Enter BOB*

**Scrooge** Hallo! What do you mean by coming here at this time of day.

**Bob** I am very sorry, sir. I am behind my time.

**Scrooge** Yes. I think you are. Step this way, if you please.

**Bob** It's only once a year, sir. It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir.

**Scrooge** Now, I'll tell you what, my friend, I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore, I am about to raise your salary! (*BOB is stunned*) A merry Christmas, Bob! A merrier Christmas, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year! I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop! Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit.

*Gradually, the stage fills with the other principals, SCROOGE shaking hands all round.*

**Narrator** Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.

**Scrooge** (*Singing begins 'off stage'*) Carols! We must have carols on this most joyous of days!  
(*Beckons CAROL SINGERS onto stage*) Come in, come in, one and all!

## *Humbug!*

### **Song 23: Hark the herald angels sing**

*Music: Traditional*

*Note: As in the final song in Act 1, 4 verses are played, but only 3 verses are sung fully – for the final verse, dialogue is spoken until the final ‘Hark, the herald angels sing’ is sung’*

Hark the herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn King!  
Peace on earth and mercy mild  
God and sinners reconciled  
Joyful, all ye nations rise  
Join the triumph of the skies  
With the angelic host proclaim:  
Christ is born in Bethlehem  
Hark! The herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn King!

Christ by highest heav'n adored  
Christ the everlasting Lord!  
Late in time behold Him come  
Offspring of a Virgin's womb  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see  
Hail the incarnate Deity  
Pleased as man with man to dwell  
Jesus, our Emmanuel  
Hark! The herald angels sing  
Glory to the newborn King!

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Son of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings  
Ris'n with healing in His wings  
Mild He lays His glory by  
Born that man no more may die  
Born to raise the sons of earth  
Born to give them second birth  
Hark! The herald angels sing  
“Glory to the newborn King!”

**Narrator**     *(Over music – the chorus remain silent' until the closing two lines)* Scrooge had no further dealings with Spirits, but lived upon the Total Abstinence Principle, ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed

**Tim**            God Bless Us, Every One!

**All** *(singing)*

Hark! The herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

## **The End**



## **Author's Note**

The most enjoyable aspects of Christmas, for me, are the songs and stories associated with the season. Traditional carols are just about the finest hymns that there are, and I get enormous pleasure from reading Christmas books and stories: Dylan Thomas' 'A Child's Christmas in Wales', Raymond Briggs' 'Father Christmas' and, of course, the Christmas Books of Charles Dickens – of which, the first and the greatest is, of course, 'A Christmas Carol'. A Victorian Christmas show with traditional carols is my idea of festive perfection!

There are several excellent versions of Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol' that use the music of Gilbert & Sullivan – 'A Gilbert & Sullivan Christmas Carol' by Gayden Wren, 'A Savoy Christmas Carol' by Nigel Holloway and 'Humbug' by J. K. Local and R. W. Tyler. However, none of them were *quite* right for the sort of staging that I had in mind, which was a semi-concert version in two acts, requiring minimal rehearsal, so I decided to write one myself, returning to libretto-writing after a nearly 15 years! However, I wish to acknowledge the influence of these other versions of 'A Christmas Carol' on the choice of songs, although I have written my own lyrics for them.

I wanted a version that had a narrator, meaning that dialogue could be kept to a minimum, no sets and a chorus that could sing from books – in other words, a show that could be performed with a short rehearsal period and in any performing space. A narrator was also important to me, as Charles Dickens' works are full of wonderful descriptive passages, which are so intrinsic to their success – and contain some of the most memorable lines in the story.

I wished to follow original Dickens story as much as possible, with the same sequence of events and as many of his original words as possible (many of the most well known adaptations take considerable liberties). Although a short novel, the whole text of 'A Christmas Carol' is too long for a musical of reasonable length, so it would need editing. Fortunately, I had a copy of the text that Dickens himself used in his celebrated public readings, so I used that to guide my decisions of what to cut and what to keep. I also hit on the idea of incorporating several of my favourite Christmas carols into the piece, and making the chorus explicitly into carol singers that, in a sense, comment on the action. With so many well-known songs in place, this gave me free reign to introduce obscure numbers without alienating the audience, including gems from 'Haddon Hall' and 'The Emerald Isle'.

The carols chosen can be done in any arrangement you prefer, and could also be sung by the audience, thus making a combined show and carol service. I quite enjoy hearing carols sung in four part harmony, but others would prefer to have everyone join in.

We produced this in 2010 & 2011 with minimal staging (6 chairs and a table) and home-made costumes, but with almost every prop' mimed – and, I must say, it worked extremely well. The show has received quite a number of subsequent productions, generally with more complete staging, and I'm glad to say that they have appreciative audiences. It's quite an easy show to sell – it seems that Dickens, traditional carols, and Gilbert and Sullivan is a combination that doesn't just appeal to me!

7<sup>th</sup> June 2022