

## Local talent shines in 'A Christmas Carol'

### Musical rendition reimagines classic at Dutch Apple Dinner Theatre

By Michael C. Upton

In "A Christmas Carol," the musical, the Ghost of Jacob Marley sets the tone and lets viewers know this is not the Christmas Carol of old.

Yes, as it takes place on the Dutch Apple Dinner Theatre stage the characters are the same, with Scrooge and the Cratchits starring in the story penned by Charles Dickens in 1843. But what opened in Lancaster on Nov. 17 (and runs until Dec. 30) is not your father's Dickens, this is the work of writers Mike Ockrent ("Me and My Girl") and Lynn Ahrens ("Ragtime") with music by Alan Menken (of Disney animation fame) and lyrics by Ahrens.

The original production ran at New York City's Theater at Madison Square Garden for 10 years, closing in 2003.

As expected, the story is set in the first two scenes as we meet Bob Cratchit (Jacob Clanton) hard at work in the countinghouse run by Ebenezer Scrooge (Robert Tully). Cratchit wants nothing more than to spend a day off with his son Tiny Tim (Brodie Kennedy/Owen Ridenour), daughter Martha (Reagan Foltz/Abigail Forester), and wife (Kayla Klase).

But Scrooge acts as one would expect by demanding Cratchit work extra to make up for his time off on Christmas Day. He denies calls for charity on the street and the miserly old fellow returns to his home. Once Scrooge retires for the evening this show goes off the rails (in a wonderfully spectacular way) with the appearance of around-the-town actor Jordan Ross Weinhold as the Ghost of Jacob Marley.

"I love scaring people at Christmas," said Weinhold, half-jokingly. "My director, Ford Haeuser, told me to dive deep and not be afraid to be weird or too scary ... which allowed me to move and sing the way I do."

The first act scene hints at the show's potential to become a surreal version of the Christmas classic. Marley, clothed in white and carrying the chains of his sins, is as pale as Beetlejuice and as uncanny as Randle McMurphy. (Weinhold does his own makeup, but costume and wig credits belong to John P. White and Brandon T. Miller respectively.)

The scene shakes up the theatre with splashes of light and commanding choreography, which sees ghosts of various shapes and sizes tormenting Scrooge with both hilarity and horror.

"I'm definitely putting on a character, but it is one of the more iconic roles of 'A Christmas Carol' and I had to think about what I wanted to see in Marley's ghost. And I wanted something that would traumatize Scrooge. This Jacob Marley is definitely enjoying the fun of scaring Scrooge and delivering his big wake-up call."

After Marley, Scrooge is visited throughout the night by the Ghost of Christmas Past (Grace Atherholt), the Ghost of Christmas Present (Tyler Price), and the Ghost of Christmas Future (Holly Wilder) in various bursts of costumed color or appropriate lack thereof.

On the streets of London on Christmas morning the townspeople are shocked by Scrooge's transformation, just like in the 1843 novella. The show ends as we all expect, with blessings for "everyone!"

"A Christmas Carol has become part of our DNA. Everyone knows who Scrooge is and they know the overall story. And the story has always touched me on a personal level because I love Christmas, but I also love the theme of redemption in the story," Weinhold said.

Weinhold, who last appeared on the Dutch Apple stage in "Miracle on 34th Street," considers the role of Marley an "unexpected treat."

The Denver resident grew up in northeastern Lancaster County, attended Point Park University where he majored in musical theatre, and has been seen on many regional stages.

And he is not the only local performer in this holiday tale.

Grey Bonson Calender plays Young Scrooge and is a student in the Warwick School District.

He joins other Lititz residents Carter Geesaman (Jonathan) and Molly Weiler (Fan); Weiler was also seen in EPAC's critically acclaimed "Les Misérables Jr." in 2021.

Ultimately, the musical remains rooted in the story of "A Christmas Carol" and becomes a joy to both those who love tradition and those who enjoy seeing things shaken up a bit. Weinhold will be seen again by Dutch Apple theatergoers in "Mousetrap," opening on Jan. 19, 2024. Until then, "A Christmas Carol" plays through Christmas till Dec. 30. More info and tickets can be found at [dutchapple.com](http://dutchapple.com).

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Jacob Marley's ghost, played by Jordan Ross Weinhold, is clothed in white and carrying the chains of his sins. **Submitted photo**

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