

SEASON 50
PlayNotes



Charles Dickens'
A Christmas Carol

ISSUE 02
PORTLAND STAGE

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HANNAH CORDES, PAULA VOGEL, ANITA STEWART, AND TODD BRIAN BACKUS IN A TALKBACK, PORTLAND STAGE COMPANY.

A Christmas Carol

by Charles Dickens

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Letter from the Editors

Dear *PlayNotes* Readers,

Welcome to our second issue of *PlayNotes* for the 2023-2024 Season!

In this issue, we explore the world of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. This beloved holiday classic reminds us to treat others with kindness and reflect on how we can be better members of our own communities. Even though Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* 180 years ago, these themes still resonate with a modern audience. To give context to the time period in which the story exists we have included articles like "Dickens' England" (p. 18), "Celebrations of Christmas Past" (p. 23), and "Spiritualism and Ghosts" (p. 20).

This production will be directed by Portland Stage's Education Director Michael Dix Thomas. To learn more about his experience bringing the piece to life, check out our interview with him (p. 10). We have also included Focus Questions (p. 13) and Post-Show Activities (p. 22) to further discussions in the classroom for our younger audience members. Readers can also learn about organizations in the Portland area who work to support our neighbors throughout the year ("Community Connections" on p. 31 and "Outreach & Advocacy" p. 33).

When compiling each issue of *PlayNotes*, we strive to provide articles and interviews that give you insight into what the process has been like behind the scenes (Portland Stage's *A Christmas Carol*), contain pertinent information about the play's setting and major themes (*The World of A Christmas Carol*), and provide deeper dives into specific subjects that compelled our literary department (Digging Deeper).

We hope you enjoy this issue and we look forward to seeing you at the theater!

Sincerely yours,

The Portland Stage Literary Department
Todd Brian Backus
Julia Jennings
Alex Oleksy
Jessi Stier

About the Play

Edited for content by Meredith G. Healy

Horse-drawn carriages do clack across the cobblestones past the waterfront here, but modern-day Portland is a couple of centuries and an ocean away from Charles Dickens's London. The world he was immersed in and wrote about was quite different from 21st-century Maine, yet the spirit of the holidays that emanates from *A Christmas Carol* still resonates around the world.

A Christmas Carol was first published in December 1843 as a novella, and it was one of Dickens's few works to be distributed in a stand-alone fashion and not through serialization. He wrote it with the goal of having commercial success because he was running low on money. Christmas rituals, which are now considered traditions, were just emerging in English public life during the Victorian period, which lasted from 1837-1901. Dickens took advantage of this societal change during the holidays, and the book became an instant hit. Having often held public readings of his previous works, Dickens took *A Christmas Carol* on tour. Initially, he performed it as a one-man show, with proceeds donated to charities. It was so popular that he continued to do readings of it for the rest of his life.



THE YOUTH ENSEMBLE IN A PREVIOUS PRODUCTION OF PORTLAND STAGE'S *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*.

A Christmas Carol lives on past its era because its story of redemption transcends 19th-century English industrialism. In every era since Dickens's lifetime, issues with wealth and greed have continued to harm societies around the world. Especially during the holiday season, benevolence and human connection get lost in the frenzy of shopping and gift-giving. When families spend Christmas Eve driving from store to store, getting stuck in traffic, bickering, and spending large amounts of money, it is easy to get frustrated rather than appreciate the opportunity to be together.

Contemporary versions of the story show that there is still much to be learned from stories of old grumps with surprisingly soft hearts. The character of Scrooge lives on not only in English-speaking cultures where his name has also become a word, but around the world as the story continues to be translated, adapted, and produced. In the original text and in Portland Stage's production, Scrooge reiterates exactly what *A Christmas Carol* teaches readers and audiences by stating, "I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, Present and the Future. The Spirits of all three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach." The universal themes of showing kindness and generosity toward others is just as timely now as it was when readers and audiences alike first experienced *A Christmas Carol*.



THE GHOST OF MARLEY AND SCROOGE, PLAYED BY DANIEL NOEL AND EVAN THOMPSON IN A PREVIOUS PRODUCTION OF PORTLAND STAGE'S *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*.

Production History

Edited for content by Macey Downs

Dickens' novella *A Christmas Carol* was a hit from the start, with 6,000 copies sold by the first Christmas after it came out. The enduring popularity of *A Christmas Carol* is due in part to its immediate and continued adaptation for stage and screen. The first theatrical adaptation of Dickens' novella opened in London at the Adelphi Theatre in February 1844. The story's fantastical imagery and sparkling dialogue made it perfectly suited to the stage, and by the end of that year, a total of eight theater companies had produced their own versions of *A Christmas Carol*.

While *A Christmas Carol* may have begun as a novella, it has firmly established itself as a theatrical tradition, alive each year on countless stages with ghosts, memories, and a healthy dose of Christmas cheer. Today, *A Christmas Carol* is in the public domain, meaning that it can be adapted freely. Dozens of regional theaters across the United States make *A Christmas Carol* a part of their communities' annual Christmas traditions. Adaptations are performed at theater companies of all sizes and locales, from Trinity Repertory Company in Providence, Rhode Island, to the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco, California. Many, like Portland Stage, create their own adaptations, but even theaters that share the same script focus on unique aspects of the story. Cast sizes range from one to thirty, and the style of each production varies depending on the character of the company. Portland Stage's version this winter will be the theater's 21st production.

A Christmas Carol is not only performed at community and regional theaters; it was seen on Broadway for four different limited engagements between 1991 and 2001, and it returned to Broadway for 57 performances in 2019, winning five Tony Awards. Since so many theater companies produce *A Christmas Carol* annually, there is a push to make it new and exciting each time. Every adaptation is a little different, and adaptations take many different theatrical forms, such as straight plays, musicals, radio plays, or one-person shows.

Ever since the first productions occurred 170 years ago, *A Christmas Carol*'s popularity has only increased. With the advent of motion pictures, *A Christmas Carol* was one of the first novels to be adapted into a screenplay, with silent versions produced in both Britain and the US. As film technology developed, so did numerous adaptations of Dickens' tale. Over the last hundred years, actors including Reginald Owen (1938), Alastair Sim (1951), Albert Finney (1970), George C. Scott (1984), Michael Caine (1992), Patrick Stewart (1999), and Jim Carrey (2009) have all portrayed Ebenezer Scrooge on film.

A number of animated versions, such as *Mickey's Christmas Carol*, and musical television specials have paid homage to *A Christmas Carol* as well, featuring familiar casts of characters such as the Muppets, the Flintstones, and the Looney Tunes gang. Films have also adapted the traditional Scrooge story to feature a specific star. For example, 2000's *A Diva's Christmas Carol* starred Vanessa Williams and updated the classic Scrooge story to feature a greedy pop singer. Even as recently as 2019, a three-episode miniseries of *A Christmas Carol* was aired by the BBC, focusing more on Scrooge as a villain. Since Dickens first published the story in 1843, it has undergone many adaptations, but the spirit of the original novella remains, and it is because of that spirit that *A Christmas Carol* remains a vital part of the holiday tradition.



THE CAST OF A PREVIOUS PRODUCTION OF
PORTLAND STAGE'S *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*.

About Charles Dickens

Edited for clarity by Meredith G. Healy and Julia Jennings

"Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show." So wrote Charles Dickens at the beginning of his most autobiographical novel, *David Copperfield*. Like David, Dickens' early years were difficult: these early experiences with poverty and strife inspired many of his beloved characters as he grew to become one of the most cherished and revered writers of the English language. Charles John Huffman Dickens was born on February 7, 1812, at a small house in Portsmouth, Hampshire in England. His parents, John and Elizabeth, were members of the emerging middle class, and his father worked as a clerk in the Navy Pay Office. When John was transferred to Kent in 1817, the family went with him. They relocated to a larger home where Dickens spent five happy years attending school, putting on theatrical productions with his seven siblings, and reading avidly.

However, John Dickens, who was generally regarded as a generous, if lavish, man, was not frugal with the family's funds. In 1824, the entire family, with the exception of Charles,

went to live in the Marshalsea debtors' prison in London. Meanwhile, 12-year-old Dickens went to work at a boot-blacking factory in Southwark to help pay off the family's debts. It was a difficult time in his life, and many of his characters, including the title characters of *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*, as well as Pip from *Great Expectations*, were based on his experiences as one of the many lonely, laboring children who dotted London's streets during Victorian times.

Respite seemed to come when the family was released from prison a few months later, but, to Dickens' horror, his mother insisted that he continue working at the factory because she had grown accustomed to the extra income. Finally, at his father's insistence, Dickens was allowed to return to school to complete his education. In 1827, at the age of 15, Dickens left school for good and took a position as a clerk in a law office. This proved to be a useful experience for him as it honed his writing skills and taught him shorthand, which he used to get a job as a court reporter. It was during this time that his first short story, "A Dinner at Poplar Walk," appeared in *The Monthly Magazine*.

In 1834, Dickens became a reporter for the newspaper *The Morning Chronicle*, where he wrote under the pseudonym "Boz," his father's childhood nickname for him. This led him to title his first book, *Sketches by Boz* (1836), which was a collection of written sketches of Londoners. The year 1836 was a banner one for young Dickens, as the first installments of his serial novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, appeared a mere seven weeks later, solidifying him as a household name. In April of that year, Dickens married Catherine Hogarth, and left the *Chronicle* to become the editor of a magazine called *Bentley's Miscellany*.

January of 1837 was the most commercially successful and prolific time of Dickens' life. His next two novels, *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby*, were published as serials and



CHARLES DICKENS.

had a new chapter released every week. *The Old Curiosity Shop*, published between 1840 and 1841, marked the beginning of Dickens' popularity in the United States. Each installment would arrive in New York by boat, and the distributors waiting on the docks would shout to the sailors, "Does Little Nell live?", eager to discover the fate of the book's young heroine.

The serial format meant that Dickens remained prolific, almost uninterrupted, for 35 years. However, following *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Dickens faced a rough patch in his career. *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) enjoyed little commercial success. His *American Notes*, published following his first journey to the United States and Canada, was very badly received in those markets because it was highly critical of the US. These same sentiments inspired portions of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, which solidified distaste from American readers. Dickens went on to tour the US twice more, which led him to add a preface to all future copies of *American Notes* tempering some of the judgments the book contains. It states, "My readers have opportunities of judging for themselves whether the influences and tendencies which I distrusted in America, had, at that time, any existence but in my imagination."

The one element of American society to survive Dickens' sharp criticism was his experience with the Unitarian Universalists, a liberal spiritual movement unattached to any specific creed. In Boston, Dickens met with Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Ellery Channing, and other leading figures of the American Unitarian movement, a visit which Dickens praised in his *Notes*. Not long after returning to London, Dickens officially joined the Unitarian Church, writing "I have carried into effect an old idea of mine, and joined the Unitarians, who *would* do something for human improvement, if they could; and who practice Charity and Toleration."

Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* soon after, believing he could use his fiction for social good. Indeed, the novella significantly reshaped our modern understanding

of Christmas, aligning the holiday with supporting and giving to those in need within our communities. While Scrooge's own conversion seems to mirror Dickens' experience with the Unitarians, Tiny Tim's cry of "God bless us, every one" at the end of the story appears to reach beyond any denominational understanding of redemption, and embraces the universal message of community care and altruism.

Dickens managed to win back his audience in the US with *A Christmas Carol*, which appeared in December 1844. He wrote the entire novella in a scant six weeks, and went on to publish it as a single volume in an effort to keep the price down. However, Dickens was extremely specific about the cover and illustrations, which caused the publisher to have to reprint multiple times. Since Dickens had recently renegotiated his contract to receive a portion of the profits rather than a lump sum, Dickens made almost no money off the beloved book.

Following a long tour of Europe with his family, Dickens settled into an estate called Gads Hill, which he'd admired since childhood. There, he renewed his love of theater by collaborating on the script for *The Frozen Deep* with writer Wilkie Collins. A young actress named Ellen Ternan was in the cast, and she and Dickens began a passionate affair that would last the rest of his life. He ended up separating from Catherine and going to live with Ellen, supporting Catherine and his 10 children only financially.

Dickens' health began to fail in 1866, but he continued to write and give public readings against his doctor's wishes. Finally, on June 9, 1870, at the age of 58, he died of a stroke, leaving his 17th and final novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, unfinished. Dickens was buried in Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey. The processional lasted three days, and the day of his burial was one of national mourning for England. Dickens remains one of the most beloved writers in European literary history.

An Interview with the Director Michael Dix Thomas

Edited for Length and Clarity by Julia Jennings

Directing and Dramaturgy Apprentice Julia Jennings sat down with **Michael Dix Thomas**, director of *A Christmas Carol* and Portland Stage's Education Director, to chat about this timeless play.

Julia Jennings (JJ): *To start off, can you tell us a little bit about your theatrical background and career?*

Michael Dix Thomas (MDT): Oh, sure. I am from Portland, I grew up here and started doing theater here—I did school plays and then did my first outside-of-school play in high school. The Children's Theatre of Maine—now part of the Children's Museum of Maine—used to run a summer Shakespeare program in Deering Oaks Park for high school students. And I was in a production of *The Tempest* when I was 16 for Shakespeare in the Park, it was really fun and I just kind of got hooked there. I went to college in Boston for theater, then I came back to Portland in 2009, was here for a while, co-founded a theater company with some folks in town, started the Fringe Festival, worked at the Theater at Monmouth, I worked here as an actor and as a teaching artist, as an education artist. And in 2015 I moved to DC for graduate school. After I finished that, I was living in DC, but I came back to Portland to work for Portland Stage a few times as an actor. And in the pandemic, my now-wife and I moved back to New England, and in August of last year, I started as the Education Director here at Portland Stage. And in the spring of last year, Anita approached me about directing *A Christmas Carol*, which is really exciting.

JJ: *I'm curious what your history is with this play in particular. How have you been involved with *A Christmas Carol* in the past?*

MDT: I have been in *A Christmas Carol* twice as an actor. In 2014, I played Nephew Fred, and in 2016, I played Bob Cratchit along with a couple of the other folks who are performing in the production this year. Caley Milliken, who plays the Ghosts, was in both of those productions, a



DIRECTOR, MICHAEL DIX THOMAS.

few of the ensemble members were in some of those productions; the actor, Paige Scala, who played Tiny Tim in 2016 is now playing Peter in the Cratchit family, so they've grown up with the Cratchits over the past seven years.

JJ: *What is it like directing a show that you've also acted in?*

MDT: Oh, it's so interesting. So much of my background has been in Shakespeare, so it's really not outside of my comfort zone to come back to a play over and over again—I've joked that I played almost all the male roles in *Romeo and Juliet*, and though I haven't had a chance to direct *Romeo and Juliet*—that's that kind of experience. And I've directed *The Tempest*, after having done it when I was 16. And so coming back to this show is really fun. You know, it's a literary adaptation, and so we have this production, which is in its 21st year running here at Portland Stage, and it's gone through so many different iterations. Anita had built such a wonderful foundation with the script and the production, and then two years ago, Sally Wood, who's directing *Saint Dad*, made some changes to that script, some changes to that production, and then I came in

and took some of what I love from what Sally did and changed some other things. So it's been a really fun opportunity to kind of play around in a space that I feel like I know already. I know some of the things that work well, some things that I was like, oh, I have a new idea for this moment. But it is a fun place to play and it feels like a comfortable place to play because I know if there's something that we build that doesn't work in the rehearsal room, then Portland Stage already has a version that we know does work; we have something to fall back on. But in some ways, it can be a little difficult or confusing or frustrating. There's scenes where I'm trying to rebuild something new and I feel like we're on a foundation. Right? So you're building a new house on an existing foundation. So much work has been done, and then how do we use what we have to make something new? It's an interesting challenge.

JJ: How would you say this year's *A Christmas Carol* is different from years past?

MDT: I feel like for me, I'm thinking about it differently than I ever have in previous adaptations and productions that I've seen—our stage show and also film versions. I have always felt—and this was clarifying, actually, in a conversation I had with our Literary Manager, Todd Brian Backus—that I have always seen Scrooge as kind of a faceless evil stand-in for something, for someone else: insert whatever malevolent, wealthy person. And in working my way back through the show, that felt less like it resonated with me personally, than seeing Scrooge as an example of what happens when we shut ourselves off from the world. And instead of taking the show to say, “Well, if only these three ghosts came to this particular person, the world would be better,” saying how do we encourage folks to find that part of themselves that is like Scrooge—that part of themselves that they have shut off from the world, that part of themselves that they've closed down for whatever reason, and that they can encourage to open up. So where do you find that Scrooge in yourself? We'll see how different that is in production, but it's certainly shifted the way that I am thinking about the play from how I've thought about the story in the past.

JJ: Relatedly, what excites you most about working on this production?

MDT: I mean, I get to be in the room with these wonderful performers and this wonderful text and we get to play and explore. I just love rehearsal, it's a space where things are open. We've had the opportunity to have our sound designer Seth Asa Sengel in the room with us, building and playing sounds as we're working our way through. We get to play in this space, in this set that was designed by Anita Stewart, the Artistic Director here. It really is just a beautiful, open, playful space right now, which is so fun. We're sort of getting to the point in rehearsals right now, as we're recording this, where we have to start setting things and locking things in and making some hard choices and closing some doors. But until this point, I feel like we've just been kind of exploring and playing and that is the part that I love the most.



PAIGE SCALA AND MICHAEL DIX THOMAS,
PHOTO BY JAMES A. HADLEY.

JJ: *What do you most want the audience to take away from this show? And also, why do you feel it's important to tell this story now?*

MDT: I mean, we talk about the timelessness of this story, and I think for me, it keeps coming back to this idea that we will always, for innumerable, excellent reasons, be closing parts of ourselves off in response to things that we've experienced, in response to things that are happening in the world. I think we need the constant reminder to open ourselves up and see each other as fellow humans. I think that that's always something we need to be reminded of. There's a charity man and charity woman in our production who are collecting donations at the beginning of the story. And one of them has a line about how we do that this time of year because it is a time "...when want is keenly felt and abundance rejoices." And I think that in Maine, now, as it gets colder, we see more acutely the experience of those who are unhoused, those who don't have enough to eat. It's hard to move around Portland right now and not notice this happening in the world around us. And at the same time, so many of us are lucky, privileged enough to be gathering with family and creating an abundance of food and comfort for ourselves. And I think it is that reason that this story is placed at this time of year, that this story is brought back this time of year, that we see these things side by side. And how do we open up now? How do those of us who recognize that we have more than we need—how do we find ways to share that and give to those who have less?

JJ: *So as you mentioned, you're Portland Stage's Education Director. What has been the overlap between directing and being Education Director, and also what has it been like working with the young ensemble? I'm curious what some of your favorite moments and discoveries have been.*

MDT: It's such a fun part of this play, and we haven't talked about it, but there are seven professional actors in the show, and then two casts of nine students, nine young people who make up the ensemble, so that's eighteen you know, 9- to 17-year-olds in rehearsals with us, which is awesome. And it is really fun in that

I'm the Education Director and organize and teach a lot of our education programs, and I knew a lot of these folks beforehand, I've worked with a lot of these folks in different capacities: some through, like I said, previous productions of *A Christmas Carol*, some through our classes and our camps. And it's really interesting to me; in this job, I get to direct with students, I get to work on shows with students and fully student-cast productions. And this is a different sort of structure. The way that our time works, we have less time with the ensemble of young people, and so frequently we'll build moments with the professional actors and then when we bring the young people in, we're sort of plugging them into those moments, a little bit less than really being in the space of discovery with them. But we have had some really incredible moments of finding new things with the young people. And I don't want to talk about too many of the things that I'm most excited about, I want them to be surprises for the audience. But it has been really fun. And this is a really wonderful group of young people. They come in, they're so prepared, they know all of their lines already. They know all of the professional actors' lines already. They're on top of what they're doing, and are bringing so much to it. It's so much fun.

JJ: *What else do you want listeners to know about your work with the show?*

MDT: I'm really excited for audiences to see it. I think that in some exciting ways, this is going to be a different production of *A Christmas Carol* than we've previously staged, which is fun for me. We're trying some things and I'm really interested to see what those look like and feel like in front of an audience. So I hope people come and see the show, and I hope they tell me what they thought about it because I can't wait to find out if we were successful in these moments.

About the Cast and Characters

by Jessi Stier



Name: Caley Milliken (AEA)
Character: The Ghosts



Name: Dustin Tucker (AEA)
Character: Bob Cratchit



Name: Grace Bauer (AEA)
Character: Mrs. Cratchit



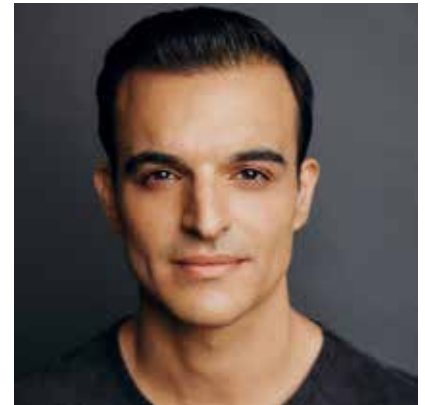
Name: Tom Ford (AEA)
Character: Scrooge



Name: Rebecca Ho (AEA)
Character: Belle



Name: Jay Mack (AEA)
Character: Nephew Fred



Name: Alex Purcell (AEA)
Character: Marley

Focus Questions

by Sophia B. Diaz & Jordan Wells, Education Interns 2020–2021

1. What makes Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* so popular? Why do you think many people continue to watch and read it every year?
2. Do you think this story is for children or adults? What aspects of the tale make it appeal to both audiences?
3. This story relies on supernatural elements. Why do you think Dickens chose ghosts to facilitate Scrooge's transformation?
4. How does *A Christmas Carol* reflect the economy and class structure of Victorian England? As a writer, how did Dickens respond to these social and economic issues?
5. What do you believe our responsibility to our community is? In what ways do you fulfill that responsibility?
6. Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is set at Christmastime, but the show deals with themes of transformation, kindness, and community engagement. How does *A Christmas Carol* transcend the idea of Christmas to appeal to everyone, regardless of religion?
7. Dickens describes many Victorian holiday traditions in his story. What is a tradition? What are some traditions that you have?
8. In *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge has to learn from the past, present, and future. Why is it important to listen to all three? How do the three complement each other in the lessons they teach?
9. What are some ways that people at all levels of financial stability give back to their community? Consider ways to give back beyond donating money.



A GROUP OF CAROLERS ON THE STEPS OF TRAFALGAR SQUARE IN LONDON.

Pre-Show Activities

by Sophia B. Diaz & Jordan Wells, Education Interns 2020–2021

In groups, explore and discuss the following themes:

- Do you believe you can change the future by changing your actions in the present?
- What is the value of remembering the past?
- If you could revisit an event or time in your past, would you change it? Why or why not?

As a class, share the traditions you have for various holidays. Discuss them in light of the following questions:

- What are the roots of your family's holiday traditions?
- What do these traditions mean to you?
- How has the meaning of these traditions changed for you as you got older?
- How do your traditions compare to other traditions around the world?

Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in 1843. It is set in London, and explores the life of the working class as compared to the life of the wealthy. In groups, discuss the following questions:

- What was life like for working-class people in Victorian London?
- What kind of jobs did the working class have in Victorian London?
- What are some ways that the working class struggled in Victorian London? What were some of the good parts of their lives?

Imagine you are a member of the working class in Victorian London. Write a journal entry about a day in your life.

Read the beginning passages of the novella *A Christmas Carol*.

- How does Dickens set the tone for the story he is about to tell?
- How would you adapt the passage for the theater? Work together in a group and divide up the lines. How can you use your voices and bodies to engage an audience? Perform your piece for your fellow classmates.
- What do these descriptions tell us about Scrooge as a character?



A FAMILY CELEBRATING HANUKAH IN BULGARIA.

Costumes and History in *A Christmas Carol*

by Jessi Stier

Portland Stage's *A Christmas Carol* is filled with technical components that have entranced audiences time and time again throughout this beloved wintertime tradition. One of the most magical and critical elements to transporting viewers back to 1800s London is the costume design, led by Costume Designer Kathleen P. Brown and Costume Shop Manager Susan Thomas. I sat down with Sue to discuss her history at Portland Stage, her collaboration with Kathleen, and how it feels to return to this special project over the years.

Sue grew up in Westbrook, ME, very close to Portland Stage. From a young age, she loved both architecture and fashion, so working in costumes felt like the perfect fit for her interests. Sue studied theater at Smith College, and upon graduation, she found her way to Portland Stage as a Costume Apprentice. She found the apprentice program to be very impactful, and eagerly returned to Portland Stage to work full time as the Costume Shop Manager in 2006.



PORTLAND STAGE'S YOUTH COMPANY ACTORS IN COSTUME.

When asked about her history working on *A Christmas Carol*, Sue reflected on a former Portland Stage collaborator who particularly inspired her—Jacqueline Firkins, a previous costume designer. “Jacqueline was a fierce and intense woman,” she said. “I would come in in the morning and find that new dresses were made overnight!” Jacqueline’s passion definitely had a positive impact on Sue, as a few of her designs are still used in *A Christmas Carol* today.

Sue’s collaboration with Jacqueline set a meaningful foundation for her current partnership with Kathleen P. Brown. “Kathleen is a fantastic, lovely human being who does things very efficiently, and has an incredible eye,” Sue said. She mentioned that she loves hearing Kathleen’s fresh ideas, as the pair find new answers to costume challenges. For example, rather than use makeup to simulate Marley’s jaw falling off as has been done in the past, Kathleen is considering using a mask to have a different stylistic effect. Comfort is also deeply important to Sue and Kathleen’s partnership, as they work to ensure that actors feel safe and seen in their identities during the costuming process.



A SAMPLE OF 1800S LONDON FASHION.

Sue also appreciates that Kathleen uses Portland Stage's costume stock to bring the design to life rather than constructing everything new, so that pieces that aren't always seen are used in performance. Using stock also helps bring a sense of authenticity to some characters. Rather than buying something new and distressing it to appear decades old, using an actual vintage garment will bring authenticity to its presentation, and be more accurate to the actor—enhancing character and story as well.

Many antique garments are used throughout the production. These items include frock coats (a precursor to suit jackets), tailcoats, Bob Cratchit's top hat, and various capes and cloaks. Many of these garments are from the 1930s, and mirror the style of clothing from the late 1800s when *A Christmas Carol* takes place. Sue's personal favorite is a woman's inverness, an outer coat with sleeves covered by a long cape originating from the 1850s. The garment was donated from New Orleans, and has survived both Hurricane Katrina and the Civil War. "That garment proves that if you construct something well, it will outlive you and your grandchildren," Sue shared eagerly. She loves working with period garments, and looks forward to encountering them each year with *A Christmas Carol*.

Sue's favorite part of the tradition of *A Christmas Carol* is working with the Youth Company. "It's fun seeing what they're



THE YOUTH ENSEMBLE OF A CHRISTMAS CAROL IN 2016.



SUSAN THOMAS, COSTUME SHOP MANAGER, WITH THE INVERNESS.

interested in and how they grow," she said. "Years ago, one of the kids who played Tiny Tim was really interested in Marley's character, and then ended up coming back as an adult to play Fred." Watching many of the actors grow up has been very powerful for Sue. She mentioned what an honor it is to train the next generation in theatrical practices, as well as inspiring an interest in costume history among young actors. Furthermore, she loves to inform each young actor exactly why they're dressed a certain way, and strives to teach them that clothing is another language in itself. "Costumes are a code, and knowing that code can tell you a lot about a character," she shared. Sue greatly enjoys introducing young performers to this concept, and considers it a treasured part of the show's process.

Overall, her collaboration with Kathleen, passion for antique garments, and love of theater education makes *A Christmas Carol* a very meaningful production for Sue and the Costume Department. They look forward to audiences seeing their hard work in action!

Dickens' England

Edited for content by Dylan Gurrera, Directing & Dramaturgy Intern 2018–2019

With today's steady increase of jobs in the UK and an increasing national minimum wage, the England of today vastly differs from the England that both Charles Dickens and the Cratchits experienced. Victorian England was a hotbed for cutthroat competition, grimy living conditions for the poor, and abysmal working atmospheres. These conditions, however, weren't a coincidental conglomeration of unfortunate situations; they were part of a more outrageous scheme. The colonial mindset of the European elite drove competition between all countries, with one common goal: to become the largest global superpower. This idea fueled British ideas and inventions in the 18th and 19th centuries to harness efficient mass production. Big factories began to rise up across the country and cities became larger than ever, growing so fast that many were left without housing or work. Without proper labor laws, industrialists exploited their workers' labor, knowingly putting them in dangerous working conditions for upwards of 15 hours a day. This age, called the Industrial Revolution, changed English society forever, and its backbone—the exploitation of labor and the competitive selfishness—live at the heart of Charles Dickens' social criticism in *A Christmas Carol*.

The Industrial Revolution started when inventors created new machines to help business owners use their employees more efficiently. With this mechanization of labor, duties that used to be time-consuming happened more quickly; capitalists could cut costs and labor in order to compete in the growing market of consumer goods. While industrialization caused Britain's textile industry to flourish, with an output growing from 40 million yards of fabric a year in 1785 to over two billion yards by 1850, the working class suffered to bring their bosses this outstanding output. Like the Cratchits, entire families were put to work—even children. The Children's Employment Commission of 1842 found children as young as four working in coal mines, pushing wagons of coal along seams too



PHOTO OF VICTORIAN BLACKHEATH VILLAGE IN LONDON.

narrow for adults or ponies. Mothers would pull heavier loads attached to chains between their legs, even when pregnant. Most of these women would suffer miscarriages from work strain. The life expectancy of an English laborer decreased over the course of the first half of the century to an appalling low in 1851: the average life expectancy of miners and laborers in Manchester, England, was 17 years. The country that revolutionized the industrial machine and saw unheard-of fortunes from the mass production of textiles and coal coexisted with a society that forced its impoverished populations to live a life of dread.

This was not new for the British Isles—the British elite had been waging a war on the poor for centuries, dating to the first set of English Poor Laws in the 1600s. However, the Industrial Revolution reinvigorated the strict social relief policies in the country. The English had been known for seeing their poor—the “vagabonds,” the “paupers,” the “street urchins”—as “waste people,” or those who were unjustifiably perceived to be lazy. Wealthy English people were tired of economically supporting these “waste people” who seemingly drained the nation's wealth in welfare relief programs.

The Victorians believed that they had found the solution. As noted in Robert Southey's once-forgotten essay, “A people properly instructed in their duty, and trained up in habits of industry and hope, which induce prudence can never be too numerous...the

better the people are instructed, the happier and the better they will become; the happier they are, the more they will multiply; the more they multiply, greater will be the wealth and strength, and security, of the state." The unyielding Victorian mindset complained that the poor would remain so as long as the government continued to aid them; the only solution, in their eyes, was to force the poor to work dangerous jobs to build the wealth of the state rather than deplete its resources. This callous perspective was unconcerned about the actual livelihood of the poor—it was always about the wealth and status of the country at large.

Tapping into this resentment amongst the working majority, two government representatives, Edwin Chadwick and Nassau William Senior, wrote a report claiming that some people were better off receiving benefits than finding honest work. In their unmerciful opinion, poverty was seen largely as a lifestyle choice born of "fraud, indolence, and improvidence," and that "every penny bestowed that tends to render the condition of the pauper more eligible than that of the independent laborer, is a bounty of indolence and vice."

This nefarious duo proposed a new solution which would guarantee that a life on benefits would always be a life of poverty. The English

Poor Laws of 1834 set up workhouses and debtors' prisons filled with the most desperate of England's population—men, women, and children living in inhuman conditions, forced to work off however much money they had been given to subsist. The conditions were so unlivable that the laborers in the Andover Workhouse, a workhouse that produced fertilizer from animal bone, fought over the putrid gristle left on bones about to be processed; newborn babies died with such frequency that the workhouse master reported them as stillborn to avoid penalizations; and the work left laborers with stab wounds on their faces and hands from shards of bone. The English Poor Laws were not a system to relieve the poor—they were a method of social control that oppressed the most vulnerable group of people.

The acclaimed writer, Charles Dickens, did not always hold such a high status in English society; he, too, was familiar with the harsh, unfeeling hands of workhouse masters. As a boy, his father was sent to a debtors' prison and Dickens was forced to work at a workhouse. With no choice but to work until his father was free, Dickens suffered through long hours with little pay in dangerous conditions—typical of a working-class boy his age. When his parents finally managed to pay off their debts and were freed, they were so excited to have the extra money that they made Dickens work anyway.

This icy, egotistical English mindset that vilified the vulnerable; this cruel treatment that resolved personal worth into an exchange value to build England into a global superpower; this "poor relief" that displaced durable freedoms of the working class; and the greedy, merciless hands of the upper classes that oppressed their laborers—this is the English society that Dickens knew and hated. His writing exposed the underbelly of this society in an attempt to change the hearts of many.



A WORKHOUSE IN VICTORIAN LONDON.

Spiritualism and Ghosts

Edited for content by Dylan Gurrera, Directing & Dramaturgy Intern 2018-2019

Scrooge goes to unlock his door when, suddenly, the keyhole changes into the face of his dead partner Marley. Shaking this off as a mere hallucination, Scrooge enters his home to sit down after another long day. As he collapses into his big chair, two arms begin to emerge from each side to grab onto Scrooge; Marley's ghost has been waiting for him. Unlike other sentimental tales of the holiday season, *A Christmas Carol* takes us on a ghostly journey, inviting us to see the past, present, and future. Victorian England was host to a growing fascination with the paranormal, a movement that was especially obvious in the literature of the era. Authors like Wilkie Collins, H.G. Wells, and Charles Dickens dominated this form to provide tales that didn't just entertain but also offered moral instruction to their readers. The popularity of this fad was deeply rooted in the new realities of life in Victorian England. Beginning in the late 18th century, the

Industrial Revolution drastically changed what day-to-day life looked like for the average British citizen. Traditional English pastoral life, or a life rooted in rural farming, gave way to cramped and unsafe urban centers as the working classes flooded the cities seeking employment. The massive influx of workers created a demand for new positions to make sure work was being done. The new class of supervisory employees, who oversaw work of the laborers, and their families started a new, literate middle class who preferred a more accessible art form than poetry. Thus, new literary forms like periodicals of published short stories became popular, providing an extremely cheap platform for generic and repetitive ghost stories known as "penny dreadfuls." However, penny dreadfuls would have never existed if Victorian England had not become so fascinated with the supernatural.



ILLUSTRATION OF SCROOGE AND THE GHOST OF MARLEY
IN A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

Victorian England did not just revolutionize the industrial process; it also began a new age of scientific discovery. In the late 17th century, when Scottish farmers began to study the science of the earth, now termed geology, they began to notice things about the earth that did not add up to how the Judeo-Christian Bible depicts the earth's creation. Geology and other scientific advances led many away from the traditional Orthodox Christian Church, a movement commonly referred to as "the Victorian Crisis of Faith." Peter Lamont, a professor at the University of Edinburgh, states that this decline in religion and the rise of the scientific movement provoked a feeling of "disenchantment" in English society; with this new, factual explanation of their world, many began to miss the magic that religions and folklore offered. A gap between reality and the mystical was created and, because of this crisis of faith, people could create magical explanations that went outside of the tradition Judeo-Christian stories. The growing spiritualist movement became fascinated with

alternative explanations to reality, accounting for events with mysterious apparitions and other supernatural occurrences.

However, the massive increase in reports of supernatural experiences cannot solely be explained by a society that wanted to believe in magic. One theory is that the increasingly common use of gas lighting, which emitted carbon monoxide, a toxic gas, might have provoked haunting hallucinations. Similarly, hypnosis and mesmerism were coming into fashion, and ever-growing numbers of people sought their own supernatural experiences. Reports of spirits sending messages through knocking on walls were common, especially when playing with Ouija boards, ancient Chinese game boards that had recently been introduced to the West.

The defining belief of spiritualism was that the dead could return to Earth and commune with the living. Families would embrace the séance as a method of communicating with those who had died in a time when many young people lost their lives in factories. These drawing-room séances became an accepted social event in which a family would hire a “spiritualist,” or an expert in communing with their deceased loved ones.

Often these were out-of-work magicians who would travel from town to town, offering their deceptive services to grieving parents or widows. They used the same illusions they would in a magic act to convince the family that their loved one had returned to speak to them. Often these tricks would involve odd sounds, perhaps knocking or a bell ringing, “spirit writing,” or writing while under a trance, and frequently an item of furniture would move, seemingly of its own volition.

Charles Dickens utilized this phenomenon of spiritualism in *A Christmas Carol* to tell a ghostly story that aligned with the Judeo-Christian belief of charitable giving. The ghosts in *A Christmas Carol* were not considered works of the devil, but rather agents of the Judeo-Christian God sent to reform the sinful and greedy Scrooge. Scrooge is redeemed and the audience absorbs the story’s overarching moral lesson. Dickens’ clever usage of spiritualism, the literary fads that it generated, and the guiding principles of the most practiced religion in England led to the story’s celebrated success.



THE BOX ILLUSTRATION FOR A OUIJA BOARD FROM 1915 TO 1918.

Glossary

by Zach Elton, Directing & Dramaturgy Intern 2020–2021

Actuarial accounting: The statistical calculation of life expectancies for the purpose of determining insurance rates.

Almhouse: Charitable housing provided to people who can no longer work. They were generally maintained by charities or the trustees of a bequest.

Back payments: An overdue payment from a debtor to a creditor on money owed.

Beetling shop: Commonly called rag and bottle shops, they were like modern pawn shops. The poor sold any spare items they could find, like rags, bottles, bones, buttons, and metals, to the beetling shop.

Camden Town: An unfashionable part of London where the Cratchits live.

Charwoman: Shortened from “chore woman.” A charwoman is a cleaning woman who did daytime chores but did not live with her employer. A maid would do the same work, but they would live with the family.

Clergyman: A male priest, minister, or religious leader, especially a Christian one.

Clerk: A person employed, as in an office, to keep records, file, type, or perform other general office tasks.

Chief mourner: The person who organizes the funeral.

Counting house: A counting house or counting room was traditionally an office where the financial books of a business were kept. It was also where the business received appointments and correspondence relating to demands for payment. As the use of counting houses spread in the 19th century, so did their reputation as often uncomfortable and dreary places to work.

Comforter: A thick, woolen scarf, typically worn in the wintertime by those who could not afford an overcoat.

Covetous: Having or showing a great desire to possess something belonging to someone else.

Dowerless: Descriptor for a family who has no money to leave a daughter for her wedding or inheritance.

Executor: The person designated in a last will and testament to settle a deceased person's estate.

Gruel: Oatmeal or other hot cereal boiled in milk or water. It was a meager meal often offered to the poor at workhouses because it was cheap to make.

Half a crown: An English coin once worth five shillings, or sixty pence.

Humbug: Deceptive or false talk or behavior.

Mince pies: A staple of British Christmas feasts, these rich pies included sugar, currants, raisins, apples, lemon, orange peel, spices, and ground meat, all in a pie crust.

Undertaker: A person who dresses a body for burial.

Workhouse (poorhouse): A publicly funded home for the poor and destitute that put people to work doing mindless and difficult labor in exchange for food and shelter. Very little money was spent on their maintenance to dissuade people from seeking aid there. In Dickens' time, it was a disgrace to be sent to the poorhouse.

Post Show Activities

by Sophia B. Diaz & Jordan Wells, Education Interns 2020–2021

- Imagine yourself as the main character of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.
 - Who would the ghosts of your past, present, and future be?
 - What would they look like and what would they say to you?
 - Where would your spirits take you?
 - How would your story end?
- Fold a piece of paper into six equal-sized boxes. In the top three boxes, draw your ghosts of past, present, and future. Below each ghost, draw an image of somewhere that that ghost might take you. On the back of the paper, write a short paragraph about each location, and then write about how your story would end—do you think you would go through a transformation, or do you think you would stay the same?
- In this play, Scrooge tells us the story of his Christmas Eve. Choose a different character in Scrooge's story (Tiny Tim, Nephew Fred, one of the ghosts, etc.) and write a paragraph about that night from their perspective.
- Scrooge describes the night in great detail, including the places he goes and the characters he meets. Choose a location or a character from the play and draw/paint/collage a set or costume design for them.
- How does each ghost contribute to Scrooge's transformation? At the end of the play, do you think he has truly changed?
- What characteristics make up Scrooge's identity at the beginning of the play? What about at the end? With a partner, discuss whether you believe Scrooge was truly able to change his identity at the end of the play.



AN AD FOR WOMEN'S VICTORIAN OUTFITS.

Celebrations of Christmas Past

Edited for clarity by Meredith G. Healy

Christmas may seem like it has always been the biggest holiday in the Western world, but it was not always so. At the height of British leader Oliver Cromwell's power (from 1653 until his death in 1658), Scrooge's wish that "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled in his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart" was almost realized. Because of the holiday's connection to the Catholic Church, the new Protestant government outlawed Christmas celebrations altogether until the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Afterwards, it took 200 years before Victorian nostalgia would fully revive the holiday's traditions. Aided by Queen Victoria and writers like Dickens, the mid-19th century saw historical practices such as caroling and gift giving come back into fashion, while new traditions, like decorating Christmas trees and sending Christmas cards, became common practice.

Caroling began during the Middle Ages, and was featured at all major celebrations. The etymology of the word "carol" is contested. Some believe that it comes from the Greek word "choraules," combining the two words "choros" and "aulein," meaning chorus (singing) and reed instrument, respectively. The Catholic Church adopted this tradition in the 13th century, focusing it around the celebration of Christmas. The tradition of caroling continued to spread throughout Europe until England's conservative Parliament outlawed it in 1647. When caroling finally regained its place in holiday celebrations during the Victorian era, it changed to fit the times. The popularity of parlor music encouraged the adaptation of old songs to modern instruments, and new songs, like "Good King Wenceslas," abounded. In the 1820s, door-to-door caroling became popular. Groups caroled to raise money for charities and were often given mince pies and hot drinks by the families they sang for.

The exchange of presents was not nearly as popular a custom as caroling during the Victorian period and certainly nowhere near as



MODERN CHRISTMAS DECORATION OF A VICTORIAN HOME IN LONDON.

prevalent as it is today. Before the Industrial Revolution, toys were all handmade, and therefore too expensive for all but the wealthy. However, with the advent of factories, toys began to be mass-produced and became more accessible for the middle class. Poor children, whose families could not afford toys, were likely to get an orange or apple in their stockings. Among all classes, handmade gifts remained the most common. Family members often spent months making presents for one another, which ranged from fans and other personal ornaments to jams and candies.

The Victorian era is also responsible for the institution of the Christmas tree in England. Some say this practice dates to the ancient Germanic tribes, who brought evergreens into their homes to remind them of the coming spring during the difficult winter months. Christians slowly absorbed the tradition in



AN EARLY 20TH CENTURY CHRISTMAS CARD.

Germany, and the English King George III's German wife, Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, introduced Christmas trees to the British royal family when Princess Victoria was 13 years old in 1832. After her coronation, her husband, Prince Albert of Germany, brought the tradition to greater popularity by giving Christmas trees to English schools and army barracks. Woodcut prints of the royal family around their tree were published in magazines all over England and America, spreading the popularity and status of the Christmas tree in the Western world.

In the same vein as the Christmas tree, Christmas crackers began making their way to the holiday table, adding both aesthetic value and fun to the celebration. Originally, Christmas crackers were without their "crack"—they were popularized as candied almonds with love tokens wrapped in paper. But then, one day, a fire in the factory combined with a chemical to produce a large crack. From that mistake, the cracker was born—a long twisted paper package with a prize inside that produced a loud bang when pulled apart. Christmas crackers began their popularity in the early to mid-19th century and had solidified their place at the Christmas dinner table by the end of the century. Like so many other Victorian Christmas traditions,

Christmas crackers remain popular today. The Christmas card, like the Christmas tree, is a symbol that seems to have been around forever. However, Christmas cards only came into popular use in 1843, when inventor Sir Henry Cole commissioned John Calcott Horsley to design the first commercial Christmas card. Three years earlier, Cole had helped establish a uniform penny post throughout Great Britain. A batch of one thousand Christmas cards could be both printed and mailed for one shilling. Rather than religious or winter-themed imagery, early Christmas cards tended to depict children, animals, fairies, or floral designs to remind people of the coming spring. Queen Victoria sent out the first official Christmas card for the royal family in the 1840s, a tradition that still continues in many governments today. The United States followed suit in 1953, when President Eisenhower issued the first official White House card.

Along with these traditions, a Victorian Christmas also called for families to attend church, feast on hearty meals, and spend time with one another and close friends. Since their resurrection, these holiday practices have become pillars of Christmas celebrations, ensuring that, despite Scrooge and Oliver Cromwell's wishes, the holiday will not retreat into obscurity anytime soon.

Fiction for Social Justice

Edited for content by Dylan Gurerra, Directing & Dramaturgy Intern 2018-2019

As the Ghost of Christmas Present begins to wither away, two meager and miserable children emerge from the folds of her dress. "Spirit! Are they yours?" asks Scrooge. "They are Man's," replies the Ghost, "The boy is Ignorance. The girl is Want." While we might think of the holiday season as a joyful time, Dickens didn't want his readers to forget a deeper meaning to the holiday spirit. *A Christmas Carol* is as much a call for the rich to strip themselves of ignorance and help the poor as it is a sentimental holiday story about togetherness. This story exemplifies Dickens' concern for economic inequality, a subject that pervades not only *A Christmas Carol* but his entire body of work, and inspired future generations of social novelists to focus on different social problems like racism, sexism, classism, and more.

In 1858, Dickens wrote to his friend and fellow author Wilkie Collins with a statement that would describe much of what Dickens hoped to accomplish through his writing: "Everything that happens...shows beyond mistake that you can't shut out the world; that you are in it, to be of it; that you get yourself into a false position the moment you try to sever yourself from it; that you must mingle with it, and make the best of it, and make the best of yourself into the bargain." Dickens committed his career as a social novel writer to criticizing the hypocrisy and shortcomings of his society, especially regarding the issues of poverty and the impoverished. In the wake of the English Poor Laws of 1834 (which would only give relief to the poor in the form of improperly fitted workhouses), Dickens wrote his second novel, *Oliver Twist* (1838). The satirical components in the novel examine the lack of opportunity for most working-class children and orphans: a dismal choice between the workhouse, a life of crime, a prison, or an early grave.

Much of Dickens' work functioned similarly to satirize English society, criticize the underbelly of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution,



ILLUSTRATION OF A SCENE IN OLIVER TWIST.

and expose society's maltreatment of the economically disadvantaged. For example, Dickens' later novel *Little Dorrit* (published serially between 1855 and 1887) is set in the prison where Dickens' own father was imprisoned for debt. The novel satirizes the shortcomings of debtors' prisons, the lack of concern for laborers' safety, and the Victorian government. These novels exemplify an author who didn't shut the world out of his fiction, choosing to challenge what he saw in his world.

His popularity and readership show that the world didn't shut out his criticisms, either. His work not only moved his readers; his sharp social criticisms changed English society. Dickens' novels exposed the underworld of industrial progress, and gave words to the exploited laborer's lived experience. His novels swayed public opinion so sharply that his descriptions of Marshalsea and the Fleet Prisons in *Little Dorrit* and *The Pickwick Papers* caused these debtors' prisons to be shut down. Charles Dickens even won the appeal of Karl Marx, one of the more famous denouncers of capitalism, who stated that: "[Dickens]...issued to the world more political and social truths than have been uttered by all the professional politicians, publicists and moralists put together..."

Following in Dickens' footsteps, many authors devoted their literary work to exposing systematic societal problems, such as economic inequality, through social novels in their own respective countries. John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* tells the devastating story of an American working-class family. Focused on the Joad family's move to California, Steinbeck's novel describes the overwhelming competition for very few jobs, degrading work conditions, and animosity from locals and police. Forced into a migrant lifestyle, the Joads become caught in a battle between union workers and landowners in search of strikebreakers to hire. *The Grapes of Wrath* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1940 and sold almost half a million copies in the first year it was published. However, the book won more than just popular readership and literary accolades; the social criticism in *The Grapes of Wrath* led to congressional hearings on working conditions for migrants and changes to labor laws.

However, these laws do little to protect today's migrant workers, comprised largely of immigrants from Mexico and Latin America. Contemporary American author

T.C. Boyle followed Steinbeck's example with his 1995 novel, *The Tortilla Curtain*. Boyle's novel chronicles the lives of two families: the wealthy American Mossbachers and the impoverished and undocumented Mexican Rincóns. The two families become involved with each other when Delaney Mossbacher accidentally hits Candido Rincón with his car. *The Tortilla Curtain* begins with an epigraph from *The Grapes of Wrath*: "They ain't human. A human being wouldn't live like they do. A human being couldn't stand it to be so dirty and miserable." The farmer's rationale for his mistreatment of "Okie" migrant workers resonates uncomfortably in our own time. Boyle said that Steinbeck's effort inspired him to "imagine a new reality in a world that hasn't changed as much as it would like to believe."

As the successes of Dickens, Steinbeck, and Boyle illustrate, fiction continues to spark tremendous social change. Like the ghosts of *A Christmas Carol*, many social novels bring the miserable conditions endured by the oppressed into the homes of the privileged. They remind us of our shared responsibility to work with and for the disenfranchised.



A STILL FROM THE FILM ADAPTATION OF STEINBECK'S *THE GRAPES OF WRATH*

Homelessness and Poverty in Maine

by Alex Oleksy

Charles Dickens wrote his acclaimed novella *A Christmas Carol* nearly two centuries ago, but his story of families like the Cratchits struggling through the holiday season in poverty has never been more pertinent. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and in the face of upcoming winter weather, many organizers and artists continue to see Dickens' tale of charity as an important reminder to think of our community members who are facing poverty and homelessness, and to consider how we can support our neighbors in tough times.

On January 24, 2023, the Maine State Housing Authority counted more than 4,250 individuals who were currently without housing in the state, including over 1,000 residents housed in shelters or transitional housing. It is important to remember that this number only represents the unhoused population on a single day, and that the number of Mainers who have faced housing insecurity throughout 2023 is estimated to be far higher. With an unhoused population that is consistently in flux, the dangers of winter feel particularly detrimental, as even a single night outdoors can prove incredibly harmful.

Even when an individual or family has access to shelter, the economic restrictions of living in Maine can keep community members living from paycheck to paycheck. According to Maine Equal Justice, the rental housing market in our state is among the least affordable in the nation, with nearly 60% of low-income households paying more than half of their monthly wages on rent. One in eight adult Mainers face food insecurity, and one in five children experience the same. For the one in twelve Mainers living without health insurance, medical emergencies or changes in income can lead to a lack of heat or electricity, or can push them out of their homes during the holiday season.



A WOMAN PREPARES A HOLIDAY DINNER FOR HER COMMUNITY.

To address the increasing need for support, Portland has established various social safety nets for residents, including a Home Energy Assistance Program and several emergency shelters across the city, which house almost 1,200 individuals per night. They have also created an Encampment Crisis Response Team, meant to maintain the public health and safety of the community and those who are unhoused. There are also city programs working to transition community members to long-term solutions. In the 2023 fiscal year, the Oxford Street Shelter placed 96 individuals into permanent housing.

However, many Mainers—both housed and unhoused—have criticized city and state officials for causing more harm than good. On November 1, 2023, the Maine Department of Transportation cleared Portland's largest homeless encampment, located on Marginal Way. This marked the fourth time

such a sweep had been conducted in just five months. By the time the clearing was completed, spokesperson Jessica Grondin said Portland could only offer eight to 10 beds to displaced residents in a nearby city shelter. To many, these sweeps have highlighted a political desire to eliminate the public presence of the unhoused without offering adequate support to the displaced.

"I got out of prison in December [2022], and I had a voucher," unhoused resident Paul Hooper said to *Maine Public* in November 2023. "But I couldn't find any place to live, because the set limit [of the voucher] was way below the housing prices. So I couldn't find a place within the allotted time for the voucher limit, and so that made me homeless."

While advocates for the unhoused population call for governmental action, such as increased financial support for new housing developments and temporary shelter solutions, nonprofit organizations across Maine have stepped up to aid those in need when the state and city will not. *Maine Needs*, a social work program founded only months before the beginning of the COVID-19

pandemic, has grown by the thousands online and in their brick-and-mortar location, connecting donors with social workers, organizers, and individuals in need across the state. *Preble Street*, another lauded community support organization, runs a *Food Security Hub* makes over 2,000 hot meals every single day, including Christmas Day.

"It's a great way to spend Christmas morning," Emily Yates, a professional chef with *Preble Street*, told *News Center Maine* last year. "I've had so much fun. Everyone is really excited. The staff is excited to eat. It's a really special time. I'm happy to be here."

As the curtain rises and falls on another merry production of *A Christmas Carol* at *Portland Stage*, we hope that Scrooge's discordant praise of "prisons or workhouses" for the poor sparks a moment of reflection in our own community. While you may not be able to provide the biggest Christmas turkey for all your neighbors, there are many ways to support those in need this holiday season through donating food, your time, or your energy to advocate for those neighbors.



VOLUNTEERS AT A MAINE NEEDS EVENT.

Winter Holidays Worldwide

Edited for content by Macey Downs

Since the beginning of recorded time, cultures around the world have held feasts and rituals to mark the coming and going of seasons. Winter celebrations are especially important, providing comfort and cheer through the coldest and darkest part of the year. Many modern wintertime holidays are rooted in the ancient practice of observing the winter solstice. In Europe, for example, the Roman Saturnalia, the medieval Feast of Fools, and the Germanic pagan Yuletide have all been adapted and absorbed into modern winter festivals. Like their predecessors, contemporary holiday feasts often celebrate light, which is scarce in the wintertime, with candles, bonfires, and electric Christmas lights. Feasting and traditional foods are also essential parts of winter holidays worldwide, celebrating the bounty of a good year and the generosity of family and friends.

North American Indigenous communities have been celebrating winter holidays for centuries. One common celebration across the world among Indigenous communities is the winter solstice. In the US, this is usually around December 21st, and is when the sun is at its lowest point in the sky, resulting in the shortest day and longest night of the year. Some Tribal Nations celebrate the winter solstice with ceremonies and festivals, while others use it as a time to turn inward and intentionally care for their spiritual selves, mind, and body, or loved ones. Tribes in the Abenaki Nation—who were forcibly removed from much of Maine and still reside in western Maine, Canada, and Vermont—look to the winter solstice as the mark that the next new moon will bring with it the start of the new year.

Christmas is one of the most widely celebrated holidays in the world, and its traditions grow more diverse as its geographic spread expands. In Venezuela, people celebrate Christmas by attending one of nine carol services leading up to the *Nochebuena de Navidad* on Christmas Eve, after which families share a festive meal. In Australia, where Christmas falls in the middle of summer and temperatures often reach 100 degrees, pool parties and trips to the beach have become tradition. “Carols by Candlelight,” an Australian



A WOMAN DRESSED AS THE CHRISTKIND.

tradition beginning in Melbourne in the 1930s, brings entire communities across the country to streets and parks, where live bands accompany their caroling. Right here, in the US, Christmas customs vary by region: in New Orleans, a huge ox decorated with holly and ribbon is paraded around the streets, while in Alaska, a colorful star on a pole is taken from door to door. The beloved figure of Santa Claus also varies widely across cultures. American Christmas imagery—heavily influenced by Clement Clarke Moore’s poem “’Twas the Night Before Christmas” and Coca-Cola’s advertisements by Haddon Sundblom—depicts a jolly, red-suited man with a reindeer-drawn sleigh. In Germany, however, children are visited by both the gift-giving Christ Child, called Christkind, who appears on Christmas Eve, and *Weihnachtsmann*, or Christmas Man, who arrives on Christmas Day to distribute gifts for good behavior. In Hungary, *Mikulás*—or Saint Nicholas—visits children on the evening of December 6. Mikulás is dressed in red bishop’s robes and accompanied by a devil, Krampus, who carries dry twigs with which to whip naughty children.

In addition to Christmas, many European countries observe other traditional winter feast days. In Sweden and several other Scandinavian countries, for example, the Feast of Saint Lucy—sometimes called Santa Lucia—is held on December 13. It celebrates the martyrdom of the fourth-century saint who consecrated her virginity to God and distributed her dowry to the poor in order to avoid an arranged marriage with a pagan. Enraged, her bridegroom denounced her as a Christian, and she was martyred for her faith.

On the morning of the Feast of Saint Lucy, the eldest daughter in each household dons a white robe, red sash, and crown of greens and candles to honor the saint. Followed by her younger siblings, she serves a breakfast of coffee and traditional Lucia buns to her parents in bed. The name Lucy derives from the Latin “lux,” meaning light, and so the Feast of Saint Lucy also celebrates the approaching return of the sun after many dark months.

Many cultures celebrate other wintertime holidays, which often center on light. In the late fall, for example, Hindus celebrate the festival of Diwali, the name of which means “row of lights.” Diwali celebrations are rooted in the ancient Sanskrit epic, the *Ramayana*, and mark the return of Lord Rama to his kingdom after defeating the demon Ravana. On a moonless night, rows of clay oil lamps, called *diwa* or *dipa*, are lit to commemorate the triumph of good over evil and announce the beginning of winter. In preparation for Diwali, people clean and decorate their homes and dress in their best clothes. They celebrate with family and friends, exchanging gifts and eating elaborate meals. They also watch parades, fireworks, and street performers.

The Thai festival Loy Krathong is celebrated on the full moon of the twelfth lunar month, which usually falls in November on the Western calendar. Loy Krathong is roughly translated as “floating lotus cups” in English. Families and friends gather near rivers, pools, ponds, and canals to set afloat candles in lotus-shaped paper boats known as krathongs. The lotus blossom symbolizes the flowering of the human spirit, and the act of releasing the raft shows respect to the goddess of the water and represents the release of grudges and resentments. Fairs with performances



LANTERASATA LOY KRATHONG FESTIVAL.

and dances, family dinners, and singing are all a part of the celebration, which ends with a fireworks display after the little boats have been launched.

Chanukah, also called the Festival of Lights, is an eight-night festival celebrated by Jewish people around the world. Families light candles on the *chanukkiyah*, a nine-branched candelabra, for eight nights to commemorate an ancient miracle in the Holy Temple of Jerusalem. In 165 BCE, a small band of freedom fighters known as the Maccabees recaptured Jerusalem from the Seleucid Empire. Under Greek rule, the Holy Temple had been rededicated to Zeus. Upon regaining control, the Maccabees immediately sought to rededicate it to their God, building a new altar and new holy vessel, known as the Eternal Light, to replace those used by their oppressors. They found, however, that there was only enough oil to light the Eternal Light for one night, yet the oil miraculously lasted for eight nights, the same amount of time necessary to prepare a fresh supply. Jewish families have celebrated Chanukah ever since by exchanging gifts, sharing traditional meals, and playing games such as dreidel.

In the US, some African American families observe Kwanzaa, a Pan-African holiday that was created during the American civil rights movement of the 1960s. Kwanzaa is a secular holiday that is not associated with any one religion. This holiday celebrates African heritage and culture. Over the week-long celebration, families light seven black, red, and green candles on the kinara, a traditional candle holder. Each day and corresponding candle represents a principle: unity, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, faith, purpose, creativity, and self-determination. Families share meals, art, and gifts for the whole week of Kwanzaa.

Winter traditions and festivals come during the darkest and coldest part of the year, when love, generosity, and cheer are most appreciated. Despite their differences, the common themes and symbols of winter celebrations all over the world suggest a profound human need to band together and celebrate in difficult times. In doing so, we become part of a global community, connected to both our ancestors and people around the world today.

Community Connections: Interview with Tara Balch

Edited for clarity and length by Alex Oleksy

In *A Christmas Carol*, the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future teach Scrooge the strength of community and giving back, inspiring him to buy the “prize turkey” for the Cratchit family, who are unable to afford a proper Christmas feast. As the unhoused population has grown in Portland in recent years, many organizations have developed to support those in need through donations of food and other necessities, such as hygiene products and clothing.

One such nonprofit is Maine Needs, which started in 2019 as a Facebook group aiming to connect donors with caseworkers and street outreach teams to create a network of support in the Portland community. We sat down with Communications Director Tara Balch to learn more about Maine Needs and the ways community members can contribute this holiday season.

Alex Oleksy (AO): *To get us started, can you tell us about your position and what your day-to-day looks like at Maine Needs?*

Tara Balch (TB): So I am the Communications Director at Maine Needs, and I've had my position for about a year and a half. My biggest responsibility day to day is running social media, emails, and all of the community outreach.

AO: *What did that first year and a half look like, and what was your organization's focus?*

TB: The main focus was to fill the gaps for other nonprofits. So we would go around to other nonprofits and say, “Hey, what's lacking for you guys? What would be helpful?”—because we didn't want to duplicate any efforts that were happening already in the community. A lot of them said, “Our caseworkers spend a lot of time trying to find their clients basic things like toilet paper and clothes that fit, and they need to be doing other things.” So we said, “Okay, we'll do that.” That's basically how it all started, the first year and a half, probably



TARA BALCH, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AT MAINE NEEDS.

two years, was all during COVID. We started in a physical space in 2020, so that was a tricky time to get things going. But people still showed up to volunteer, and we masked and had air filters, and were as cautious as we could be. And it really is beautiful, how it all worked out.

AO: *Can you tell us more about how Maine Needs connects with the community?*

TB: We're still primarily social media-powered, and we have a pretty big following on Instagram and Facebook. Through those followers, we're able to reach a lot more people just through people sharing things. We also have a lot of great support from the business community, so there's a lot of businesses who will send an email and say, “Hey, we want to do a fundraiser for you. Is that okay?” And we're like, “Absolutely!” I think that really helps reach folks as well.

AO: How has social media changed the way Maine Needs works with the people of Portland?

TB: That's an interesting question. I think that we try to help inform the community of what's going on and a lot of different ways that they can help, because there's people of different socioeconomic levels and different abilities. So we try to present a lot of different ways that people can jump in and be involved, no matter what their situation is, and I think that's something that helps people stay engaged in a meaningful way.

AO: How have you seen your work change since the inception of Maine Needs in 2019?

TB: In general, there's just been a lot of growth, and it's happened really quickly. We do our best to reach all of Maine, so we'll deliver to all the counties. We have volunteers who will deliver, because it's a challenge for caseworkers to get down to our neck of the woods. But in being able to reach more organizations and agencies that support people, it's brought a lot more requests and referrals our way, so we're fielding a lot more need. I think right now we have about 300 requests in our inbox, so it's a lot to keep up with. We need more things. We're sending out more things, and I think the needs in general throughout the state have grown a lot in the past few years, just with the rising cost of everything, and with the housing crisis, so things have just gotten busier and busier. But we're really lucky to have volunteers continuing to show up and help get all that work done.

AO: What drew you to work with Maine Needs?

TB: I was employed elsewhere at the time, but my job was on pause because of the pandemic. I'd been following Maine Needs for a while on social media, and was always interested in helping out, but just could never find the time. So while I wasn't working, I thought that I gotta do something that means something with my time. And I just went and started volunteering on a Monday, and then I went every single Monday for a year, and then this job came up, and I applied for it.



VOLUNTEERS AT A RECENT MAINE NEEDS EVENT.

AO: Did you find a community volunteering at Maine Needs before you started working there full time?

TB: Yeah, absolutely. And it's really interesting, too, because there are people who come pretty regularly, who will do the same day every week, but a lot of people come when they can fit it in their schedule, or college kids will come up when they have the summer off. You're always meeting new people. And I think that was what was really interesting to me, because I don't think I would have gotten a chance otherwise to actually interact with all of these different people all at once, working towards a common goal together. I think it is really uniting, getting to chat with people about what brought them there, and their lives. It was incredible.

AO: What is something that you're working on now that particularly excites you?

TB: Right at this very moment, we are working on a holiday fundraiser, so we're doing an auction online. We solicited donations from the community, and it kind of was anything goes, so we got artists and retailers and business owners and breweries and anyone who wanted to contribute to help their community. This is the third year that we've done it. Last year, I think we had 30-some donations, and this year,

DIGGING DEEPER

we have about 150. So, the response from the community has just been so beautiful. I mean, it blows my mind all the time. It's that kind of thing that keeps my job really exciting, seeing the ways that people want to show up for each other and figuring out how they can, and being creative with those efforts. It's just the coolest thing to watch. That's really what's keeping me going right now.

AO: How can people get involved in the work of your organization?

TB: Obviously volunteering, which is in person. We do three-hour shifts, and we're open Monday through Saturday, so we try to stay open to accommodate people's schedules as much as we can. Then there's donating, which can be material goods or financially. I keep a list on our website updated every week of what we're accepting, and it changes really quickly based on the requests that we're getting in from caseworkers and the needs of the community. We also have a weekly wish list on our website that people can order things directly from and have them shipped to us. And then we have an option on our website to also give financial aid, which people can do as a one-time donation, or a recurring donation. But also just following along on social media and sharing our posts, I think, is really important. As we continue to grow and get more requests, and have more needs to meet

in the community, we really need as much help as we can get to source those items. We also try to keep the community updated on what's happening. For example, right now, Portland is dealing with encampment sweeps that keep happening. So we try to let the community know that this is what's happening, and this is what you can do to get involved in finding a solution; reaching out to your elected officials and holding them accountable. That's a big part of our work, too, advocating for these kinds of causes that are directly affecting our shared community.

AO: Anything else you would like to add?

TB: I think what's important for the community to know is that everyone's welcome. Maine Needs is for everyone. We welcome help from anyone, ideas from anyone. I think it can feel intimidating to try and get involved in an organization, especially as a volunteer. But once you get in there and see how everything works, I think it feels a lot more accepting, possible, and approachable.

You can keep up with the work of Maine Needs at @maineneeds on Facebook and Instagram.

Outreach & Advocacy

by The Editors

This section is dedicated to offering an easy way for our readers to connect to the issues we discuss in *PlayNotes*.

Are you or a loved one affected by one of the issues we discussed? Contact these organizations for support. Want to make a difference in how these issues are handled in our community? Volunteer with these organizations or donate towards their causes.

Maine Needs

"Maine Needs started in January of 2019 in a garage north of Portland and as a Facebook group to create a bridge between those donating things regularly with those who were working with caseworkers, teachers, nurses and street outreach teams and knew what specific, basic items were needed by so many, ie; main needs. Things like baby clothes, diapers, cleaning supplies, toiletries, backpacks, bedding, kitchen items, children's toys, books and art supplies. The goal was to use social media as an active bulletin board, informing the community of what the community's needs were and learning together. That Facebook group grew to 9000+ people who wanted to

help and is still full of local providers making requests. In the Spring of 2019, a mini donation center inside of the Root Cellar was set up for caregivers with babies. They are committed to keeping our doors wide open to anyone in the community that wants to help and have welcomed in over 1000 volunteers."

Website: <https://www.maineneeds.org/>

Racial Equity and Justice Organization

"REJ Org is a BIPOC founded and operated organization focused on healing, supporting, and building up BIPOC families in Wabanaki Territory (Maine). They approach their work with the idea that families have the right to thrive, not just to survive. They provide resources to support our community in our collective journey to accessing more equality, resources, safety, cultural wellness, rest, empowerment, and opportunity. Family Care, Cultural Continuation, Liberation, and Healing are the foundational values of their work. REJ Org brings families together through culturally nourishing outdoor and indoor gatherings. They are focused on doing activities that bring collective happiness, and gathering resources for families and youth experiencing systemic barriers, discrimination, and racial battle fatigue to make gatherings as healing as possible."

Website: <https://www.racialequityandjustice.org/>

Maine People's Housing Coalition

"PHC is a network of people centered in greater Portland, Maine who believe that housing is a human right. Our mission is to destigmatize, decriminalize, and end homelessness. We work towards our mission by organizing as many people as possible—in mutual aid projects that build solidarity and make our conditions more survivable; and in political projects that expose and overcome the interlocking oppressions of racism, mass incarceration, misogyny, settler colonialism, our failing child protective systems, mental health, the overdose crisis, and how all that contributes to what we call homelessness."

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/phc.me/>

Maine Prison Advocacy Coalition

"MPAC exists to advocate for humane, ethical and positive changes in Maine's prisons and jails. Based on the lived experience of current and formerly incarcerated people, their families, friends and allies, we work in coalition with a variety of individuals and organizations to identify, organize, activate and evaluate these long overdue changes, and to work to make our communities more welcoming to those who return to us. We also work with those who remain inside to ensure a life of dignity and care."

Website: <https://www.maineprisoneradvocacy.org/>

Survivor Speak

"We are a Maine-based, survivor-led organization working to end sex trafficking and sexploitation through centering the experiences, healing, voices, and leadership of survivors. SSUSA does outreach, education, and organizes survivors of sexploitation, prostitution, and sex trafficking so that survivors' experiences and wisdom can begin to steer the anti-trafficking movement to holistically address sexploitation and its oppressive roots of racism, poverty, and misogyny. SSUSA educates and engages current stakeholders in the movement, including law enforcement, members of the judicial system, the Department of Health and Human Services, legislators, providers, and the community at large. Our mission is to provide education, advocacy, and mentoring for survivors and the communities that serve them to ensure radical and sustainable change and to end sexploitation in Maine."

Website: <http://www.survivorsspeakusa.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SurvivorSpeakUsa>

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The Opportunity Alliance (TOA)

"We are a community-based nonprofit that builds stronger communities in Cumberland County and across Maine by helping individuals, children, and families navigate crisis, access basic needs, and improve their neighborhoods. Whether you or a loved one needs assistance, or you are looking to support your neighborhood, TOA is a great place to start. In the community for over 50 years, we offer an array of services and resources: from crisis response, mental health and substance use supports, heating assistance, and homelessness prevention to childcare and senior volunteer programs, help starts here."

Website: <https://www.opportunityalliance.org/>

Project Relief Maine

"We are a group of young people across occupied Wabanaki territory building local power to eradicate white supremacy."

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ProjectReliefME>

Financial Assistance

Portland Social Services

"The Social Services Division strives to provide quality programs to low-income Portland residents that encourage dignity, self-respect, and self-reliance in the transition from public assistance to self-sufficiency."

Website: <http://www.portlandmaine.gov/225/Social-Services>

Food Assistance

Preble Street

"The mission of Preble Street is to provide accessible, barrier-free services to empower people experiencing problems with homelessness, housing, hunger, and poverty and to advocate for solutions to those problems."

Website: <https://www.preblestreet.org/>

Wayside Food Programs

"Wayside has been increasing access to nutritious food for those in need in Southern Maine since 1986."

Website: <http://www.waysidemaine.org/>

Holiday Assistance

Maine Children's Home Christmas Program

"Each year, the Christmas Program at the Maine Children's Home distributes boxes of gifts and clothing to more than 1,700 financially disadvantaged children throughout the state."

Website: <https://mainechildrenshome.org/programs/christmas-program>

Youth Services

Maine Youth Justice

"We are a non-partisan campaign to end youth incarceration and reinvest in the community. We have over 20 youth organizers that meet every week. We believe people deserve basic human rights that include healthcare, housing, food, education, etc. Maine's juvenile system is failing our youth and we are calling for an end to that, and to bring the kids home and give them programs that will help them succeed--not create more trauma. We need all the voices we can!"

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Maineyouthjustice>

Portland Stage Company

Education Programs

Student Matinee Series

The Portland Stage Student Matinee Program provides students with discounted tickets for student matinees. Following the performance, students participate in a conversation with the cast and crew, which helps them gain awareness of the creative process and encourages them to think critically about the themes and messages of the play.

Play Me a Story

Experience the fun and magic of theater on Saturday mornings with Play Me a Story! Ages 4 – 10 enjoy a performance of children’s stories followed by an interactive acting workshop with Portland Stage’s Education Artists for \$15. Sign up for the month and save or pick individual days that work for you. Build literacy, encourage creativity and spark dramatic dreams!

Shakespeare Teen Company

In April and May of 2024, students will come together as an ensemble to create a fully-staged production of Shakespeare’s Hamlet in Portland Stage’s studio theater. Participants in grades 7-12 take on a variety of roles including acting, costume design, marketing, and more!

Vacation and Summer Camps

Dive into theater for five exciting days while on your school breaks! Our theater camps immerse participants in all aspects of theater, culminating in an open studio performance for friends and family at the end of the week! Camps are taught by professional actors, directors, and artisans. Students are invited to think imaginatively, critically, and creatively in an environment of inclusivity and safe play.

PLAY Program

An interactive dramatic reading and acting workshop tour for elementary school students in grades pre-k through 5. Professional education artists perform children’s literature and poetry and then involve students directly in classroom workshops based on the stories. Artists actively engage students in in small group workshop using their bodies, voices, and imaginations to build understanding of the text while bringing the stories and characters to life. PLAY helps develop literacy and reading fluency, character recall, understanding of themes, social emotional skills, physical storytelling, and vocal characterization. The program also comes with a comprehensive Resource Guide filled with information and activities based on the books and poems.

Directors Lab

Professional actors perform a 50-minute adaptation of a Shakespeare play, followed by a talkback. In 2024 we will be touring *Much Ado About Nothing* to middle and high schools. After the performance, students engage directly with the text in an interactive workshop with the actors and creative team. In these workshops, students practice effective communication, creative collaboration, rhetoric, and critical analysis. The program also comes with a comprehensive Resource Guide filled with information and resources about the play we are focusing on. Directors Lab puts Shakespeare’s language into the hands and mouths of the students, empowering them to be the artists, directors, and ensemble with the power to interpret the text and produce meaning.

Portland Stage Company

Anita Stewart *Artistic Director*
Martin Lodish *Managing Director*

Artistic & Production Staff

Todd Brian Backus *Literary Manager*
Jacob Coombs *Associate Technical Director*
Ted Gallant *Technical Director*
Myles C. Hatch *Stage Manager*
Meg Lydon *Stage Manager*
Mary Lana Rice *Production Manager & Lighting Supervisor*
Seth Asa Sengel *Asst. Production Manager & Sound Supervisor*
Emily St. John *Props Master*
Susan Thomas *Costume Shop Manager*

Administrative Staff

Paul Ainsworth *Business Manager*
Isabel Bates *Education Assistant*
Beka Bryer *Front of House Associate*
Covey Crolius *Development Director*
Chris DeFilipp *House Manager*
Erin Elizabeth *Marketing Director*
Allison Fry *Executive Assistant*
James A. Hadley *Assistant Marketing Director*
Lindsey Higgins *Development Associate*
Jennifer London *Company Manager*
Renee Myhaver *Assistant Box Office Manager*
Donald Smith *Audience Services Manager*
Julianne Shea *Education Administrator*
Madeleine St. Germain *Front of House Associate*
Michael Dix Thomas *Education Director*
Adam Thibodeau *House Manager*

Apprentice Company

Katie Barnes *Stage Management Apprentice*
Ellis Collier *Education Apprentice*
Lucie Green *Company Management Apprentice*
Julia Jennings *Directing & Dramaturgy Apprentice*
Ellery Kenyon *Education Apprentice*
Isee Martine *Scenic Design Apprentice*
Claire Lowe *Electrics Apprentice*
Alex Oleksy *Directing & Dramaturgy Apprentice*
Elizabeth Sarsfield *Stage Management Apprentice*
Jessi Stier *Directing & Dramaturgy Apprentice*
Crow Traphagen *Costumes Apprentice*
Elena Truman *Costumes Apprentice*

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