

MARLEY'S GHOST

Another Christmas Carol

Jeff Goode

BROADWAY PLAY PUBLISHING INC

56 E 81st St., NY NY 10028-0202

212 772-8334 fax: 212 772-8358

BroadwayPlayPubl.com

MARLEY'S GHOST

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First printing: January 2006

I S B N: 0-88145-294-7

Book design: Marie Donovan

Word processing: Microsoft Word

Typographic controls: Ventura Publisher

Typeface: Palatino

Printed and bound in the U S A

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff Goode is an actor, director and screenwriter, and the author of over fifty plays, musicals and childrens shows.

A corn-fed Iowa youth, Jeff attended the University of Iowa, where he co-founded (with Todd Ristau and Stan Ruth) the original No Shame Theater (out of the back of a pickup truck), and began writing to feed his acting habit.

During his summers, Jeff traveled to Bar Harbor, Maine to help establish the Unusual Cabaret, and became the companys first resident playwright when the other playwrights missed their flights.

After graduating from two different colleges with degrees in everything but playwriting, Jeff moved to Chicago and wrote THE EIGHT: REINDEER MONOLOGUES and hasnt had a moments peace since.

In 1997, Jeff came to Los Angeles to write the pilot for M T Vs *Undressed*, and later created the animated series *American Dragon: Jake Long* for the Disney Channel.

You can follow Jeffs further adventures on his website: jeffgoode.com.

also published by Broadway Play Publishing Inc:
DRACULA RIDES AGAIN

MARLEY'S GHOST was produced in November 2003 by Circle X Theater Company (Producing Artistic Directors Tara Flynn and Tim Wright, production produced by Ken Metz and Stan Weightman Jr) at the Hollywood Forever Cemetery (CA). The cast and creative contributors were:

PHANTOMRichard Augustine
HOUSEKEEPER/MRS CRATCHIT Rebecca Avery
TUTTLE Anthony Backman
GRAVEDIGGER'S WIFE/BELLE/BELLE Emma Barton
SCROOGE/YOUNG SCROOGE Bob Clendenin
GRAVEDIGGER/BEGGAR Ahmad Enani
DIMINUTIVE GHOSTKevin Fabian
MARLEY/YOUNG MARLEY Keythe Farley
BOB CRATCHIT Matt Ford
PAWNBROKER/MARGARET Jennifer Kays
JENNY/MRS FEZZIWIG Ally LoPrete
WILKINS Ross Mackenzie
GIANT GHOST Johanna McKay
REVEREND Todd Sible
LAUNDRESS/TINY TIM David Paul Wichert

Understudies: Anthony Backman, Beatrice Casini, Tom Elliott, Joe Tyler Gold, Chris LoPrete, Ross MacKenzie, Tara Platt, Jessica Toth

Director Matthew Bretz
Production Design Gary Smoot
Lighting Design Geoff Korf
Soundscape Paul Hepker
Costume Design Cynthia Herteg
Stage Manager Christi Vadovic

MARLEY'S GHOST was also produced in November 2003 by Pantheatrics at the TripleForce Artistic Center, Columbus OH. The cast and creative contributors were:

REVEREND/PHANTOM Richard Isbell
SCROOGE Michael Wilson
GRAVEDIGGER'S WIFE/MRS FEZZIWIG . Megan Cooper
GRAVEDIGGER/PAWNBROKERRichard Napoli
MARLEY Rene Saxton
WILKINS/BEGGAR Eric Ewing
TUTTLE David Belskie
BOB CRATCHIT Justin Moon
JENNY/BELLE/LAUNDRESS Courtney DeCosky
HOUSEKEEPER/MRS CRATCHIT Yvonne Isbell
GIANT GHOST Michael Parsons
DIMINUTIVE GHOST Kendra Lyn
YOUNG MARLEY James Logan
YOUNGSCROOGE Isaac Nippert
MARGARET Christie Pitko
TINY TIM Amanda Ciani
CRATCHIT CHILDREN Brianna Biffath,
Devin Isbell, Katelyn Whitted

Director Dale Gregory
Production manager Arnie Thies
Stage managers Isaac Nippert,
Courtney DeCosky & Eric Ewing
House Manager Joyce Thies

PRODUCTION NOTES

Scenery and characters come and go as effortlessly as phantoms throughout the play, because, unlike SCROOGE's tale, which begins in the natural world, MARLEY's adventure occurs entirely within the ghostly realm from start to finish. For MARLEY is dead...to begin with.

The PHANTOM, the GIANT GHOST and the DIMINUTIVE GHOST are character designations for the three ghosts, borrowed from Dickens' descriptions in the original novel. However, the physical appearance of these characters is not integral to the plot of MARLEY'S GHOST, and should not be taken as a requirement of this script.

If the play is performed in repertory with an ongoing production of A CHRISTMAS CAROL, it may be preferable to use the costumes already designed for those characters, regardless of whether they are diminutive or gigantic or phantasmal.

The playwright always encourages color-blind and gender-blind casting—choosing the best actor for the role, regardless of their own personal race or gender. The fact that SCROOGE is an elderly British man does not necessarily mean that the actor playing him has to be.

INTERMISSION

If you wish to add an act break, the JUDGE can simply call a short recess at any time, and then gavel the court back in session after the break. The author recommends an intermission after the BELLE and SCROOGE scene, at the end of page 46. To wit:

DIMINUTIVE GHOST: What is it that misery loves, your honor?

(The GIANT GHOST unexpectedly bursts into tears.)

GIANT GHOST: The Court will take a short recess to compose itself.

(The GIANT GHOST sobs and runs out of the room.)

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO *then commences with:*

GIANT GHOST: *(Gaveling)* Court is now in session. Order! Order! Now, if there is nothing further from the prosecution?



1. MARLEY'S FUNERAL

(A cemetery outside of London. Before an open grave.

REVEREND HEDGES *performs the ceremony.*

A GRAVEDIGGER *and his WIFE wait nearby with shovels.*

EBENEZER SCROOGE *is the sole mourner.*)

REVEREND: We are gathered here today to lay to rest the earthly remains of our dear departed brother Jacob Timothy Marley. May he rest in peace. What can one say about a man like Jacob Marley...?

(Pause. He looks around helplessly, at a loss for words. No one offers any suggestions, so...)

REVEREND: Amen.

(SCROOGE comes over to shake the REVEREND's hand.)

SCROOGE: Beautiful ceremony, Reverend. Very concise. Economy of words. He would have liked that.

REVEREND: You must be the next of kin.

SCROOGE: I'm his business partner, yes. Ebenezer Scrooge.

REVEREND: Oh good, because there is still a bit of business to attend to.

SCROOGE: What's that?

REVEREND: The fee.

SCROOGE: What fee?

REVEREND: For the service.

SCROOGE: I wasn't aware that I had done you a service.

REVEREND: The memorial service. The blessing upon his soul.

SCROOGE: Oh, that. Think nothing of it, Reverend. I am happy to oblige. Yours is not a breed of superstition I particularly subscribe to. But the rituals are amusing enough, and seemingly harmless overall. And we would have buried him anyway, so it wouldn't be right to charge you for it.

REVEREND: Charge me?! I'll have you know, Mister Scrooge, that the laying to rest of the deceased is neither superstitious, nor amusing. It is one of the most sacred and fundamental sacraments in all of Christendom. That's why one hires a clergyman to perform it.

SCROOGE: Hires?

REVEREND: Yes, hires.

SCROOGE: You don't expect me to *pay* you for exploiting the occasion of my dear partner's death to practice your bizarre and antiquated customs over his helpless corpse?

REVEREND: There is nothing bizarre or antiquated about commending the spirit to the hereafter.

SCROOGE: The human spirit is a humbug.

REVEREND: A humb—?? Your language, Mister Scrooge! I am a minister. And there are ladies present.

SCROOGE: Minister, indeed! A minister of finance! If I had known that your interest in Jacob Marley's soul was purely mercenary, I would have put a stop to it immediately. This is a *funeral*, sir.

REVEREND: Yes! I know! I performed the service!

SCROOGE: A service you perform only for the wealthy dead, I take it, and those with a pocketful of change to scavenge. What happens to the poor and indigent? Cast into the Thames with a stone about their necks?

REVEREND: Of course not. Every soul is equal in the eyes of heaven, regardless of wealth or stature. But I hope you're not suggesting that His Divine Magnanimity excuses your debt to the church?

SCROOGE: I hope you're not suggesting that I pay you for a service you would have performed anyway, with or without my consent.

REVEREND: That is precisely what I am suggesting, Mister Scrooge. I came here in good faith, in your time of need, to say a few words over your friend—

SCROOGE: If words are your commerce, then you should do as any manufacturer of defective products, and take them back, for I have no use for them.

REVEREND: I do take them back! May he *never* rest in peace. And may you never find it either, so long as you walk this Earth. Nor ever after.

SCROOGE: Bah!

REVEREND: You are an affront to humanity and decency, Mister Scrooge—you, and any man like you.

SCROOGE: I'm glad you got that off your chest. Now get out of my sight before I charge you a physician's fee for the therapeutic release.

REVEREND: This discourtesy will haunt you, Ebenezer Scrooge.

SCROOGE: Bah!

(The REVEREND storms out. He storms back in.)

REVEREND: Merry Christmas.

SCROOGE: Humbug!

(The REVEREND exits again. The GRAVEDIGGER nudges his WIFE. She reluctantly approaches SCROOGE.)

WIFE: Excuse me. Mister Scrooge, is it? Mayhap you will remember me? I am the wife of the gravedigger.

SCROOGE: What's that to me?

WIFE: My husband asked me to speak to you.

SCROOGE: What kind of man is he that he cannot speak for himself?

WIFE: He's a deaf mute man, sir.

SCROOGE: Ah. Yes, that's right. What is it then?

WIFE: Well, we couldn't help overhearing your quarrel with the Reverend.

(The GRAVEDIGGER nods and points.)

SCROOGE: And now you're wondering if I intend to pay your fees, as well? You needn't worry. Ebenezer Scrooge always settles his debts. *(Reaching for his purse)* Now, how much was it again?

WIFE: Nine shillings, sir.

SCROOGE: The price you quoted me this summer was six.

WIFE: But that was months ago. We thought you wanted him buried then.

SCROOGE: He wasn't dead then.

WIFE: Then why were you asking about it? You're not involving us in some grisly undertaking, are you? ...Because that'll cost you extra.

SCROOGE: Nothing of the sort. A good businessman is prepared for every contingency, that is all: Sudden illness. Fall from a horse. Swallowed some arsenic. Do you wait until the bodies arrive at the cemetery to start digging a hole?

WIFE: Of course, we do.

SCROOGE: Well, you see, that's poor planning. That's why you live in a little cottage here on the cemetery grounds. You would do better to dig your holes in summer when the ground is soft. Opportunity, madam.

WIFE: But it's winter now and the ground is hard.
...And it's Christmas!

SCROOGE: What the devil does that matter? I was promised one grave, dug and filled, for six shillings, and I'll not be swindled out of a penny more.

WIFE: And we won't bury him for less than nine. We'll not be swindled either, Mister Scrooge.

SCROOGE: Well, then we are at a stalemate.

WIFE: Aye, that we are. If stalemate means what I think it does.

(The GRAVEDIGGER interjects. When he speaks, he is not intelligible.)

GRAVEDIGGER: [It's a deadlock. In a game of chess. When neither player can win and neither player can lose, so the game ends in a draw.]

(They both stare at him.)

SCROOGE: I have an idea how we might settle this. *(Handing her his business card:)* This is my business address. And my residence. As you can see, it is a suite of offices in the mercantile district on the far side of London. It is my suggestion, therefore, that we leave him to rot in the open air, if you like, next to your cottage, and we shall see which of us is first overcome by the stench. *(He takes back his business card.)*

WIFE: You are a wicked, wicked man, Mister Scrooge.

SCROOGE: Then you would do well not to cross me, cross me, Mrs Gravedigger.

(SCROOGE exits. The WIFE scowls.)

GRAVEDIGGER: [What are we going to do now?]

WIFE: Well, we can't just leave him! The old miser's right, he'll stink up the whole boneyard. But there's no point in exerting ourselves on a proper burial. Throw a layer of dirt on him to soak up the stink and leave it at that. *(She turns to go.)*

GRAVEDIGGER: [And where are you going?]

WIFE: I'm going into the house.

(The GRAVEDIGGER grumbles.)

WIFE: To bake us a pie, sweeting. It's still Christmas, after all! Or had you forgotten?

(He blushes and nods as he starts to dig, and she goes off into the cottage.)

(The GRAVEDIGGER throws a shovelful of dirt into the hole. Suddenly, JACOB MARLEY sits up out of the grave, spitting dirt, and screaming like he has awakened from a very bad dream.)

MARLEY: HAAAAAAAAAAAAHHH!!

(The GRAVEDIGGER continues shoveling, as if nothing has happened.)

MARLEY: Merciful Hades, what a nightmare. I dreamed I was being buried alive by a hideous hen-pecked deaf mute. *(Realizing:)* Wait a moment, where am I? What am I doing in a graveyard? In my bedclothes? On a Saturday? How did I get here? *(Noticing the GRAVEDIGGER)* And who are you?

(The GRAVEDIGGER, oblivious to him, continues shoveling.)

MARLEY: Answer me, Man!

(The GRAVEDIGGER stops shoveling and walks away.)

MARLEY: Where are you going? Don't walk away from me! Do you know who I am? I am Jacob Marley!

(But the GRAVEDIGGER is already gone.)

MARLEY: Oh no... He's a deaf mute. Just like in my dream. How is this happening? This had better not be one of Bob's pranks. *(Loudly)* Do you hear me, Bob Cratchit? *(No response)* Bob? *(Nothing)* Nephew? *(Still nothing)* I'd better not find out you've dragged me off to a graveyard in the middle of the night and left me there. Alone. Without even someone around to pinch me to see if I'm dreaming.

(MARLEY hears someone approaching.)

MARLEY: What's that? Who's out there? *(Recognizing:)* That ghostly presence... That deathly pale complexion! ...Is that you, Ebenezer?

(Enter the PHANTOM—a hooded spirit who SCROOGE will later come to know as the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come.)

MARLEY: There you are, Scrooge. You nearly startled me, creeping about in the dark like that. Come, help your old partner out of this hole he's got himself into. I've just had the most harrowing nightmare. And you were in it. And that Reverend Hedges. Do you remember him? The one who owes us money. And there was a wretched funeral in my dream. I wonder who it was for—

(PHANTOM pinches him.)

MARLEY: Ow! You pinched me! What was that for? Wait a minute! You're not Scrooge! You're not my partner. Who are you? What do you want with me?

(The PHANTOM beckons.)

MARLEY: What? You want me to come with you?

(The PHANTOM beckons more emphatically.)

MARLEY: No, I'm not going anywhere. Not with the likes of you.

(The PHANTOM shrugs, "Why not?")

MARLEY: Why not? Because you're wandering around a graveyard draped in black like some ghastly undead spirit sent to torment the living, for one thing.

(PHANTOM shakes its head "no".)

MARLEY: Oh, you're not here to torment the living?

(PHANTOM points at MARLEY)

MARLEY: You're here to torment me? That's very funny, "Spirit." Very amusing. Well, I'm afraid you're going to have to torment me some other time, because I'm clearly not feeling well this evening. I wonder if I have a fever. That would certainly explain this vivid delirium. But more likely it's something I ate. Or something I didn't eat. I always suffer the most morbid fantasies when I miss my evening meal. It's my penance for working so late. But that's the curse of the successful businessman. Yes, now that I think about it, I was having the most excruciating stomach pangs as I took to my bed. That must be it. So you see, Spirit, you are merely a figment of my indigestion. There's nothing so spectral about you that it can't be exorcised with a spot of tea and a sandwich the moment I wake from this dream.

(PHANTOM pinches him again.)

MARLEY: Ouch! You pinched me again! (*Sudden realization:*) Again? You pinched me before and I felt that, too. ...Oh no.

(PHANTOM nods, "Oh yes.")

MARLEY: But that would mean...?

(PHANTOM nods again.)

MARLEY: But that's impossible. No, it can't be. I can't be not dreaming. (*He pinches himself on the arm.*) Ow.

(PHANTOM *pinches him, too.*)

MARLEY: Ow. (*He pinches himself again*) Ow.

(PHANTOM *pinches him, too.*)

MARLEY: Ow. Stop it! No more pinching!

(PHANTOM *signals "Truce".*)

MARLEY: So I'm not asleep. Is that it? But what am I to make of this? How can this be real? And how did I come to be spirited out of my bed and transported across town and left standing in an open grave in my bed clothes? And why? And how? And who are you? And who's grave is this? And what does any of this have to do with me?

(PHANTOM *points at the tombstone. Lightning flashes.*)

MARLEY: What? The tombstone? What about it?

(PHANTOM *points at the tombstone again. More lightning.*)

MARLEY: No, I don't want to read the inscription. Just tell me what it says.

(PHANTOM *continues to gesture more and more emphatically.*)

MARLEY: I don't want to look. What does it say? Who is buried here? Tell me, Spirit! Speak to me! Whose grave is this? (*He falls to his knees, covering his eyes and sobbing.*)
...Just tell me! Who is dead?

(*Exasperated, the PHANTOM waves its hand and suddenly they are transported to...*)

(*An office in a counting-house...where two businessmen, DICK WILKINS and BENJAMIN TUTTLE, are meeting.*)

WILKINS: Merry Christmas, Tuttle!

TUTTLE: Merry Christmas to you, Mister Wilkins!
And a happy New Year!

WILKINS: And a prosperous one, too, by the looks of it. Now that we're here.

MARLEY: Tuttle and Wilkins? (*He ducks behind the PHANTOM to avoid being seen.*) Ahem. Former business associates of mine. What are they doing *here*?

WILKINS: Yes, I never thought I'd see the day.

TUTTLE: Marley swore neither of us would ever set foot in his counting-house as long as he lived.

MARLEY: Indeed, I did.

TUTTLE: And here we are.

MARLEY: The counting-house? (*Glancing around in a panic, he suddenly realizes that it is the office of his own counting-house of Marley & Scrooge.*) How did we get here? (*To TUTTLE and WILKINS*) Get out! Get out, you! This minute! Or I'll have you apprehended as trespassers!

(*But neither TUTTLE nor WILKINS seems to hear him.*)

TUTTLE: So you've heard the news, of course?

WILKINS: Yes, of course.

MARLEY: What news? What have you heard?? (*To the PHANTOM*) Why won't anyone listen to me today?

(*PHANTOM gestures, "Ssh! Be quiet. Listen."*)

TUTTLE: Are you going to the funeral?

WILKINS: On Christmas day? I think that man has ruined enough of my holidays without me giving him one more to spoil posthumously.

(*MARLEY waves his hands in front of them, but they cannot see him.*)

MARLEY: What are these? Some insensible visions that can neither see nor hear?

(PHANTOM does not answer, pointing instead to the door where BOB CRATCHIT is about to come in, followed by his assistant, JENNY.)