A Christmas Carol

By Charles Dickens
Adapted by Gregory A. Falls
Directed by John Langs

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The Bellevue Collection
The One and Only Snowflake Lane
It was 1976 and after several years of doing *The Absurd Musical Revue Does Christmas*, and some of us complaining about rehashing the same show, Greg [Falls] decided to change tactics and do an adaptation of Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* to present instead. We were pleased and horrified all at once. With only the source material and little time or money to create a period show (with effects and magic required!) we had more of a challenge than we had considered when whining about the *Musical Revue* rehashes.

Sally Richardson and I based our designs on the original John Leech illustrations. Sally, with only a few period- and vaguely period-appropriate garments in stock from that season’s *Desire Under the Elms*, borrowed as much as she could and built the rest of the costumes. The spirits had to be made from scratch, of course, and were the most challenging. The jolly Ghost of Christmas Present was easy: a green velvet and white “fur” robe with hidden battery pack belt underneath to power twinkle lights in his head wreath and magical(!) “ice” goblet. Sheet rocker stilts brought impressive height to the Ghost of Christmas Future, though the clanking sound they made—and which we could not silence without causing an industrial hazard—was a bit annoying. (We rationalized it as his clanking bones …[cough]!) The Ghost of Christmas Past proved elusive (an old man/child with a flame on its head?) and was “reimagined” for several years to come.

I made use of our stock platforms and supplemented one built as the required pop-up grave. This proved a problem for two reasons over the next several years. A: The stock platforms were used all year so they had to be totally repainted for the next year’s *Carol*. B: Jerry Williams had convinced Phil [Schermer] to deaden the hollow sound that platforms produced by topping them with Homasote, the material they used for bulletin boards then, which was basically half inch thick paper pressboard and was soft enough that the surface was easily damaged, resulting in many annoying touchups.

We used many props and furniture from the storeroom. (Scrooge’s money box, a prop that I had made for a show in ’71, and benches from *Fanshen* in ’73, are still in the show!). We built what we couldn’t find and invested in expensive scrim material to cover flats so special effects would show through. We built a
INCITING EVOLUTION IN BUILDING

Karuna House, designed by Holst Architecture and built by Hammer & Hand
2013 AIA Portland Design Award, 2014 National Institute of Building Sciences Beyond Green Award
John Gilbert’s first show at ACT was *In White America*, the opening show of the second season in 1966. How fitting for a man who spent his life living according to his philosophy of speaking out against injustice. My most vivid memories of John are of the many years spent watching him in tech rehearsals as our one-and-only Scrooge for many years. The original version of *A Christmas Carol* was very low tech compared to the current one and John played Scrooge with a long, sharp putty nose, bent posture, and raspy voice, which must have been wearing on his natural soothing tone. My favorite bit of business from those shows was how he transformed from old Scrooge to Scrooge as a young man in all the Fezziwig/Belle scenes by simply changing his posture and coat. What amazing stamina he had, doing all of the performances in those early years with two shows a day, six days a week, for a month.

It was fitting that he last performed Scrooge the final year it was staged at the Queen Anne ACT in 1995, twenty years after he originated the role.

–Shelley Henze Schermer
dry ice fogger, rented a smoke machine, and after much experimenting thanked heaven for the new-fangled plastic snow we bought and recycled after sifting out the spirit glitter and assorted gunk! Nevermind the time the Cratchits spent dinner in the aftermath of a blizzard when a rope broke.

Greg hired Bob MacDougall to write an original score for the show. He was an actor who had been in several shows that season and was also cast in Carol. His music was an integral part of the show and three musicians—on an oboe, clarinet, and violin—performed it live backstage. Some of the sound effects were also live and performed by an actor. The clock chimes were on sections of metal pipes hanging from a frame and Marley’s entrance was accompanied by plucking the strings of our grand piano off stage left. The next year, with a mind on the budget, it was recorded and became taped sound cues for the stage manager. I came to think of Bob’s score as another character in the show after years sitting in tech rehearsals and spending days working in the paint room behind the stage during the runs. It, like John Gilbert’s distinctive voice for Scrooge’s dialogue, was burned into my brain. It took me years after we had new Scrooges and the new score was substituted to no longer hear the originals running in my head when I watched the show.

Greg was convinced our new Christmas show would sell and we would do it again the next year. Phil, of course, wasn’t. Greg was right. (This created a new problem: where to store the scenery until the next year? The perennial problem of all theatres: saving scenery, props, and costumes is thrifty; having the space to do so is not. Greg offered his storeroom. That was how A Christmas Carol came to reside in The Highlands for several years.) Carol became an annual tradition for the Seattle-area audience and an essential part of ACT’s annual financial support. It was so successful that there was even a new show written...
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Carol essentially became part of the annual Young ACT Company (lovingly known as “yak”) tour as they were the core of the cast for the show for many years to come with John Gilbert performing the lead. Carol also started a new career for Greg as a successful playwright. The next YAC tour was The Odyssey, which he penned with Kurt Beattie, and for many years to come the tours were of his own very successful versions of various modern children’s books, Greek myths, and Tales of the Arabian Nights.

As I had for the pre-Carol shows, I continued to decorate the theatre for the happy folk who came for their annual dose of holiday cheer until well after the move downtown. Greg added scenes and characters, honing Carol into what is now a gem of a script. The third year after he bemoaned the desire for another “guest”, I volunteered to be in the Fezziwig party as well as run the fog and grave backstage in my sausage curls and pantaloons. This arrangement was not repeated. A gift shop was opened in the lobby to sell custom ACT Christmas Carol wrapping paper, ornaments, canned plum puddings, a coloring book, and other assorted holiday fare. Time marched on and Carol has now had a “who’s who” list of directors, Scrooges, and many Tiny Tims who grew, moved into more senior roles, and eventually left acting behind. What never changes are the annual creative costume re-fitting for different-sized actors, and the occasional minor disasters like missed entrances, misbehaving effects, and the rare real snow cancellation headaches.

“God bless us, every one!”

Dancers Richard Farell and Shelley Henze Schermer, John Gilbert as Scrooge, Marie Mathay as Belle, Lisa Sisley as Miss Fezziwig, and Jean Smart as Mrs. Fezziwig, in the 1978 production of A Christmas Carol. PHOTO BY CHRIS BENNION
Eagles Aerie No. 1 – The Fraternal Order of Eagles was founded in February 1898 by six theatre owners gathered in a Seattle shipyard to discuss a musician’s strike. After addressing the matter, they agreed to “bury the hatchet” and form “The Order of Good Things” which has since grown into an international fraternal organization with the mission of promoting peace and hope through unity, justice, and equality. F.O.E. membership today exceeds 800,000, with more than 1,500 local Aeries in the U.S. and Canada.

In 1925, they opened the doors of their new building: Aerie No. 1, at 700 Union Street. The grand building, designed by architect Henry Bittman’s firm, was ornately covered in terra-cotta and housed a sweeping auditorium, a bowling alley, a billiards parlor, and a gym, as well as residential apartments, a night club, and halls for Eagles’ ceremonies.

After the Order of Eagles left the building, the building became the home of the Unity Church of Truth from the mid-1950s until 1960. In 1961, Martin Luther King Jr. gave a speech in the auditorium during his only visit to Seattle. By the mid-1960s the space had become a popular rock concert venue, and hosted The Grateful Dead eight times, as well as many other rock and roll legends.

Then, in 1996, ACT moved downtown. The organization had outgrown its home in Lower Queen Anne and had been looking for a new space when the Eagles building came onto the market. After extensive fundraising efforts, ACT realized its $30.4 million goal with the generous support of donors as well as a number of grants from local businesses and organizations. A substantial amount of the money raised went toward the significant renovations needed in order to turn the space into a theatrical venue. The eighth floor, which now houses ACT’s beautiful rehearsal space, was added during renovation; the Eagles auditorium converted into The Allen Theatre in the round; and the lower level transformed into The Falls Theatre and The Bullitt Cabaret. While the Eagles building boasts great grandeur, ACT has managed to reproduce the intimacy inherent to its cozy Lower Queen Anne venue in each of its new performance spaces.

The building is now in its 90th year, as ACT welcomes over 150,000 patrons annually through its five unique performance venues. The relocation to the former Eagles lodge has allowed ACT to grow its programming and ambitions, creating art in all corners of the building.
TIMELINE OF IMPORTANT DATES

The ’60s saw the birth of ACT. Beginning as just an experiment during the summer season, over the course of the decade Gregory A. Falls’ brainchild bloomed into an established home for bold contemporary theatre in Seattle.

1965: ACT’s first season, a summer season run by Greg Falls as a new Seattle theatre experiment. The season opens with Arthur Kopit’s Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Momma’s Hung You in the Closet and I’m Feeling So Sad, which is very well received. ACT becomes incorporated as a non-profit organization with a board of directors.

1966: ACT expands to a seven-show season running from June to September. Important play of the season: In White America by Martin B. Duberman examines the black experience in U.S., and is considered both provocative and "timely."

1968: ACT, having received strong support from the community, expands its season further, lengthening the run of each of the seven shows in its season, and, in so doing, overreaches its bounds. While the theatre suffers financially, the selection process for producing plays is refined. The most successful show of the season, Beckett’s classic Waiting For Godot, shows Falls that audiences crave an intellectual challenge. This pushes on ACT’s mission to provide work that sparks thought and conversation.

1969: A hit season following the overreaching scale of the 1968 season. Though the length of each show’s run is cut back down to 14 weeks, the season is a major success. The season cements ACT’s place in the community as a cultural institution that continues to provide Seattle with thought-provoking art, including the world premiere of Beverley Simons’ Crabdance.
ACT in the ’70s was building a significant audience, growing to nearly ten times the size of its first season, and beginning to outgrow its first home in lower Queen Anne. The ’70s also saw the beginning of a major ACT tradition: The Falls adaptation of Dickens’ A Christmas Carol.

1976: ACT begins a beloved holiday tradition with its first production of A Christmas Carol, as adapted by Greg Falls. The theatre’s regular season also expands, now running from June all the way through Thanksgiving and giving each play a full 24-performance run. As the theatre continues to grow in its former home in Lower Queen Anne, this year marks the beginning of the multi-year renovation of the space to bring it up to date and strengthen it as a home for all the work that ACT wants to offer.

1978: On opening night of Henry IV: Part One, the mayor declares it to be ACT Theatre Day in Seattle. By 1978, ACT has garnered an audience roughly ten times the size of its opening season.
ACT – A Contemporary Theatre presents

By Charles Dickens
Adapted by Gregory A. Falls
Directed by John Langs
Music Composed and Conducted by Adam Stern

Beginning November 27, 2015 • Opening Day November 29, 2015

CAST

CREATIVE TEAM
John Langs Director
Shelley Henze Schermer Scenic Designer
Deborah Trout Costume Designer
Michael Wellborn Lighting Designer
Dominic CodyKramers Sound Designer
Chris DiStefano Music Director
Steven M. Klein Original Sound Designer
Emily Penick Choreographer
JR Welden* Stage Manager
Erin B. Zatloka* Assistant Stage Manager
Tori Thompson Production Assistant
Alyssa Keene Dialect Coach
Wiley Basho Gorn Kenan Directing Fellow
Thomas Charles Speltz Directing Intern

Running Time: This performance runs approximately 90 minutes. There will be no intermission.

*Members of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

The video and/or audio recording of this performance by any means whatsoever are strictly prohibited.
Dear Friends,

It’s been my experience at ACT that when Christmas comes ’round, and it’s time to mount our production of Charles Dickens’ immortal tale, the building suddenly has a special light and joy in it—“bright eyes and beaming faces”, as Dickens put it. In part, I think this is because there are many children in the cast and in the audiences, unlike the rest of the plays we produce; and they always bring with them the excitement of the holiday season, the hope and promise of the New Year.

The story is of course about Scrooge and his change of heart. But counterpoised to him are the Cratchits—who represent, at least in most of the tale, everything Scrooge isn’t and needs to be—and who carry the heart of the story every bit as much as he does. Their care for one another, even in their poor circumstances, gives us a sense of the greater possibilities of life and pleasure that can exist because of human love.

Dickens hated the political economists of the day, in particular the utilitarian thinkers inspired by British social reformer Jeremy Bentham, who believed that the principal and most important relationships between people were economic ones—“the cash nexus”, as Thomas Carlyle put it. And that it should be the right and necessary course for those who couldn’t keep up their part in the marketplace to die, as failed experiments in the natural competitive process toward the most advanced and prosperous society. But of course, the very center of all that is good in this story is located in the person of Tiny Tim, who, being a cripple, is useless in such a value system. He certainly can’t earn his keep. This isn’t important to his parents and his brothers and sisters; his health and well-being are what matters to them. In fact, as the novelist Walter Allen pointed out, he is the center of love in the story, and in his kindly and vulnerable self, an ultimate source of goodness for all. Scrooge is drawn to him because imprisoned inside Scrooge is the memory of another little vulnerable boy: himself. And with that realization comes enlightenment to Scrooge and all of us. None of us manage to survive and thrive in the world alone: we all got a helping hand from someone, most of us from our parents, who gave us part of themselves selflessly, instinctively. And it is the good and right thing to do so in turn.

So thank you for joining with all of us fellow travelers on this earth, in this wonderful gift from Charles Dickens to each and every one of us this Christmas, and let us hope, for many, many Christmases to come.

Kurt Beattie
Artistic Director
COMING SOON TO ACT

A co-production with The 5th Avenue Theatre

ASSASSINS

BOOK BY JOHN WEIDMAN
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY STEPHEN SONDHEIM

Feb 27–May 8

Endangered Species Project
Dec 14
Explore the great plays you seldom see. December features Life with Father by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse. Join ESP in 2016 as they bring 12 plays back to the stage.

Sandbox Radio LIVE!
Dec 28
Seattle's locally grown radio theatre returns with your favorite local writers, actors, and musicians reimagining theatre for radio—recorded LIVE! December's theme is "The Big One".

14/48: The World’s Quickest Theater Festival
Jan 8, 9, 15, 16
14 plays written, cast, directed, rehearsed, scored, designed, and premiered in 48 hours.

Buzzer
Feb 3–21
Jackson just moved into a fantastic apartment in his old neighborhood; only it's not—his old street is in the throes of rapid gentrification. Money, race, love, trust, and fear are at the door—buzz us in.

The Great Soul of Russia
Feb 3, Mar 2, Apr 6
Join The Seagull Project and members of Seattle’s vibrant artistic community as they explore how various Russian artistic roads, past and present, begin and end with Chekhov.

Worse Than Tigers
Mar 24–Apr 17
Olivia and Humphry’s quietly failing marriage is ready to eat them alive. Unless the escaped tiger outside their door does first.

acttheatre.org  |  206.292.7676  |  700 Union Street, Seattle
A Note from Director

JOHN LANGS

When I was younger, a pre-teen, and any serious crisis would befall me—from a skinned knee, to a rougher encounter with a sibling, or the sharp corner of a kitchen table—to heal the pain of the moment my mother had a simple remedy: a grilled cheese sandwich and a homemade milkshake. To me, there was nothing that soothed my troubled soul faster than the warm/cold combination of that dairy-filled delight. More than the taste and the sustenance, it was the ritual of the thing: after crisis there was comfort in a very particular form, which created a feeling that I remember today.

This is the 40th year of ACT’s A Christmas Carol, and next year will be my first as Artistic Director. Many have asked if I will change this holiday tradition: is it time to try something new? I think it’s a good question, and one we must never stop asking, as the challenge of any art is to stay relevant, but I weigh this question against the fact that Dickens’ tale endures in the way that it does and continues to resonate in people’s hearts year after year. This production is always a happy milestone in ACT’s calendar, a holiday tradition that’s becoming something larger and more meaningful to our community than our founder and the story’s adaptor Greg Falls could have ever imagined; every December this production is met with a kind of gratitude and appreciation that continues to surprise us all.

It’s my fourth time at the helm of A Christmas Carol. I go to work on it each year with an open heart, because each time I encounter its characters, scratching out a life in the harsh socioeconomic climate of turn-of-the-century London, I find I am uplifted, healed, and a bit reborn. Its power is in the comfort: the tree in the lobby, the music in the air, the snow from the lighting grid, and the anticipated clink-clink of our ancient prop coins. We know what will happen. We can share this beautiful redemptive story with the next generation, and like the grilled cheese sandwich and milkshake, it is and always will be made with love.

Thank you for coming to gather with us again at the turning of the year to remember what is good, and to count our blessings together. May the holiday season and the New Year bring us all comfort and joy.
For a young man, Dickens aspired to be an actor, but on the day of his audition with one of London's premiere theatre managers he came down with a bad cold and was unable to attend. Happily for English literature, if perhaps unhappily for the English stage (evidence suggests that had he become an actor, he'd have been second to none), Dickens didn't pursue his acting ambitions further. However, he remained an avid theatregoer for the rest of his life, and participated enthusiastically in amateur theatricals. The most famous of these was The Frozen Deep (1857), an "Arctic melodrama" written with his friend Wilkie Collins (The Moonstone, The Woman in White) and first performed in the schoolroom of Dickens' house in Tavistock Street with some of the windows and part of a wall removed to extend the stage—no doubt to the dismay of the playwright/star's long-suffering wife!

Within two months of its publication in December 1843, eight stage adaptations of A Christmas Carol were playing in the West End—only one actually authorized by Dickens—but the most famous and effective of its performances were those eventually given by Dickens himself. His first public reading of A Christmas Carol was in 1853 at Birmingham for an audience of 2,000, an immense crowd for the time. In this century before radio and television, very few of Dickens' devoted readers knew what he looked or sounded like, and the opportunity to see him in person, reading from his own work, was an event not to be missed. Dedicated fans camped in the street outside the auditorium the night before tickets went on sale, as if for a rock concert, and although Dickens always made sure that some seats were priced within reach of the working class at just a shilling each, tickets were regularly scalped at prices far exceeding their face value.

And what did they see, these people who waited all night? Many in his audience were, at first, disappointed. Dickens was not an imposing figure physically, nor did he have the commanding vocal range of a great actor, but had actually become in action, as in imagination, the personality of his pen. Within two months of its publication in December 1843, eight stage adaptations of A Christmas Carol were playing in the West End—only one actually authorized by Dickens—but the most famous and effective of its performances were those eventually given by Dickens himself. His first public reading of A Christmas Carol was in 1853 at Birmingham for an audience of 2,000, an immense crowd for the time.

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Dickens enters the theatre of the world through the stage door…

— GEORGE SANTAYANA

Charles Dickens, 19th century. HERBERT WATKINS

expressive face, and most of all the twinkle in his large, deeply-set brown eyes as he announced in his rapid, emphatic way “Marley-was-dead-to-begin-with…”, as if he were already anticipating the thrills and delights of and color; and once he began to read, people soon forgot their initial reservations. Beyond his obvious gifts as an actor, Dickens also had enormous charisma, and an ability to enthral an audience through sheer force of personality that we would describe now as “star quality”. Eyewitnesses described the energy of his movements as he walked briskly to the podium, his marvelously mobile and expressive face, and most of all the twinkle in his large, deeply-set brown eyes as he announced in his rapid, emphatic way “Marley-was-dead-to-begin-with…”, as if he were already anticipating the thrills and delights of the story he was about to tell and could hardly wait to get on with it. An American journalist wrote that to hear Dickens read A Christmas Carol was like hearing the very sound of Christmas bells, and in time the readings became a holiday tradition for many people—just as families now go every year to see The Nutcracker, or watch Frank Capra’s American gloss on A Christmas Carol, It’s A Wonderful Life.

It’s not unusual for artists to be gifted in more than one way, but what was unusual about Dickens was the degree to which...
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

his two talents were enmeshed. What the writer’s imagination conceived, the actor vitalized in solitary performances that the writer translated into literature, which the actor then returned to three dimensions in the many readings from his work that Dickens gave in the final decade of his life. The process also worked in reverse: playing the role of The Frozen Deep’s conflicted antihero, who sacrifices himself to save the life of his romantic rival, directly inspired Dickens to create one of his most indelible characters, the dissolute but ultimately noble Sydney Carton in A Tale of Two Cities. The connective tissue between a writer and an actor, of course, is the drive to tell a story, but writers tell theirs alone, for an audience they can only imagine and may never see. What joy it must have been for Dickens to stand on stage and see the impact of his stories in real time, on the faces of his audiences! It’s interesting to note that there are no quotes from him about his writing as vibrant as this one about acting: “I would like to be going all over the kingdom,” he burst out one night after a particularly successful performance, “and acting everywhere! There is nothing in the world equal to seeing the house rise at you, one sea of delighted faces, one hurrah of applause!”

So gather round with us again to listen to what Dickens’ great-granddaughter Monica called “the greatest little book in the world,” and join us and our actors in celebrating the joys of the season and one of the greatest storytellers who ever lived—off the stage and on it.

—MARGARET LAYNE

Margaret Layne is ACT’s Director of Casting. She holds a B.A. Cum Laude in English Literature from Yale University.
Who's Who in A Christmas Carol

Kurt Beattie (Ebenezer Scrooge/Artistic Director) has been creating theatre for Puget Sound audiences for over 40 years as an actor, playwright, and director. His productions at ACT include Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike, Bloomsdaiy, Grey Gardens; Ramayana (with Sheila Daniels); The Pitmen Painters; Double Indemnity; In the Next Room, or the vibrator play; The Lieutenant of Inishmore; Rock 'n' Roll; Becky's New Car; Intimate Exchanges; First Class; The Pillowman; Mitzi's Abortion; The Underpants; Bach at Leipzig; Vincent in Brixton; Black Coffee; Alki; Moon for the Misbegotten; Fuddy Meers; Fully Committed; Via Dolorosa; and the holiday classic, A Christmas Carol. Elsewhere he has directed at Seattle Repertory Theatre, Empty Space Theatre, Intiman Theatre, Seattle Children's Theatre, University of Washington, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, The Alley Theatre in Houston, and Oaji Playwrights Festival. As an actor, he has appeared in leading and major roles at ACT, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Intiman Theatre, Empty Space Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare Company, as well as many regional theatres throughout the country. Beattie is a recipient of the Theatre Puget Sound Gregory A. Falls Sustained Achievement Award, and the Outstanding Achievement in the Arts Award from ArtsFund.

Rob Burgess (Mr. Fezziwig/Topper) Northwest born and bred, Rob is happy to be sharing the holidays with this wonderful group of artists and, of course, you! A graduate of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, he has been seen in numerous productions spanning several years in the Seattle area. Rob thanks his lucky stars that his talented partner, Seattle-based costume designer Melanie Taylor Burgess actually said ‘yes’—lo, those many years ago! They are very proud of their progeny, Madison and Lily, and are both thrilled to be part of this grand creative community.

Hillary Clemens (Spirit 1/Chanwoman) is happy to return to A Christmas Carol after appearing as Belle in 2013. Her most recent Seattle role was Desdemona in Othello (Seattle Shakespeare Company). Elsewhere, recent roles include Daisy in The Great Gatsby (Indiana Repertory Theatre), Juliet in Romeo and Juliet (Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival), Crystal in Bethany (The Gift Theatre; Jeff Award Nomination for Principal Actress, Time Out Award for Best Actress), Annie Sullivan in The Miracle Worker, and Viola in Twelfth Night (Indiana Festival Theatre). Chicago favorites include As You Like It (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), The Illusion (Court Theatre), Ski Dubai (Steppenwolf); Picnic (Writers' Theatre; Jeff Award Nomination for Supporting Actress); A Room With A View (Lifeline Theatre); and Mine, Dirty, The Three Sisters, and Blithe Spirit (The Gift). She’s lucky to share the stage and her life with Matt Schwaeder.

Ava Drummmond (Tiny Tim/Inignorance) is a third grader at Parkwood Elementary School in Shoreline. This is her first play ever. She ran away to the circus five years ago, and spends most of her waking hours at The School of Acrobatics and New Circus Arts in Georgetown, where she’s a member of the Amazing Circus 1-ders and the Mini Fly Team, SANCAS’ youngest flying trapeze company.

David Drummond (Spirit 2) This is David’s tenth time performing in ACT’s A Christmas Carol, having first played the Ghost of Christmas Present 28 years ago. Maybe he’ll get it right this time. He has performed with theatres large and small all over town, last appearing as the title character in Coriolanus (Seattle Shakespeare Company). Everyone agrees his best work by far is as Daddy in The Long Happy Life of Jack Henry Drummond (now in its seventeenth smash year), and its sequel Ava’s Amazing Days (still playing to a packed house after eight years). An award-winning audiobook narrator with close to 200 books recorded, he’s overjoyed to be out of his stuffy little studio and breathing the fresh sooty air of Victorian London.

Sophia Franzella (Martha Cratchit/Miss Fezziwig) is ecstatic to be making her ACT debut! Sophia moved to Seattle just over a year ago from Austin, TX, where she studied the Meisner Technique and earned her B.A. in Theatre from St. Edwards University. Most recently, Sophia appeared in the title role of the new work My Dear Miss Chancellor (Annex Theatre). Other Seattle theatre credits include Little Red in Into the Woods (STAGEright Theatre) and Anastasia in Zapat! (Annex Theatre). Sophia received the Best Actress Award in the 2015 Seattle 48 Hour Film Project. She would like to thank John for taking a chance on her. She would also like to thank her loving and supportive family, as well as her brilliant and inspiring partner Nathan.

Sarah Harlett (Mrs. Fezziwig/Miss Clackett) is delighted to be back at ACT and a part of A Christmas Carol again! Recently seen in The Memorandum (Strawberry Theater Workshop), The Man Who Could Forget Anything (On the Boards), Cumulus (West of Lenin), and Middletown (ACT). Sarah has also performed at Seattle Children’s Theatre, Intiman Theatre, New City Theater, Seattle Shakespeare Company, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and Empty Space Theatre. Internationally, she has performed at the Centre de Danse in Paris with the Megan Murphy Company. Sarah is a current member of The Sandbox Artists Collective and a founding member of the Compound Collective, the nationally acclaimed Seattle performance group in Seattle from 1994–2000. Sarah graduated from Cornish College of the Arts, the Gaiety School of Acting (Dublin), and the British American Drama Academy (Oxford).

Kristoffer Holton (Charles Cratchit/Young Scrooge) is thrilled to be spending the holidays at ACT. He has performed in Tarzan (Village Theatre KIDSTAGE) and last Christmas as Grover Dill in A Christmas Story, The Musical (The 5th Avenue Theatre). He is passionate about acting, singing, tap dancing, baseball, and creative writing. Thanks to Mom and Dad for their support and encouragement!

Ariyanna Fernandez (Elizabeth Cratchit/Lit Fezziwig) currently attends Rhythm Fire School of Music. In July 2015, she was the winner of the Capital Lakefair Voice Competition. Over the past several years, she’s been cast in plays such as Annie the Musical, Jack and the Beanstalk, and has co-starred in a few commercials. She also won Seattle’s Freshest Voices 4th Annual Singing Competition. Film credits include: Speak Up, Jump, and Soul Stealer. Ariyanna enjoys reading, drawing, soccer, spending time with her family from Guam, and is very passionate about music. Watch for her singing the National Anthem for the University of Washington’s athletic teams on TV. She is thankful for the opportunity to be a part of the cast here at ACT and thanks her friends and family for all of their support.

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Rob Burgess (Mr. Fezziwig/Topper) Northwest born and bred, Rob is happy to be sharing the holidays with this wonderful group of artists and, of course, you! A graduate of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, he has been seen in numerous productions spanning several years in the Seattle area. Rob thanks his lucky stars that his talented partner, Seattle-based costume designer Melanie Taylor Burgess actually said ‘yes’—lo, those many years ago! They are very proud of their progeny, Madison and Lily, and are both thrilled to be part of this grand creative community.

Hillary Clemens (Spirit 1/Chanwoman) is happy to return to A Christmas Carol after appearing as Belle in 2013. Her most recent Seattle role was Desdemona in Othello (Seattle Shakespeare Company). Elsewhere, recent roles include Daisy in The Great Gatsby (Indiana Repertory Theatre), Juliet in Romeo and Juliet (Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival), Crystal in Bethany (The Gift Theatre; Jeff Award Nomination for Principal Actress, Time Out Award for Best Actress), Annie Sullivan in The Miracle Worker, and Viola in Twelfth Night (Indiana Festival Theatre). Chicago favorites include As You Like It (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), The Illusion (Court Theatre), Ski Dubai (Steppenwolf); Picnic (Writers’ Theatre; Jeff Award Nomination for Supporting Actress); A Room With A View (Lifeline Theatre); and Mine, Dirty, The Three Sisters, and Blithe Spirit (The Gift). She’s lucky to share the stage and her life with Matt Schwaeder.

Ava Drummmond (Tiny Tim/Inignorance) is a third grader at Parkwood Elementary School in Shoreline. This is her first play ever. She ran away to the circus five years ago, and spends most of her waking hours at The School of Acrobatics and New Circus Arts in Georgetown, where she’s a member of the Amazing Circus 1-ders and the Mini Fly Team, SANCAS’ youngest flying trapeze company.

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Who's Who in A Christmas Carol

Charles Leggett
(Scrooge) At ACT: Gooper in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof; Spirit 2 in A Christmas Carol (seven iterations, beginning in 2002); Victor Franz in The Price; Ben in The Dumb Waiter; George Brown in The Pitmen Painters; Ray in Yankee Tavern; Sheriff in The Trip to Bountiful, Joe Foster in Becky's New Car; Marshall Herrick in The Crucible; and Peter in Seven Ways to Get There (ACTLab).

Charles is a recipient and three-time nominee of the Theatre Puget Sound Gregory Award for his work at Seattle Repertory Theatre, ACT, and Seattle Shakespeare Company, and has twice (2009 and 2015) been nominated for The Stranger Genius Award. He worked the last three summers at Intiman, and has appeared at Village Theatre, The 5th Avenue Theatre, Seattle Children’s Theatre, Book-It Repertory Theatre, Portland Center Stage, and numerous smaller companies.

Jason Marr
(Men's Understudy) is delighted to be back with ACT for another Christmas Carol! He last appeared on the ACT stage as Oliver in The Pitmen Painters. Recent stage credits include Mother Courage (Seattle Shakespeare Company) and Humble Boy (Seattle Public Theater). He has performed with Book-It Repertory, Wooden O, Washington Ensemble, Theater Schmear, GreenStage, Taproot Theatre, Harlequin Productions, the 14/48 Festival, Theatre Anonymous, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Island Stage Left, and the Shakespeare Theatre Company in D.C.

He is also a co-founder of One Lump or Two Productions (Elsinore Diaries, Holiday of Errors). Jason has a B.F.A. in Acting and Directing from UNC Greensboro and an M.F.A. from the Shakespeare Theatre Company's Academy for Classical Acting at George Washington University. He is married to the beautiful and fabulous Jill Marr.

Matthew Floyd Miller
(Bob Cratchit) could not be more pleased to embark on his first Christmas Carol with his beloved ACT family. At ACT he has appeared in Middletown, Rock’n Roll, The Underpants, and The Pillowman. On Broadway he has appeared in Not About Nightingales, directed by Trevor Nunn (Circle in the Square) and The Invention of Love (Lincoln Center). In Los Angeles he most recently appeared in the west coast premiere of Stupid Fucking Bird (The Boston Court; L.A. Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Ensemble), The Mystery of Irma Vep (The Falcon), and Yes, Prime Minister (Geffen), among numerous regional credits. TV/Film: upcoming Colony, Major Crimes, Criminal Minds, Law & Order, All Good Things. Training: NYU Graduate Acting.

Derek Mulkins
(Peter Cratchit) is honored to be making his ACT debut in A Christmas Carol this holiday season! Other roles include: Fagin’s gang/Book Boy in Oliver! (The 5th Avenue Theatre) and Elmer in The Best Christmas Pageant Ever (Seattle Public Theatre). Derek is enrolled in the Woodinville High School drama program under the direction of Josh Butchart. Special thanks to his voice coach, Christopher D. Littlefield, Tim Hagerman, Karen Mitchell, and Alex Paz of The Arts Manifest. Love and gratitude to Mom, Dad, Kayla, Grandparents, Genevieve, Jake, and Matthew. Enjoy the show!

Heidi Myrick
(Belinda Cratchit/Fan) is thrilled to be back at ACT in her second production of A Christmas Carol! Some of her favorite past credits include Carousel (The 5th Avenue Theatre), Aladdin (Centerstage Theatre), and Annie (Heavier Than Air Family Theatre). Besides theatre, Heidi also likes being on camera and has been in several commercials, short films, and a TV miniseries. In her spare time Heidi enjoys dancing, singing, baking, drawing, and hanging out with her friends. Heidi would like to thank her parents, family, and friends for their continued support. Merry Christmas!

Conner Neddersen
(Middle Scrooge/Grocer/Guest/Spirit 3) is delighted to be making his ACT debut with this wonderful holiday tradition! Conner is a Cornish graduate, and a member of New Century Theatre Company. Recent credits include: Poul in Festen (NCTC); Prince Hal in Henry IV part 1 (Wooden O); Lucius in Feetway (Taproot Theatre); and Charlie in Mary’s Wedding (NCTC), for which he received a Gregory Award nomination for Outstanding Actor. Love to his mother and father, and happy holidays to all!

Brandon Oke
(Singing Thief/Master Fezziwig/Undertakers Assistant/Turkey Boy) is a fifth grader from Everett who really enjoys entertaining audiences. He appeared as Randy in A Christmas Story, The Musical (The 5th Avenue Theatre; 2015 Gregory Award nominee and 5th Avenue Subscribers’ Choice Award recipient for Best Supporting Actor); Jojo in Seussical Jr.; and in Jungle Book (Village Theatre). Other past roles: Lost Boy/Tootles in Peter Pan (Lyric Light Opera), Tiny Tim in A Christmas Carol (Seattle Musical Theatre), Augustus Gloop in Willy Wonka, and Thing 2 in Seussical. He studies acting, singing, and dancing with Village Theatre's Pathway program; is active in Cub Scouts; and takes voice, piano, and ukulele lessons. Thanks to Mom, Dad, Lauren, Kylie, and his dog Coby!

Matt Schwader
(Fred/Dick Wilkins) returns to A Christmas Carol after playing Fred in 2013. Most recent performances: Gatsby in The Great Gatsby (Indiana Repertory Theatre), Romeo in Romeo and Juliet (Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival), Tristan Tzara in Travesties, Jack in The Importance of Being Earnest, and the title role in Hamlet (American Players Theatre). He’s appeared with Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Court Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Northlight Theatre, and Remy Bumppo Theatre Company in Chicago; as well as Actors Theatre of Louisville, Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival, and Utah Shakespeare Festival. International: Royal Shakespeare Company, Shakespeare Link Canada, and Montes Namuli Dance Company in Mozambique. He's voiced radio, television, and internet spots and played Ted Powell on NBC’s Chicago PD. Matt is thrilled to be in this production with his wife, Hillary Clemens.

Jasmine Jean Sim
(Belle/Niece) graduated from Cornell College of the Arts in 2015 as well as the Pacific Conservatory for the Performing Arts (PCPA) in 2013. Credits: Mary Tildford in The Children’s Hour and Rose in John Baxter is a Switch Hitter (Intiman Theatre), April in Dirty (ACTLab and Washington Ensemble Theatre), Elisesava in Grand Hotel (Cornish Theatre), and Miranda in The Tempest (PCPA and Kingsman Shakespeare Company). She is scheduled to appear in 9 to 5 with Seattle Musical Theatre in February! Love to Mom, Dad, Andie, and Rory.

G. Valmont Thomas
(Marley/Old Joe) returns to ACT after performing the role of Chutes and Ladders in Water By The Spoonful (West Of Lenin), Bottom the Weaver in A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Tennessee Shakespeare Company), Blue in Party People (Berkeley Repertory Theatre), and Wining Boy in The Piano Lesson (Syracuse Stage, Seattle Repertory Theatre). In the acting company of Oregon Shakespeare Festival for 13 seasons, he enjoyed playing the title character in Macbeth, Falstaff in The Merry Wives of Windsor, Feste in...
Twelfth Night, and Lincoln in TopDog/UnderDog. Next he is appearing at True Colors Theatre in Atlanta as Donny Dubrow in David Mamet’s American Buffalo. Mr. Thomas always enjoys creating theatre at ACT. Happy holidays to everybody! (Pssst! Santa … ? G. Val loves playing board games.)

Jen Taylor (Mrs. Cratchit/Fezziwig Dancer) Previously at ACT Jen played Janet in Steven Dietz’s Yankee Tavern and Belle in A Christmas Carol. Most recently, she played Roxane in Cyrano (Portland Center Stage) where she has also played Viola in Twelfth Night and Elizabeth in Pride and Prejudice. At Seattle Shakespeare Company, Jen played Beatrice in Much Ado About Nothing, Eliza Doolittle in Pygmalion, and Imogen in Cymbeline. She has performed in most of the theatres in Seattle and is a founding member of New Century Theatre Company. Jen is a voice artist in radio, television, audiobooks, and numerous video games, including the Halo series as Cortana and Dr. Halsey. If you have a Windows Phone or PC, she is the voice of your personal assistant.

Kayla Walker (Ladies’ Understudy) is thrilled to spend another Christmas season with ACT. As a coach and actress, you may have seen her work in Emma, I Am Of Ireland, (Book-It Repertory Theatre); Zapoi!, Bunnies (Annex Theatre); Julius Caesar (Wooden O); Bengal Tiger (Washington Ensemble Theatre); This Land (Strawberry Theatre Workshop); Mary Poppins, Cabaret (Village Theatre); Theatre Schmeater; and Taproot Theatre. She is a proud graduate of Cornish College of the Arts and holds a B.F.A. in Theater and Original. She is a proud graduate of Cornish College of the Arts and holds a B.F.A. in Theater and Original. The Theatre); Theatre Schmeater; and Taproot Theatre.

John Langs (Director) John has been delighted to serve as Associate Artistic Director of ACT for three years, and will become ACT’s Artistic Director in 2016. John’s 16-year freelance career has afforded him the opportunity to work with many prestigious theatre companies across the country. He has directed productions at Playwrights Horizons NY, Ensemble Studio Theater NY, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Lookingglass Theater Company in Chicago, Circle X in Los Angeles, The Resident Ensemble, New Century Theatre Company, Washington Ensemble Theatre, and Seattle Shakespeare Company. John received his directing degree from UNCSA. Some of his favorite directing credits include The Shaggs Philosophy of the World (LA Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Original Musical), and Brothers Karamazov (seven LADCC Awards including Best Production of the year and Best Direction) and directing Kurt Beattie in King Lear. John received the first annual Seattle Gregory Award honoring excellence in direction for The Adding Machine. Recent Seattle credits include New Century Theatre Company’s Mary’s Wedding, The Seagull Project’s The Three Sisters, and Othello (Seattle Shakespeare Company). As a dedicated fan of original work, John has shepherded over a dozen projects to their premiere productions.

Shelley Henze Schermer (Scenic Designer) has been associated with ACT designing props, scenery, and costumes for the mainstage, cabaret, and children’s productions since 1971, including: A Moon for the Misbegotten, Later Life, Custer, Amadeus, Fool for Love, On the Razzle, Little Shop of Horrors, Laughter on the 23rd Floor, and two versions of A Christmas Carol. Her design work, locally, nationally, and internationally, includes theatre scenery, interactive museum exhibits, special events, conventions, and interior design, including ACT’s Kreielsheimer Place. She has also developed and produced live theatre. Her current project is authoring Defining ACT 1964–1996.

Deborah Trout (Costume Designer) is a northwest designer. This past season’s work includes Mr. Burns, a post-electric play (ACT); American Dream (Seattle Opera); Alice Gosti’s durational piece How to Become a Partisan (St. Mark’s Cathedral); Cyranos (Portland Center Stage) with Seattle’s Jane Jones; Seven Ways to Get There (ACTLab); and In the Garden of Rikki Tiki (Seattle Children’s Theatre). Other theatres include: Actors Theatre of Louisville, The Alley Theatre (Houston), Alliance Theatre (Atlanta), Arizona Theatre Company, Denver Center Theatre Company, Intiman Theatre, Children’s Theatre Company (Minneapolis), Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Perseverance Theatre (Juneau), Seattle Repertory Theatre, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Syracuse Stage, and Yale Repertory Theatre. Ms. Trout co-founded the New York millinery company Mackey and Trout, holds an M.F.A. from the Yale School of Drama, and teaches design at the University of Washington.

Michael Wellborn (Lighting Designer) is pleased to return to ACT’s production of A Christmas Carol for his 20th season. Other designs at ACT have included Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike, Eurydice, The Clean House, The Night of the Iguna, Bach at Leipzig, and Das Barbecu (1995). Wellborn has also designed lighting for Seattle Repertory Theatre, Portland Center Stage, Intiman Theatre, Seattle Children’s Theatre, and The American University in Cairo. With Spectrum Dance Theatre and the Firie-Woodbury Dance Company, his work has toured the U.S., Mexico, northern Europe, and southeast Asia. Michael is the Production Manager at Seattle Children’s Theatre.

Dominic Cody Kramers (Sound Designer) is a faculty instructor at Seattle University’s Performing Arts and Art Leadership Department, and continues to design locally. Earlier this year, he created the soundscape for Cat On a Hot Tin Roof (ACT), and will be designing Buzzer (ACTLab) in January. His work has also been heard at Seattle Children’s Theatre, Seattle Beckett Festival, Seattle Shakespeare Company, Seattle Repertory Theatre, West of Lenin, upstart crow collective, Strawberry Theatre Workshop, Madcap Melodrama, and The Flying Karamazov Brothers. Other west coast design credits include Universal Studios Hollywood Theme Park, PCPA TheatreFest, Pasadena Playhouse, San Luis Obispo Little Theatre, Santa Clarita Repertory East Playhouse, Hudson Theatre, and Oregon Cabaret Theatre. Dominic earned an M.F.A. from California Institute of the Arts and a B.A. from UNC-Ashville, his hometown. He is a proud member of United Scenic Artists USA-829.

Chris DiStefano (Music Director) is very happy to be back at ACT. A longtime fan of Dickens’ novel, he is thrilled to join as the Music Director for this production, and to be a part of this Seattle tradition. His last show was Grey Gardens at ACT in 2013. Since then he went on to music direct James and the Giant Peach (Seattle Children’s Theatre) and Dogfight (ArtsWest). He is back in Seattle after a year abroad in Paris, where he was studying life and how to live it, as well as vocal technique and philosophy. Bon spectacle!

Steven M. Klein (Original Sound Designer) Mr. Klein’s design credits include the world premieres of A Normal Life, Halcyon Days, Tears of Rage, and My One Good Nerve (ACT); Psychopathia Sexualis, Vor Dire, Jolson Sings Again, Scapin (adapted by Bill Irwin), and Largely/New York (Seattle Repertory Theatre); numerous productions for both Seattle Children’s Theatre and Intiman Theatre; as well as the 1995 production of Wagner’s Der Ring des Nibelungen (Seattle Opera). His work has been heard nationally at The Kennedy Center, Arena Stage, Philadelphia Drama Guild, Utah Shakespeare Festival, La Jolla Playhouse, Mark Taper Forum, and Arizona Theatre Company.

Emily Penick (Choreographer) is the Artistic Associate at ACT, Artistic Director of RED STAGE, and a local director and choreographer. Recent choreography credits include fight choreography for Othello (Seattle Shakespeare Company), associate and movement direction for Mary’s Wedding (New Century Theatre Company), and choreography for Don Nordo Del Midwest (Café Nordo). Favorite directing credits include The Other Woman (Milwaukee Repertory Theatre), The Rose Tattoo (Ohio University), and The Secret Rapture (Bucknell University). Favorite associate directing credits include Bethany (ACT), The Seagull (American Players Theater), An Iliad, and Ragtime (Milwaukee Repertory Theatre). Upcoming directing
Who's Who in A Christmas Carol

and choreography projects include R&I (Seattle Immersive Theatre), Worse Than Tigers (RED STAGE, ACTLab), and 9 to 5 (Centerstage Theatre). Emily earned her M.F.A. in directing from Ohio University.

JR Welden (Stage Manager) has stage managed Cat On a Hot Tin Roof, The Invisible Hand, Uncle Ho to Uncle Sam, Mary Stuart, One Slight Hitch, Eurydice, The Underpants, and A Christmas Carol at ACT. He stage managed 10 seasons at Intiman Theatre, working on productions including The Grapes of Wrath; Nickel and Dime; and The Mandrake Root, with Lynn Redgrave. At Seattle Repertory Theatre, his credits include Blue Door, The Chosen, and Pygmalion.

Erin B. Zatloka (Assistant Stage Manager) is glad to be back at ACT where she last assistant stage managed Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris. Other favorites at ACT include Little Shop of Horrors, Pilgrims Musa and Sheri in the New World, The Lieutenant of Inishmore, and Rock ‘n’ Roll. Nothing in her life could happen without friends and family. Love to Greg and Zoey for they are my true gifts this and every Christmas.

Carlo Scandiuzzi (Executive Director) is a founder of Agate Films and Clear Pictures, producing such films as Prototype, Dark Drive, Outpatient, and The Flats, and Indieflix, a distribution company. In 1979, Scandiuzzi started Modern Productions, bringing to Seattle such legendary bands as The Police, Devo, Nina Hagen, Iggy Pop, The Ramones, John Cale, Robert Fripp, James Brown, Muddy Waters, and many more. He performed in several plays at Empty Space Theatre including Aunt Dan and Lemon, The Return of Pinocchio, and Dracula. In the early ‘80s, he collaborated with many Seattle performance artists such as Norman Durkee, Alan Lande, and Jesse Bernstein. He also acted in various films including Bugsy, The Public Eye, Another You, Casanova’s Kiss, and Killing Zoe. He graduated from the Ecole Supérieure D’Art Dramatique of Geneva. Carlo currently serves as a member of the Seattle Arts Commission.

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In the event of an emergency, please wait for an announcement for further instructions. Ushers will be available for assistance.

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The theatre’s emergency number in the Union lobby is 206.292.7667. Leave your exact seat location with your emergency contact in case they need to reach you.

**Smoking Policy**

Smoking is NOT allowed in any part of the theatre or within 25 feet of the entrance.

**Firearms Policy**

No firearms of any kind are allowed in any part of the theatre.

**Food**

Food is not allowed in the theatre. Tuxedos & Tennis Shoes is the exclusive caterer of ACT.

**Accessibility**

Wheelchair seating is available. The theatre is equipped with the Williams Sound® Listening System for the hard of hearing; headsets are available from the house manager for use, free of charge, with a valid ID and subject to availability. ACT offers American Sign Language interpreted and audio-described performances. For more information, email service@acttheatre.org.

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Stage Carpenter

1 Denotes staff member has worked at ACT for 10 years or more
For the past 26 years the Neal family has bought-out an entire performance of *A Christmas Carol*, generously sharing these 434 seats with family, friends, and coworkers. ACT's Artistic Associate, Emily Penick, sat down with the late Dr. Neal’s wife Bette Neal, daughter Lisa Pignataro, and son Craig Neal to learn more about this big-hearted family’s tradition, and its humble beginnings one Christmas Eve in 1978.

**EMILY:** Please tell us a bit about Dr. Neal and his famous Christmas spirit.

**LISA:** Our vision of our dad was that he was our own Mr. Fezziwig. He was always doing something special for our friends and referring dentists at Christmas time.

**BETTE:** Interestingly, Jack also identified himself with Scrooge. He told us that as a young man Christmas was just another day to him. But as our family grew, he saw the

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Jack in his Victorian costume with his two youngest children, Katey and Joe, in 1988.
importance of family traditions. Although he wasn’t the “humbug” guy that Scrooge was, he did come to the realization that Christmas was not just another day.

EP: What is a favorite memory of ACT’s A Christmas Carol?
LISA: The first time our family went to A Christmas Carol was December 1978. My mother took my brother and I—we were 9 and 11—on Christmas Eve. My dad, Jack Neal, was in the hospital and although we were sad that our dad wasn’t able to be with us, going to the theatre that night made that Christmas Eve seem magical. That Christmas Eve became one of our most favorite Christmas memories.

EP: When and how did this generous family tradition of buying an entire performance of A Christmas Carol start?
CRAIG: My dad realized what a special evening it was for us, and eight years later when our office was trying to decide what special event we could do for our referring doctors at Christmas, my mom and dad decided we should invite our referring doctors, their staff, and their families to an evening of theatre for A Christmas Carol. So the tradition was born. I am just glad that my partners, Dr. Galia Leonard and Dr. Kyle Sorenson, and I can continue this tradition.

BETTE: Year after year, people always said coming to see A Christmas Carol was a wonderful start to their Christmas holiday. As the years went by, Jack loved to hear people tell him that when they first came as our guest, they brought their young children and now their children are bringing their children.

EP: What are your favorite seats to see the show from?
LISA: Whether it was at the theatre in Queen Anne, where ACT was founded, or at the current Union Street location, there has never been a bad seat in the house.

BETTE: My daughter Katey went to A Christmas Carol when she was four. Her best seat in the house was sitting on her father’s lap.
Many of our guests have come year-after-year and have told us they are happy we have continued this tradition. It is the perfect start to their Christmas season.

**EP:** In your family, are there any favorite *Christmas Carol* moments that you look forward to most each year?

**BETTE:** Our favorite moments are when the lights go down and we are transported into a Victorian Christmas setting. The Christmas carolers, the costumes, the familiar characters create a sense of anticipation for the story to unfold.

**EP:** What is something about ACT that you know, but other people might not?

**BETTE:** Even though we have seen the show every year for over twenty-six years, each performance is different and unique from the year before. And although the story never changes, the adaptation does. The play is always amazing and entertaining, and the actors give 100% to their roles.

So often, as we have gathered to leave the theatre, people have come to us and said no matter how many times they have seen this production it is still a thrill and it is always different. Many of our guests have come year-after-year and have told us they are happy we have continued this tradition. It is the perfect start to their Christmas season.

**EP:** What do you enjoy most about the ACT experience?

**BETTE:** Everything. The venue, the actors, the house managers. Everyone is wonderful to work with.
How did you come to ACT?
I got my theatre degree at the University of Washington while Greg Falls was head of the drama program there, and I applied for the prop job at ACT in 1971, the year I graduated. I was hired to be the set design and prop assistant, and the next year I took over the prop master job. So began my long career at ACT.

How has your relationship with ACT developed over the years?
I started designing children's shows at ACT in 1972 and then, after a season spent as the Rep's prop master, I returned to ACT and after a few years began designing on the mainstage as well as the Young ACT Company shows. Greg Falls and I developed a great working relationship and I designed most of his shows for many years. I became the resident designer for the theatre, decorating for Christmas, the mortgage burning, Dickens Faire, etc.

When I started at ACT in the dark ages we opened a new show every two weeks. We had a two-day changeover, summer stock schedule. It never seemed difficult at the time! Unlike anywhere else I have worked over the years, Greg Falls' ACT was the best place to work. Greg would
TIMELINE OF IMPORTANT DATES

The ‘80s was a decade of transition for ACT, with the retirement of Greg Falls after 23 years, handing over the reins to Jeff Steitzer. Additionally, the ‘80s was the theatre’s final decade in Lower Queen Anne.

1982: ACT is now considered to be one of the six major cultural institutions in Seattle, alongside the Seattle Symphony, Seattle Opera, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Pacific Northwest Ballet, and Seattle Art Museum.

1985: Jeff Steitzer comes aboard at ACT as a Resident Director. The theatre starts to think about either a major overhaul renovation or a change of location—as the home in Lower Queen Anne begins to show its age.

1988: Falls retires from his 23-year run as Artistic Director, to be replaced by ACT Resident Director, Jeff Steitzer. Steitzer turns the theatre’s focus toward the production of new works by English and American playwrights.
always greet you warmly, and make you feel like your job and opinion were important. He treated everyone as an equal part of the “family”. Those long days never seemed a burden.

Do you have some favorite memories or anecdotes from those days?

The technical director, Dick Montgomery, kindly gave me Friday, Saturday, AND Sunday off to get married in 1972. (Remember that two-week schedule?) And then there is the fact that my wedding was the day of the Watergate break-in. Of course, we didn’t know it at the time! The annual marking of the date in the news reports did make it easy to keep track of which anniversary we were having.

You and your husband worked on turning the Eagles building into a theatre venue. What was that process like? What vision did you have for how to transform the space into a theatre?

The new building, being registered historic, came with extensive existing period details that had to be restored and required us to make any new construction easily recognized as such, yet still blend with the old decoration. Challenging!

My husband, Phil, and Callison’s architect, Gary Wakatsuki, spent months reworking the spaces to suit our needs. They had to add the shops above the existing roofline as there weren’t any spaces with enough clearance to build the scenery. Former ACT board president Jane Yerkes and I were asked to work with the Callison interior team and we were determined to make the spaces welcoming and colorful with a touch of whimsy. Over time I came to be in charge of the interior decoration.

The Allen Theatre was especially difficult because we needed to visually separate the theatre within the ballroom. Phil decided to make the new stage a crater, inspired by a meteor shower one night. The idea was that when you went down to your seat the theatre would become its own unique space, and the ballroom would fade to the background. We used rich bronze, burgundy, purple, and splashes of red with a classic diamond pattern and swirls to reflect the restored ballroom décor. The fabric colors on the seats came to me as a way to make the space decorative even when the seats were empty. The drapery and panels over the lights are acoustic requirements made decorative. The Falls Theatre, on the other hand, was the new, improved version of our old Queen Anne stage. Our traditional colors there were a deep blue with accents, so that “ACT blue” and cinnamon (now copper) were used in a bow to our history, with the green added to give it its own identity, and the stars and stripes reflected the connecting Eagle’s mural room decor.

You’ve designed over 60 shows at ACT, what are some favorite projects you’ve worked on? Why?

It always has to do with having a great meeting of the minds brought to life. I loved Man and Superman; getting to stretch the budget and backstage space to accommodate the three full sets Tom Gruenwald and I dreamed up, including a 1902 car! For Custer, with dear Johnny Kaufman directing, we set out to evoke the Montana battlefield and it came out exactly as envisioned. And I loved doing Catholics with Greg. Amadeus with Steitzer was a jeweled music box and illustrated how one can turn paint, rope, plastic flowers, and lots of glue-gunning into beautiful period detail. Little Shop of Horrors with Denise Ford pushed the limits of mechanics available at the time and was so much fun. I could go on ... oh, and then there was Steitzer’s and my On the Razzle, which was beautiful and nearly killed me ... my personal “Scottish play” ... I mind-blocked the title for years.
The ‘90s at ACT saw three different artistic directors (from Steitzer to Shannon to Edelstein) and two different theatre spaces. The theatre moved into the heart of downtown in the middle of this decade, making the ‘90s a period of resettling and reimagining the possibilities for Seattle’s contemporary theatre.

1994/1995: Steitzer hands in his resignation as Artistic Director, as the board begins a capital campaign for the move out of the Lower Queen Anne location and transition into the theatre’s new home downtown. Peggy Shannon takes over the reins as Artistic Director at ACT.

1996/1997: ACT stages its final performance in its Lower Queen Anne home: Laughter on the 23rd Floor by Neil Simon, and transitions into the downtown location. ACT opens the doors at its new multiplex style home in the former Eagles’ auditorium in the heart of downtown Seattle, launching the new space mid-season with Tom Topor’s Cheap. The theatre struggles in its first season adapting to the new location, having lost many subscribers following the move. Peggy Shannon resigns as Artistic Director of the theatre, leaving the position open for acclaimed NY Director, Gordon Edelstein, who brings with him, Artistic Associate, Kurt Beattie. ACT and the Seattle theatre community suffer a major loss when Greg Falls passes away at age 75.
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Artistic Director Kurt Beattie streamlined the season to six Mainstage shows and A Christmas Carol. 2007 saw the beginning of the Central Heating Lab (now ACTLab), which has since become an integral part of the ACT experience.

2002: Edelstein leaves ACT in the hands of his Associate Artistic Director, Kurt Beattie.

2003/2004: ACT is forced to lay off the majority of its staff, and post a $1.7 million dollar debt. With outstanding support from the community, and a generous half million dollar donation from ACT’s chairman of the board, Phil Condit, ACT manages to pull through its financial crisis. The theatre emerges as a more streamlined operation, with Kurt Beattie at the helm, producing a five-play season in both 2003 and 2004.

2007: Kurt Beattie and ACT’s Executive Director Carlo Scandiuuzzi open the doors of the Central Heating Lab, an experiment designed to foster new work and fill up the five theatre spaces available in ACT’s new building.
Every Christmas season, my wife, Jackie, whips up a triple recipe of this batter filled with brandy soaked fruits and toasted nuts, pops the baking pans into the oven, and fills the house with the scent of sweet spices. A modern update on the traditional steamed English pudding or weighty fruitcake, these little powdered sugar-dusted bars are suitably fruity and nutty, yet delicate in texture, and they’re an absolute breeze to make.

FIG OR “FIGGY” pudding dates back to at least the 16th century and was a popular seasonal dish in the 19th century, often given to holiday carolers. Figgy pudding is more like cake than pudding and is made of dried fruit, a special cake batter, seasonings such as nutmeg and cinnamon, and seasonal spirits. How does a dessert stand the test of time? Seattle chef extraordinaire Tom Douglas shares a modern take on figgy pudding for your family to enjoy this year.

INGREDIENTS

2 cups all-purpose flour
¾ tsp ground allspice
¾ tsp ground cinnamon
¼ tsp ground cloves
¼ tsp ground nutmeg
½ tsp kosher salt
1 cup brandy
1½ cups dried cherries
1½ cups prunes, chopped medium-finely
1 cup sultanas or golden raisins
½ cup dark raisins
½ cup currants
1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened, plus more for buttering the pan
2 cups packed brown sugar
3 large eggs
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 cup pecans, toasted, cooled, and chopped medium-finely
Powdered sugar as needed for sprinkling

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Butter a 9x13 baking pan and line the bottom with a piece of parchment, leaving a few inches of parchment overhanging the long sides of the pan; butter the paper.

Whisk together the flour, spices, and salt; set aside.

Put the brandy in a saucepan, and bring to a simmer. Remove from heat and stir in the fruit. Transfer the mixture to a bowl and cool to room temperature. Add one cup of the flour mixture to the fruit mixture and combine. Set both the fruit mixture and remaining dry ingredients aside.

In an electric mixer with the paddle, on medium speed, beat the butter and the brown sugar until light and fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well to incorporate each egg. Mix in the vanilla. On low speed, add remaining dry ingredients and mix until just combined. Remove bowl from mixer and fold in fruit mixture and pecans. Transfer batter to the prepared pan.

Bake until cooked through and a skewer comes out with a few crumbs attached but no batter, about 50 to 55 minutes, rotating pan once halfway through baking time.

Remove pan from oven and allow cake (still in the pan) to cool on a wire rack for one hour. Then, use the overhanging parchment to lift the cake (in one large piece) out of the pan. Transfer to a wire rack and cool completely, still on the parchment, another 45 minutes or more. Turn the cake over, peel off the parchment, then turn it over again to put it right side up. To move the fruitcake around, use a couple large spatulas or slip a large piece of cardboard under it.

Using a serrated knife, cut the fruitcake into 32 bars and sprinkle with powdered sugar before serving.

Recipe from
The Dahlia Bakery Cookbook
(Morrow, 2012)
TIMELINE OF IMPORTANT DATES

ACT continues to grow and change, increasing and strengthening its presence as a home for bold, provocative voices in theatre, and challenging audiences with works both old and new. In 2015, ACT celebrates its 50th anniversary and its 40th year of A Christmas Carol.

2011: ACT begins a musical co-production relationship with The 5th Avenue Theatre.

2015: ACT celebrates its 50th anniversary, opening the season with a throwback from its very first season in 1965, Tennessee Williams’ Cat On A Hot Tin Roof. Kurt Beattie ends his 12-year run as Artistic Director at the end of another season of great theatre, leaving ACT in the hands of Associate Artistic Director John Langs as it moves into the future.
This is the little Baby Ezra with a rare immune disease. And this is the who works with the who are both supported by these generous to repair tiny immune systems, giving children like Ezra a second chance at a healthy childhood.

CARE. RESEARCH. PHILANTHROPY. COMING TOGETHER EVERY DAY. Baby Ezra was diagnosed with a rare immune disease, leaving him unable to fight germs and infections. The collaboration between Seattle Children’s doctors, researchers and generous people like you make it possible for children like Ezra to have a brighter future. To learn more or donate, visit seattlechildrens.org.

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