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Living > Article

Adaptation of 'A Christmas Carol' remains true to spirit of classic, but offers a new spin

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By Steve Freeman / Special Contributor to the Arlington Morning News

A novel adaptation of Charles Dickens' beloved holiday classic features the usual characters but in different roles. It's as if someone switched all the names on their gifts under the Christmas tree.

In *Tiny Tim: A Christmas Carol Revisited*, which will open Friday at Main Street Theatre, a sickly little girl replaces one of the classic's leading characters Tiny Tim. A grown-up Tim looks the part of the pessimistic miser Ebenezer Scrooge and Scrooge plays the prophetic ghost Marley.

The take-off of *A Christmas Carol* tells the same story of evil, selfishness, discovery and repentance, but the characters' ages have advanced and their roles changed.

Playwright Steven Rowell said he wanted to show how times change, but how people make the same mistakes and must take some of the same steps to reform.

"In the original, Tiny Tim was not in the story much at all, but he was still pivotal," says Mr. Rowell a television production engineer in Orlando, Fla. "Now, he's grown up and must learn the same lessons of being good to his fellow man and finding a purpose for living just like Scrooge did."

The production is the **Tiny Tim: A Christmas Carol Revisited** at Main Street Theatre. WHEN: 8:10 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays, through Dec. 16.



Steve Freeman / AMN
Laura Leither, left, plays Martha Cratchit, and Chad Moore, right, plays a young Tiny Tim, in Main Street Theater's *Tiny Tim: A Christmas Carol Revisited*, which opens Friday. The two actors react with excitement at a holiday invitation sent them by Scrooge, who is played by James Hill, middle. The adaptation of the Charles Dickens Christmas classic continues through Dec. 16.

world 16. Playwright Steven Rowell will premierattend the Mansfield world of Mr. premiere Friday RowellWHERE: Main Street Theatre, 107 play. N. Main St., Mansfield It is COST: \$12 for adults, \$9 for senior the adults and \$6 for children 12 and first of younger five INFORMATION: he has penned that has gotten to the stage.

Theater organizers heard about the play, liked the twist on the popular holiday standard and jumped at being the first to stage the work.

"I directed the original a few years ago, and have always loved it, so I liked what this adaptation did to show us again the classic story of evil, fear and redemption," says James Hal Mills of Burleson, the show's director who also stars as Scrooge.

The new story leaps from Victorian England to New York City in 1899. Tiny Tim, the boy who once beamed with optimism despite being crippled, now is a stern and mean-spirited Tim Cratchit, the owner of a garment factory, a sweatshop.

Mr. Cratchit, played by Franklin Roberts of Mansfield, treats Christmas with a "Bah! Humbug!" attitude. He works his employees hard right up to Christmas Eve. His usual targets include his apprentice and his wife, played respectively by Kenny Hallman and Cathe Hallman, both of Mansfield.

When the kindly ghost Scrooge appears to him to point out the error of his ways, Tim begins a nightmarish journey challenging him to review his life and make some changes.

Mr. Rowell added elements to remain true to the time period of America at the turn of the century. The apprentice's daughter, Tessie, played by Alyssa Hammons of Mansfield, has yellow fever, a common disease in those days. The strict taskmaster, Mr. Cratchit, must deal with workers starting to discover their own rights, and women fighting to vote.

The play also bows to history with the characterizations of the three spirits who accompany Mr. Cratchit to reveal his life's demise.

The Ghost of Christmas Past is Lady Liberty, starring Kimberly Titus of North Richland Hills; Christmas Present is President Teddy Roosevelt, played by Jeremy Moran of Grand Prairie; and Christmas Future is a masked Western outlaw, played by Kevin Titus of North Richland Hills.

Mr. Rowell enjoyed reworking the tale with no guilt about tampering with a classic. To him, the hundreds of adaptations like his over the years only prove the superiority of the original.

"The purists will be glad to know I created every scene based on a chapter of the book. I didn't want a diluted adaptation," he says.

Audiences will have a chance to meet the playwright at a reception in his honor following the Friday performance.

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