

LANTERN  
THEATER  
COMPANY

special  
holiday  
event



*Charles Dickens'*  
**A CHRISTMAS  
CAROL**

AN ORIGINAL ADAPTATION BY  
Anthony Lawton

IN COLLABORATION WITH  
Christopher Colucci AND Thom Weaver

**STREAMING DECEMBER 13, 2024 – JANUARY 6, 2025**



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COVER, THIS PAGE, and THROUGHOUT:  
Anthony Lawton in *Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol*. All production photos by Mark Garvin.



WELCOME 3

**LANTERN THEATER COMPANY**

**Charles McMahon**  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

**Stacy Maria Dutton**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

in association with

**MIRROR THEATRE COMPANY**

presents

*Charles Dickens'*  
**A CHRISTMAS  
CAROL**

AN ORIGINAL ADAPTATION BY  
**Anthony Lawton**

IN COLLABORATION WITH  
**Christopher Colucci & Thom Weaver**

**Thom Weaver**  
SCENIC & LIGHTING DESIGNER

**Kierceton Keller**  
COSTUME DESIGNER

**Christopher Colucci**  
SOUND DESIGNER

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# About the Lantern

**LANTERN  
THEATER  
COMPANY**

Lantern Theater Company produces plays that investigate and illuminate what is essential in the human spirit and the spirit of the times. We seek to be a vibrant, contributing member of our community, exposing audiences to great theater, inviting participation in dialogue and discussion, engaging audience members on artistic and social issues, and employing theatrical language and techniques to enrich student learning in the classroom.

## ***Illumination* Education Program**

Our *Illumination* education program complements and expands on the work of classroom teachers to bring an essential artistic lens to curricular material, allowing students to connect to classic stories in a dynamic way and empowering teachers with new approaches to traditional literature. Our lessons are designed to support student development in three key areas: the ability to think critically and problem solve, the ability to communicate effectively, and the ability to collaborate. Following a decade of providing arts-integrated instruction in the classroom, we have found that exposure to the theatrical discipline deepens student understanding of assigned material and fosters empathy and positive collaborative habits – essential skills that will provide long-term benefits to students into their adult lives.

We are deeply grateful to the individuals, foundations, corporations, and government partners listed here and on the following pages whose generosity provides critical support for our award-winning artistic, education, and community programming. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation by visiting us online at [lanterntheater.org/support](http://lanterntheater.org/support).

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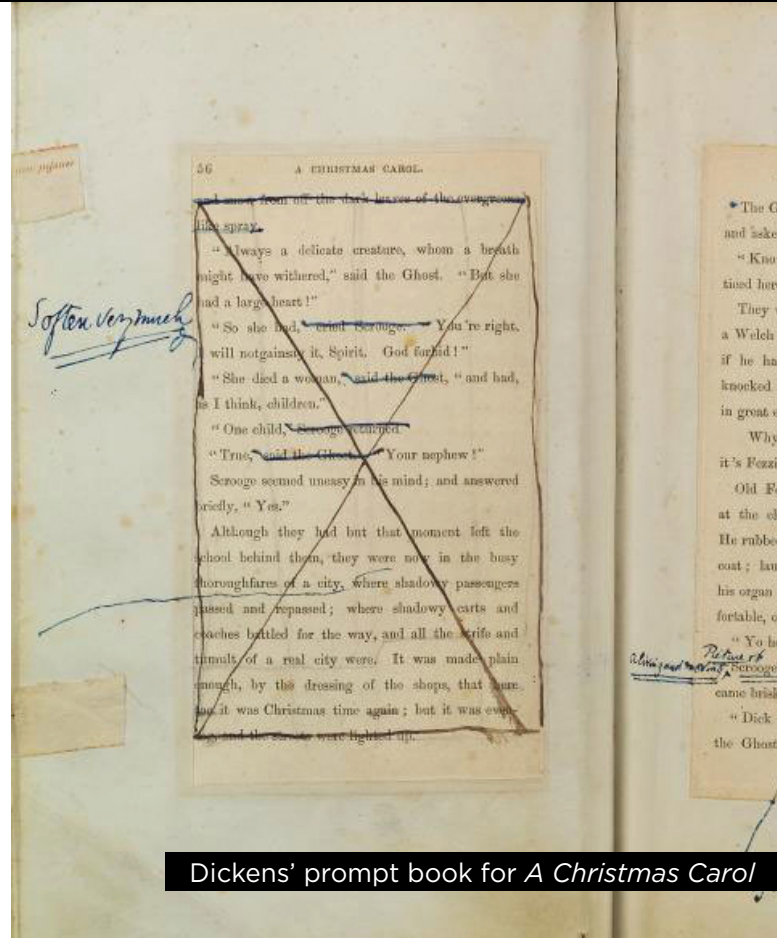
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## Charles Dickens' One-Man Christmas Carol

Anthony Lawton's solo performance of *A Christmas Carol* has a particularly distinguished predecessor: Charles Dickens himself. At a time when it was considered undignified for authors to do public readings of their work, Dickens embraced them, channeling his love of theater, acting, and applause into nearly 150 public readings of *A Christmas Carol*. He was both a singular literary talent and a gifted actor, and the two passions were always intertwined. While writing, he would stare at himself in a mirror and make the faces and voices of his characters. It was only natural that these private performances would turn public.

Dickens didn't just perform the work – he adapted it as well. When he first began reading the novella publicly, the performances took three hours. He honed it over the years, cutting and adapting his own words until the story could be told in 90 minutes. He used unique voices for each character and performed emotion rather than describing it. His prompt books were printed with wide margins, allowing him to make notes to himself about his delivery, such as “tone to mystery,” “turn to pathos,” or “soften very much.” Audiences were rapt, and a tradition was born.



Dickens' prompt book for *A Christmas Carol*



Dickens in 1843





Victoria and Albert (1848)

## Christmas Traditions

The Christmas of the 1840s – Scrooge’s, Tiny Tim’s, and Dickens’ – was not the jolly celebration we recognize today. Many of our now-treasured traditions were just emerging in London, and the popularity of *A Christmas Carol* did much to enshrine them in homes and festivities.

The Christmas tree, for example, was popularized in England when an engraving of Queen Victoria and her German husband, Prince Albert, in front of their decorated evergreen was published in 1848. Christmas cards and Christmas crackers were also introduced in the 1840s, and gift-giving transitioned from New Year’s to December 25th during the same decade. While Dickens did not invent these traditions, *A Christmas Carol* is often credited with redefining the holiday spirit, helping turn it into a celebration of family and generosity.

## Dickens’ England: “Are there no workhouses?”

*A Christmas Carol* is famous for its spirits, its warmth, and the good-hearted little boy who helps a miser see the error of his ways. Dickens had originally intended it to be a social justice pamphlet called *An Appeal to the People of England, on behalf of the Poor Man’s Child*. On the advice of his publisher, Dickens rethought his plan

and turned the contents into the 1843 novella in just six weeks, believing that a story would make his case more clearly and resoundingly.

It was a time of rapid industrialization, massive population growth, and widening gulfs between the rich and poor. Rural English people and European immigrants – many fleeing starvation in their home countries – flocked to London, more than quadrupling its population between 1800 and 1880. While London became a center of trade, enriching the wealthy and creating a middle class, the poor were left behind to struggle amid crumbling infrastructure and rampant disease. Cholera ravaged the poor; the mortality rate for poor children was sometimes estimated as high as 50%.

The cycle of poverty was difficult to break. A proper education required the ability to pay tuition, which the poor could not do. So-called “ragged schools,” which Dickens supported, offered free education to the poorest children – but they could only attend if their families did not need them to work and bring in an income.

Children were in high demand as factory workers and chimney sweeps due to their size. Children as young as five were hired out for paltry sums, working instead of learning, finding themselves without the education that could help them find opportunities to rise out of poverty. The 1833 Factories Act limited the workday for nine- to thirteen-year-olds to nine hours a day, six days a week – an improvement over the existing, more exploitative terms.

Public assistance for the poor also came with harsh labor. The New Poor Law of 1834 passed under great pressure from the wealthy and middle classes, who did not want to pay to support the poor. Under this law, in order to receive public assistance, the poor were confined to workhouses. Conditions were harsh, and the mandatory labor was demeaning, arduous, and long. The harsh conditions were meant to encourage the poor to help themselves; it was, in effect, a punishment for falling victim to an unsympathetic age.

Charles Dickens – and his characters – would recognize a good deal of their society in ours: distrust of immigrants, work requirements for those in need of help, widening gaps between the rich and the poor, and an education system that limits opportunities for those who cannot pay for them. Like Scrooge and Bob Cratchit, the wages of workers are a fraction of their employers’, and the rising cost of living seems to outstrip the average paycheck. In 1843’s *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens advocated for social responsibility, generosity, and community – lessons we still need today.

**—Meghan Winch**



There are some stories so woven into the mythos of a culture that it seems impossible to imagine a time before they existed. They form the basic core of stories that serve as a common reference point, standing for some basic facet of human nature.

Ebenezer Scrooge, Jacob Marley, Bob Cratchit, and Tiny Tim all have passed on into figures of hieroglyphic symbolism, to the point where when we think about them, their identities as cultural phenomena obscure the original impressions created by the hand of the artist. The clarity and urgency of the redemption story in *A Christmas Carol* seem to demand dramatization, but those dramatizations passed down through the years ultimately form a sort of interpretive crust as each generation of interpreters leaves its mark on the original.

But something extraordinary happens when you strip away your assumptions and just sit with the simple power of the words and characters, and hear the story told in a clear and simple human voice. Cute clichés give way to the power of an utterly compelling narrative of a singular night. *A Christmas Carol* is a devastating story, laying bare all the ugly forces that separate and isolate human beings from one another, turning life into a solitary torment. It is also a joyous story of one person's release from that torment just at the moment when it seems about to clasp him in its grip for all time; it has become the story of the joy of reconnecting with those things most precious to us.

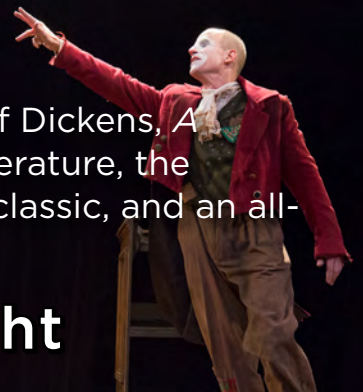
I think the greatest value in the dramatic and storytelling arts is to weave again those bonds between us all that the cold abrasions of the world are always fraying. We see the common humanity of saints and sinners and become more truly ourselves.

—**Charles McMahon**

## DELVE INTO THE PLAY WITH LANTERN SEARCHLIGHT

Join us on the Lantern Searchlight blog as we explore the world of Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* in the nexus between Victorian economics and literature, the fascinating circumstances surrounding the writing of this holiday classic, and an all-new interview with Anthony Lawton.

[lanterntheater.org/searchlight](https://lanterntheater.org/searchlight)





“I willingly believe that the damned are, in one sense, successful, rebels to the end; that the doors of hell are locked on the inside...” —C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

““To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket – safe, dark, motionless, airless – it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.” —C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*

**—Anthony Lawton**





It's unclear how or even why, but sometime a long time ago we managed to convince ourselves that in order to have, others must have not. It feels embedded in us, in our DNA. It feels like a law: as immutable as it is insidious.

The greatest miracle of *A Christmas Carol* has nothing to do with ghosts, and it has nothing to do with time travel. The greatest miracle of *A Christmas Carol* is *transformation*. Our capacity to change, however impossible it may seem. Our capacity to forgive, and to ask for forgiveness. To learn. To reunite, to re-engage. To switch to decaf. To transform a bitter relationship into a loving one. To find faith again, in whatever form that manifests. To get sober. To learn to listen. To see the reflection of ourselves in the suffering of others. To raise our hand, stand up, and say "what can I do?"

This capacity is a miracle, one that lives inside each of us. It will always seem hard, or even impossible. It will always seem too late. We will always doubt our ability to forgive, and others' willingness to forgive us. We will always feel helpless to do anything in the face of forces too daunting and too great to oppose.

But we can.

**—Thom Weaver**







**ANTHONY LAWTON (Co-Creator / Storyteller)** has acted in Philadelphia for 30 years. Favorite roles include George in *Of Mice and Men* (Walnut Street Theatre); Gideon in Athol Fugard's *Playland* (The Wilma Theater); Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet* (Arden Theatre Company); Coleman in *The Lonesome West*, Feste in *Twelfth Night*, and Storyteller in *A Christmas Carol* (Lantern Theater Company); the Fire Chief in *The 24-Hour Bald Soprano* (Brat Productions); Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale*, Cromwell in *A Man for All Seasons*, and Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival); Dr. Parker in *Bat Boy* and "man" in *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* (1812 Productions). Film: *Unbreakable*, *Invincible*, *Law Abiding Citizen*, and *Silver Linings Playbook*. He has also appeared on CBS TV's *Hack* and *Cold Case*.

In 1999, *Philadelphia City Paper* named him the city's "Best One-Man Theatre" for his solo productions of Shel Silverstein's *The Devil and Billy Markham* and C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce* and *The Screwtape Letters*, which he produces under the aegis of his own company, the Mirror. The mission statement of the Mirror is "Spiritual Theatre for a Secular Audience." For more info, see his website: [anthonylawtonactor.com](http://anthonylawtonactor.com).

In 2003, he was awarded an Independence Foundation grant to develop a production of his first original play, *The Foocy*, which garnered five Barrymore nominations in 2005, including Best New Play. In 2016, the Independence Foundation gave him a grant that enabled him to develop his first musical: an adaptation of George MacDonald's *The Light Princess*. Arden Theatre Company produced the play, which received eight Barrymore nominations, including for Best New Play. The play won in two categories, including Best Original Music, for which Lawton shared a credit as lyricist.

He has taught acting, directing, Shakespeare, and solo performance at the University of Notre Dame, his alma mater. He has also taught acting at Temple University, Eastern University, Community College of Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania, Friends' Central School, The Wilma Theater, Walnut Street Theatre, and Arden Theatre Company.



**THOM WEAVER (Co-Creator / Scenic and Lighting Designer).** His work has been seen at NYSF/Public Theater, Roundabout Theatre Company, Vineyard Theatre, Primary Stages, Signature Theatre (NY), The Wilma Theater, Arden Theatre Company, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Theatre Exile, New Paradise Laboratories, Walnut Street Theatre, Center Stage, Huntington Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Alliance Theatre, Syracuse Stage, Milwaukee Rep, Shakespeare Theatre, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Berkshire Theatre Festival, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Folger Theatre, Cleveland Playhouse, Roundhouse Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse, Hangar Theatre, Spoleto Festival, City Theatre, Pittsburgh Public Theater, and Yale Rep, among others. Six Barrymore Awards, two Jeff Awards, and two AUDELCO Awards. Co-founder of Die-Cast with Brenna Geffers, founding board member of Theatre Philadelphia, and a member of Wingspace. Education: Carnegie-Mellon and Yale. He/him.

**CHRISTOPHER COLUCCI (Co-Creator / Sound Designer)** is happy to end (and begin) his '23-24 theater season at the Lantern. Recent work: *The Lehman Trilogy* (Arden Theatre Company), *Children of the Sun* (Philadelphia Artists' Collective), *The Last Yiddish Speaker* (InterAct Theatre Company), *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Walnut Street Theatre), *Noises Off* (Delaware Theatre Company), *The Flatlanders* (1812 Productions), and *Camp Siegfried* (Theatre Exile), as well as both *Tartuffe* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* here at the Lantern. Next up, books and long bike rides. 2016 Pew Fellowship in the Arts; eight Barrymore Awards for Outstanding Original Music and Sound Design; Independence Fellowship in the Arts (2012, 2019); MA in Philosophy from Western Kentucky University; BA in Philosophy/Theology from Eastern University. SoundCloud (<https://soundcloud.com/cmsound>); YouTube (<https://tinyurl.com/yd89tm64>); Instagram @christopherm\_colucci

**KIERCETON KELLER (Costume Designer)** is a Philadelphia-based costumer, wardrobe, and performer. She is the resident designer for the dance programs at Ursinus College and Drexel University, while also dabbling in occasional outside design work. Some of her proudest endeavors have been creating designs for local high schools. Kierceton is a proud graduate of Temple University (2017), where she received her BA in Theater.

**CHARLES McMAHON (Artistic Director)** co-founded Lantern Theater Company in 1994 and serves as Artistic Director in addition to directing,

acting, and writing for the company. He has directed all but one of the Lantern's annual Shakespeare productions, including recent productions of *The Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Tempest*, and *Coriolanus*. Other directing credits include *Tartuffe*, *Travesties*, *The Plague*, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, *As You Like It*, *New Jerusalem*, *La Ronde* (also translator and adapter), *Richard III* (2006 Barrymore Award, Outstanding Production of a Play), *The Comedy of Errors* (2004 Barrymore nomination, Outstanding Direction of a Play), *The House of Bernarda Alba*, and *A Doll's House*. His recent acting credits include Tolstoy in *The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson*, *Charles Dickens & Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord* and Heisenberg in *Copenhagen*. His writing credits include *Oscar Wilde: From the Depths* and co-creating an original adaptation of Dylan Thomas' *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, which was honored with two Barrymore Awards and five nominations, including a nomination for Outstanding New Play. A native Philadelphian, he is a graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts where he studied acting and directing.

**STACY MARIA DUTTON (Executive Director)** has been Executive Director of Lantern Theater Company since 2016, after serving on the company's Board of Directors for over a decade. Her prior career in investment management spanned 25 years, including as Managing Partner of Brandywine Global Investment Management and as Co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of Hygrove Partners. She served on the Board of Directors of the Philadelphia Orchestra Association from 2007 to 2019, including service as Audit Committee Chair and Investment Committee Chair. In 2011, she was named Business on Board Member of the Year by the Arts & Business Council of Greater Philadelphia. She earned an MBA from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, a BA in Philosophy from the University of Chicago, and pursued graduate studies at the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of the Johns Hopkins University.



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 Audio Recordist and Dialogue Editor ..... Chad Kinsey  
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