

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



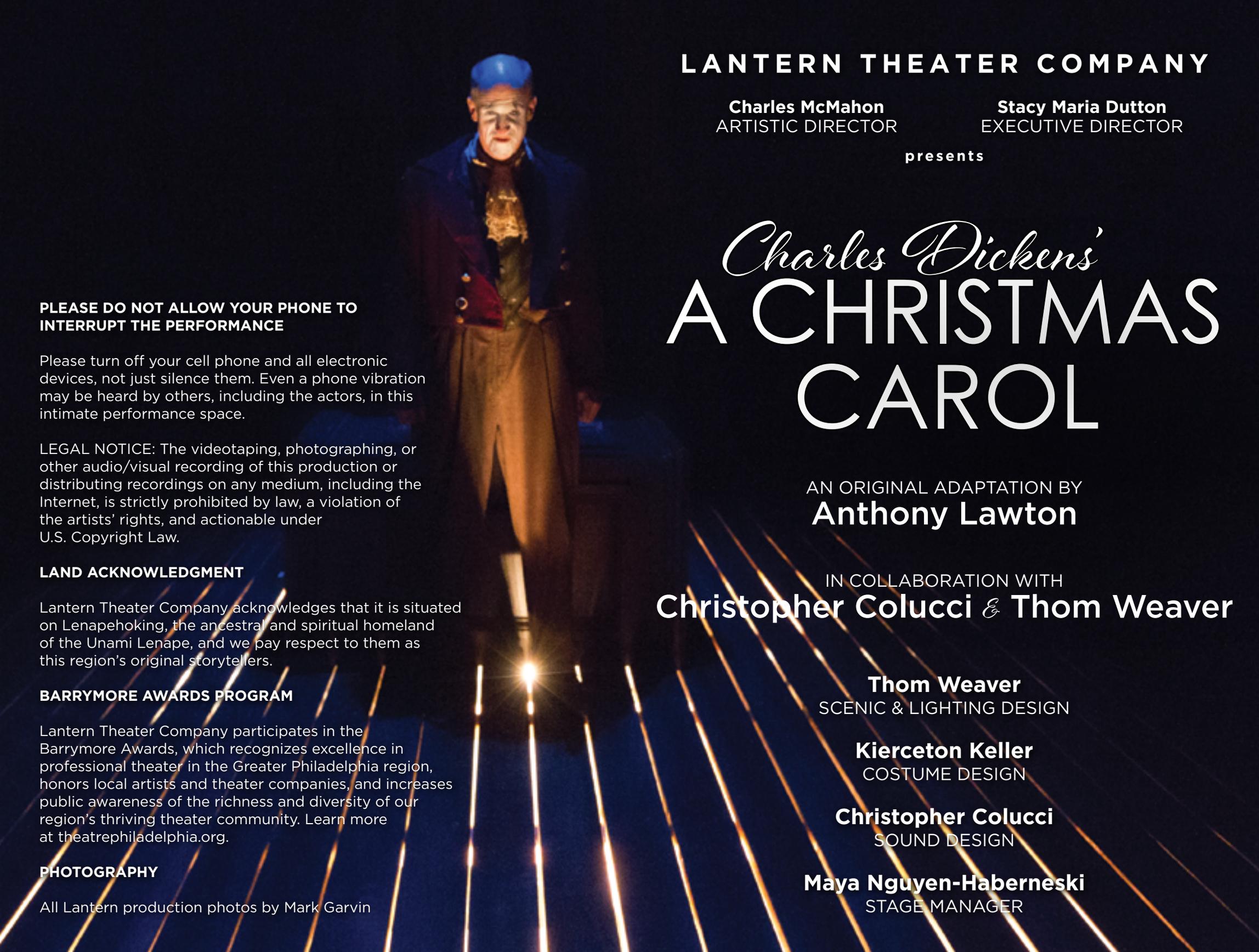
25|26  
season

**LANTERN  
THEATER  
COMPANY**

AN ORIGINAL ADAPTATION BY  
Anthony Lawton

IN COLLABORATION WITH  
Christopher Colucci  
AND Thom Weaver

**DECEMBER 13 - 28, 2025**

A man in a blue cap and dark coat stands on a stage, illuminated by dramatic lighting. The background is dark with several bright, diagonal light beams creating a sense of depth and focus on the performer.

# LANTERN THEATER COMPANY

**Charles McMahon**  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

**Stacy Maria Dutton**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

presents

# *Charles Dickens'* A CHRISTMAS CAROL

## PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW YOUR PHONE TO INTERRUPT THE PERFORMANCE

Please turn off your cell phone and all electronic devices, not just silence them. Even a phone vibration may be heard by others, including the actors, in this intimate performance space.

LEGAL NOTICE: The videotaping, photographing, or other audio/visual recording of this production or distributing recordings on any medium, including the Internet, is strictly prohibited by law, a violation of the artists' rights, and actionable under U.S. Copyright Law.

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Lantern Theater Company acknowledges that it is situated on Lenapehoking, the ancestral and spiritual homeland of the Unami Lenape, and we pay respect to them as this region's original storytellers.

## BARRYMORE AWARDS PROGRAM

Lantern Theater Company participates in the Barrymore Awards, which recognizes excellence in professional theater in the Greater Philadelphia region, honors local artists and theater companies, and increases public awareness of the richness and diversity of our region's thriving theater community. Learn more at [theatrephiladelphia.org](http://theatrephiladelphia.org).

## PHOTOGRAPHY

All Lantern production photos by Mark Garvin

AN ORIGINAL ADAPTATION BY  
**Anthony Lawton**

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

**Thom Weaver**  
SCENIC & LIGHTING DESIGN

**Kierceton Keller**  
COSTUME DESIGN

**Christopher Colucci**  
SOUND DESIGN

**Maya Nguyen-Haberneski**  
STAGE MANAGER

NEXT UP ON THE LANTERN MAINSTAGE

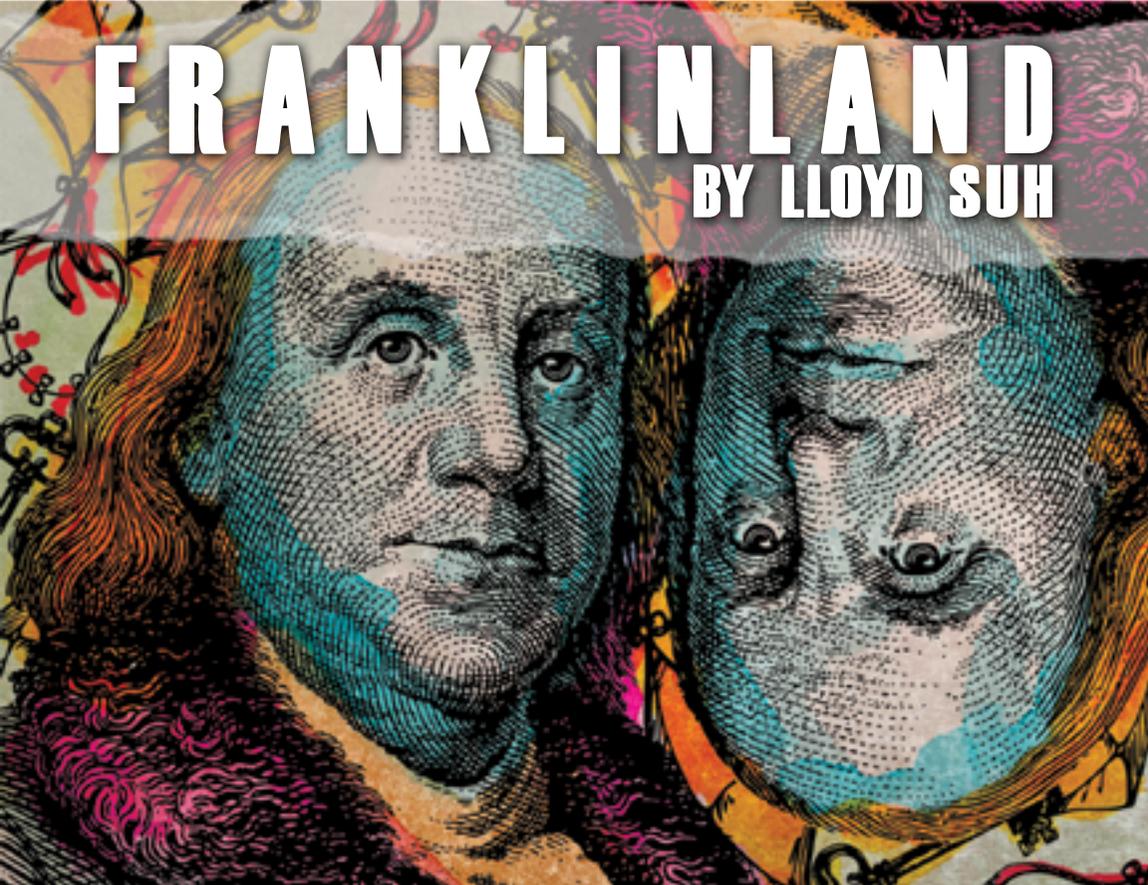


# BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY

by PEARL CLEAGE

**BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY**  
PHILADELPHIA PREMIERE  
BY PEARL CLEAGE  
DIRECTED BY BRETT ASHLEY ROBINSON  
FEBRUARY 12 - MARCH 15, 2026

Harlem, 1930. The music is hot, and change is in the air. Angel is a talented singer looking for her big break, and her friend Guy wants to design costumes for Josephine Baker. When a southern stranger enters their lives, will he help them reach their dreams or destroy them? Pearl Cleage's drama of the Harlem Renaissance is mesmerizing, inventive, and soulful.



# FRANKLINLAND

BY LLOYD SUH

**FRANKLINLAND**  
PHILADELPHIA PREMIERE  
BY LLOYD SUH  
DIRECTED BY CHARLES MCMAHON  
MAY 7 - JUNE 7, 2026

Benjamin Franklin played many roles: publisher, inventor, political agitator, diplomat - and he wanted his son to follow him into the sciences. When William rebels and becomes the Royal Governor of New Jersey, the stage is set for a father-son conflict of international proportions. Join us for the Philadelphia premiere of Lloyd Suh's endearing and insightful new play of revolutionary consequences, in the city where it happened.

**TICKETS ARE ON SALE NOW!**

[www.lanterntheater.org](http://www.lanterntheater.org)

Victoria and Albert in 1848; Inset: Dickens in 1843 and Dickens' prompt book for *A Christmas Carol*



## 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.

## 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 – any 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.

First edition of *A Christmas Carol* (1843)



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**



“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**

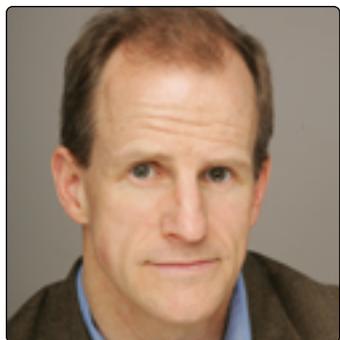
It’s unclear how or even why, but sometime a long time ago we managed to convince ourselves that in order to have, others must have not. It feels embedded in us, in our DNA. It feels like a law: as immutable as it is insidious.

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 33 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 premiered at the Lantern and garnered five Barrymore nominations in 2005, including Best New Play. In 2016, the Independence Foundation gave him a grant which enabled him to develop his first musical: an adaptation of George MacDonald's *The Light Princess*. Arden Theatre Company produced the play, which received 8 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, 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, Vineyard Theatre, Primary Stages, Signature Theatre (NY), The Wilma Theater, Arden Theatre Company, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Theatre Exile, New Paradise Laboratories, Alliance Theatre, Alley Theatre, Center Stage, Geva Theatre, Huntington Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare, Syracuse Stage, Milwaukee Rep, Shakespeare Theatre, Asolo Rep, Berkshire Theatre Festival, Williamstown Theatre Festival, The Folger Theatre, Cleveland Playhouse, Roundhouse Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse, Hangar Theater, Spoleto Festival, City Theatre, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, and Yale Rep, among others. Six

Barrymore Awards, two Jeff Awards, Helen Hayes Award, 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)** Recent work: *Spinner* (Delaware Theatre Company) and both *The Real Thing* and *Macbeth* here at the Lantern. Next up: *Sherlock Holmes: The Great Detective* and *A Delicate Balance* (Walnut Street Theatre), *Circle Forward* (Gulfshore Playhouse), *Can't Forget About You* (Inis Nua Theatre Company), *Seng's Hair Salon* (InterAct Theatre Company), and *Marsha Blovotnick and the Marvelous Magical Chicken Soup* (Theatre Ariel). 2016 Pew Fellowship in the Arts; Eight Barrymore Awards for Outstanding Original Music and Sound Design; Independence Fellowship in the Arts (2012, 2019); Resident Videographer (Lantern Theater Company); MA in Philosophy from Western Kentucky University; BA in Philosophy/Theology from Eastern University. Christopher's latest recording of music for classical guitar (*Contrastes II*) is available on Spotify and most streaming platforms. [www.soundcloud.com/cmsound](http://www.soundcloud.com/cmsound) [www.instagram.com/christopherm\\_colucci](http://www.instagram.com/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.

**MAYA NGUYEN-HABERNESKI (Stage Manager)** is excited to be returning to this production of *A Christmas Carol*, and is especially looking forward to calling the Jacob Marley cue sequence! This was her first professional show she stage managed as a 2023/24 Professional Apprentice. Since the apprenticeship, she has served as Assistant Stage Manager for several Lantern productions with some of her favorites including *The 39 Steps*, *Much Abo About Nothing*, and *Crumbs From the Table of Joy*. She will also be stage managing the remainder of Lantern's 2025/26 season. To Cheryl, Ari, and Ahimsa, I love you to the other side of the world and back!

**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 *Macbeth*, *Much Abo About Nothing*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Tempest*, and *Coriolanus*. Other directing credits include *The 39 Steps*, *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

# 2025/26 STUDENT MATINEE SERIES

## Dear Educators,

Welcome to Lantern Theater Company's 2025/26 season! Our award-winning *Illumination* program offers a range of opportunities for students and educators to engage with our theater artists, including:

- Weekday student matinees with post-show discussions and study guides
- Classroom residencies on curricular material
- Discounted academic group tickets to public performances

Our 2025/26 student matinee series continues with performances of our mainstage productions of *Blues for an Alabama Sky* and *Franklinland*, plus our annual production of *Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol*.

Student audiences bring a unique energy and curiosity to live performances, and we know that a strong production can powerfully shape students' relationship to curricular material. We are excited to work with you to engage your students beyond the classroom as we continue another unprecedented academic year.

To inquire about upcoming productions and discount tickets for your students, please contact Talia Speak in our Education Department at **215.829.9002 x106** or **education@lanterntheater.org**.

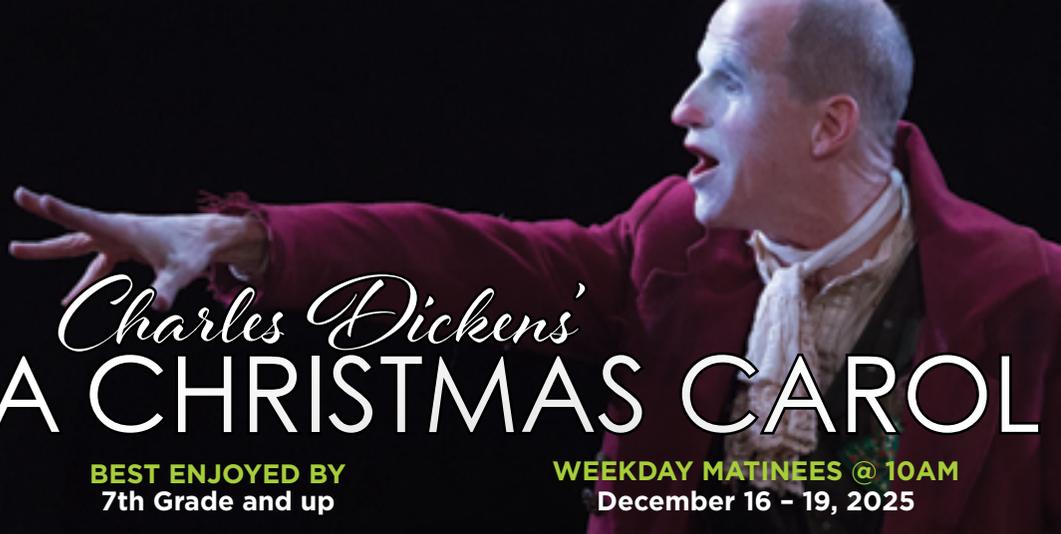
**DISCOUNT PRICING** Bring your students to special weekday morning performances and enrich your classroom curriculum! Tickets are just \$18 per student and \$15 per student for Title 1 schools. One free teacher/chaperone ticket is provided for every 10 student tickets purchased.

**Q&A** Learn about the making of each play. All students will be invited to ask questions during a post-show talkback with members of the cast.

**STUDY GUIDES** Bring the show into your classroom with study guides that include in-depth information about the play, thought-provoking questions, and classroom activities. All lesson plans meet national and state standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking, Language Arts, and Theater Arts.

**FIELD TRIP GUIDES** We provide field trip guides to all teachers to make your visit as carefree as possible.

**CALL 215.829.9002 x106**



## Charles Dickens' A CHRISTMAS CAROL

**BEST ENJOYED BY**  
7th Grade and up

**WEEKDAY MATINEES @ 10AM**  
December 16 - 19, 2025



## BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY

by PEARL CLEAGE

**BEST ENJOYED BY**  
10th Grade and up

**WEEKDAY MATINEES @ 10AM**  
February 24 - March 18, 2026



## FRANKLINLAND

BY LLOYD SUH

**BEST ENJOYED BY**  
8th Grade and up

**WEEKDAY MATINEES @ 10AM**  
May 19 - June 9, 2026

**VISIT [lanterntheater.org/matinees](https://lanterntheater.org/matinees)**

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.

**ARTISTIC & EDUCATION**

Artistic Director .....Charles McMahon  
 Education Director .....Matt Tallman  
 Education & Artistic Associate .....Talia Speak  
 Resident Dramaturg..... Meghan Winch  
 Resident Videographer..... Christopher Colucci  
 Commissioned Artists..... Steve H. Broadnax III, Christopher Colucci,  
 Peter DeLaurier, Anthony Lawton,  
 Forrest McClendon, Thom Weaver  
 Teaching Artists.....Grace Acquilano, Carly L. Bodnar, Susan Chase,  
 Morgan Charéce Hall, Donovan Lockett, Taylor J. Mitchell,  
 David Pica, Rebecca Posner, Patrick Reilly, Arthur Lee Robinson,  
 Arielle Siler, Talia Speak, Matt Tallman, Joyous Whitfield

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 Finance Director ..... Anne Shuff  
 Patron Services Manager ..... Emily Wilson  
 Front of House Associate .....Zaria Leonard-White  
 Associate for Institutional Advancement ..... Grace Acquilano  
 Resident House Manager..... Patrick Reilly  
 2025/26 Season Professional Apprentices.....Jazmin Mahoney,  
 Rasheda Sesay, Gavin Spiewak

**PRODUCTION**

Production Managers ..... Scott Cassidy, Kate Coots  
 Technical Director .....Andrew Thompson  
 Stage Manager .....Maya Nguyen-Haberneski  
 Costume Supervisor ..... Kelly Myers  
 Master Electrician ..... Nick Wacksman  
 Audio Engineer ..... John Kolbinski  
 Wardrobe/Run Crew ..... Rasheda Sesay  
 Program Editor & Designer .....Anne Shuff

**DELVE DEEPER INTO THE PLAY**

Join us on Lantern Searchlight on Medium as we explore the world of Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* in the nexus between Victorian economics and literature, the fascinating circumstances surrounding the writing of this holiday classic, and more.

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



## ABOUT THE LANTERN

The mission of Lantern Theater Company is to produce 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, and engaging audience members about artistic and social issues.

As we expand our role in Philadelphia through broader and deeper engagement with our artists, our audience, and our community, our education programs will continue to draw from our expertise in dramatic and literary texts and in theatrical language and techniques to enrich learning in the classroom and beyond.

## EDUCATION PROGRAM

*Illumination* is Lantern Theater Company's award-winning education program, which seeks to educate and engage local students using dramatic texts and theatrical techniques. In addition to our student matinee performances, we provide innovative, arts-based approaches to English and History curriculum to enhance the value of education in the Philadelphia region.

We believe strongly that arts education is a vital component of creating vibrant, well-rounded citizens. Given the ongoing challenges facing the educational system in Philadelphia and its surrounding areas, it is our civic duty to do what we can to support arts education in the classroom – and to support the next generation of artists and innovators.

In the 2025/26 school year, the Lantern will provide extended classroom residencies to 600–800 middle school and high school students, mainly in the Philadelphia School District, and we will host up to 2,500 high school and college students at Lantern performances, including at up to 19 student matinee performances at 10 am.

### MAJOR SUPPORT FOR OUR 2025/26 SEASON PROVIDED BY



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**THANK YOU!** The following list includes gifts received between 5/11/24 and 11/11/25. Although space does not allow us to list donations under \$100, we are enormously grateful to *everyone* who invests in our artistic, education, and community engagement programs. We can't do it without *YOU*.

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A photograph of actor Anthony Lawton on stage, dressed in a red coat and a white cravat, holding a small, decorated Christmas tree in his right hand. The background is dark with colorful confetti and a bright spotlight shining down on him.

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