

WHAT THE DICKENS

(A Partridge In A Parody)

a Harmony College Show

"WHAT THE DICKENS" PRODUCTION NOTES

CONCEPT

The title of this holiday show seems to say it all, "What The Dickens!" or "A Partridge In A Parody." The show is a parody of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," complete with the major characterizations of Scrooge, Marley, and the Spirits of the Past, Present and Future. The chorus plays a major supporting role by singing songs that project the action of the characters. The fact that this is a parody allowed the author some freedom in comedic writing. The characters often address the audience directly, in asides. The show is a crazy farce that should be played for all the possible laughs.

Many chapters will choose to produce this one hour playlet during the holiday season and wish to make the entire performance longer. Here are some suggestions. Add an intermission then perform a straight barbershop concert of the chorus repertoire, chapter or guest quartets. Or, have an audience, sing-along of seasonal and possibly sacred holiday songs not included in the show.

If the makeup of your audience and chapter is so inclined you may wish to perform a concert of sacred Christmas music (Society arrangements available), perhaps even interspersed in the reading of the Christmas scriptures. "What The Dickens" was written to be enjoyed by our members of all faiths.

While the show is holiday orientated, it can be performed any time during the year. The show was first performed at Harmony College in August. If the show is used as your annual show and not during the holiday season, capitalize on this fact. Make sure the audience knows they are getting a bit of "Christmas in May" or October. This helps add to the zaniness of the script. Carry the holiday motif through the usher's costumes, lobby decorations, etc. Have as much fun with this show as possible, whenever you perform it. A second act could deviate from the holiday theme and include guest quartets, chapter quartets, the chorus in concert, etc.

Suggestions have been indicated in the script as to who should perform each song: chorus or quartet. These are only suggestions. Flip these around to suit your own situation. Remember, however, that mixing chorus and quartet performances offers variety to your audience, gives a brief respite to the performers and provides opportunities to encourage quartet participation within the chapter. Also do not overlook the possibility of using solo voices with the chorus "ooing" in the background. Double quartets are another form of variety. The concept is broad and allows freedom in its interpretation.

As with any production, your chapter should use all the theatrical elements you have at your disposal to make "What The Dickens" the most exciting and interesting production possible for your audience. These elements include scenery, props, costuming, lighting, chorus, stage presence, supplemental choreography, vignettes, pantomimes, or any other entertainment device you can imagine.

Following these general remarks, we have given you some more specific thoughts on the show and some production ideas. There are many more ideas that you can and should come up with on your own.

One good idea-producing process that can be used is brainstorming. Divide the chapter into groups. Assign each group an entire scene. Let the group write down as many ideas as they can on how to stage their scene. Tell them to use all the theatrical elements they can think of and not to throw out any idea because it is impractical. The group which comes up with the longest list can be awarded a prize or some type of special recognition. Once the lists are complete, the show committee can take them, extract the good ideas and use those which work with the total show in mind.

Remember, the audiences at your show could stay home and listen to barbershop records. They have come to witness a theatrical experience which includes both sound and sight; don't cheat them. Feature our unique product - barbershop harmony - and complement it with a solid visual performance.

Cassette learning tapes for all the music in this show will be available for purchase by May, 1988 from the Society's Order Desk. The stock numbers are Tenor (4671), Lead (4672), Baritone (4673), Bass (4674) and the set of four (4670). These tapes are copyrighted by the Society.

STAGING AND SETS

The following description is how the show was presented at Harmony College. The sets consisted of three scenes. The first scene was that of Ernie's bedroom. This was represented by a four-poster bed, night table, lamp, and an alarm clock. This was set downstage right in front of a natural shark's tooth scrim, undyed. The second scene was set just upstage of the scrim so a fade through was possible. (If a scrim is not used, two lines of dialogue, as indicated in the script, must be eliminated. There must be either a scrim, curtain or separation by distance of Ernie's bedroom and the town scenes.) Two paintings were hung on the scrim to give the effect of a wall.

The second scene was an exterior of the house, with a working front door, set upstage, left at a 45 degree angle to the audience. A rock wall was set upstage of the house, this wall was the length of the set and masked some platform units set

upstage. A gazebo was used and set stage right center. A park bench was set downstage of the gazebo. There was a sign which read "MIDDLEVILLE, POPULATION 2,879," downstage right. On the back of the sign was painted a similar sign which read, "LITTLEVILLE, POPULATION 879."

The third scene was that of Littleville. It was basically the same set as the second scene but some attempts were made to show a time difference. Some lattice work on the gazebo, that had been covered during the present day Middleville, was revealed by removing the styrofoam coverings. The park bench was replaced with a newer bench as if the bench had been recently added to the scene. Any ideas to further delineate the time difference between Middleville and Littleville to provide a visual change for the audience are left to your interpretation.

The effect of snow which is referenced several times in the script, can be accomplished in various ways. Theatrical snow can be purchased through any supply house. Small styrofoam pellets or flakes are another possibility. The image of snow produced by a special effects projector (rentable through many theatrical suppliers) is a consideration for the last scene.

Again, you may wish to stage the show completely differently utilizing the strengths and limitations of your stage. Even if the staging is simplified, good singing and strong characterizations and chorus involvement will carry the show successfully.

CHARACTERIZATIONS AND ACTING

The show's cast is comprised of six actors and the chorus as an ensemble. The part of Ernie is the most challenging in terms of number of lines and responsibility. The other five have a very limited number of lines and time on stage. We are confident that you can find these actors within your chorus ranks. However, if this is a problem due to the size or ability of your chapter, look to outsiders. If there is a community or little theater group in town, contact them. These amateur performers, like Barbershoppers, are very accommodating and love to be on stage. Also a Barbershopper from a neighboring chapter might be a perfect choice. Following are character sketches:

ERNIE: A Scroogelike character that has the versatility to speak conversationally with the audience in several asides. The scrooge type attitude is set on the opening speech in both the dialogue and first aside. A little sarcastic in nature, he quips and gibes the three spirits throughout the show. He makes a character reversal, by the end of the show and his attitude towards music during the holiday season is positive. Although he is the semi-heavy in the show, the attitude of the rest of the cast to him is one of understanding and a desire to help him see the purpose of music which they already know.

JACK MURLEY: A takeoff on Jacob Morley. Scrooge's ex-partner, who has returned as a ghost to haunt him. Jack Murley is Ernie's former music teacher. He must be tortured and ghostly one instant then reprimanding Ernie with teacher-like sternness the next.

SPIRIT OF THE PAST: The young man striving for respect and creditability. He is bubbly and eager to improve and impress but somewhat new at the spirit business. He misses his cue at his entrance but not due to negligence, simply not sure of how to proceed with his first assignment. As his scene continues, his competency is displayed with the slight drawback of not being able to transpose Ernie back to his room.

SPIRIT OF THE PRESENT: The Spirit of the Present is a happy-go-lucky, jovial, good natured, type of guy. He is also a bit pompous. His puns are terrible but he is very amused and entertained by his own wit. He can demonstrate a semi-serious side when setting up a sequence of songs.

SPIRIT OF TIME-YET-TO-COME: This spirit is the Specter of Death. Although he says nothing and a costume may hide his face and features he should be ominous and menacing, moving slowly and surely. He must project a sense of impending doom with posture and gesture.

NOTE: The script calls for the three spirits and Ernie to sing part of "Deck The Halls" as a quartet. If the actors are not singers or if the right voice parts are not represented they can sing this song or "Jingle Bells" in unison or even eliminate the singing.

STAGE MANAGER: Pantomimes the effect of snow and lips the yelling of such words to the light man in the back of the auditorium. He lips these since the chorus is singing and he does not wish to interrupt the song. If the stage manager is used for the second snow effect, he can surreptitiously sneak around, hiding behind groups of chorus members throwing snowflakes over the groups as he pauses. This would also work if there was no fly space to drop snow from the baton. There is room for flexibility in the use of the stage manager and the snow.

CHORUS: There are a couple of lines of dialogue from within the chorus. More importantly, however, the chorus must portray town's people and be the foil for Ernie's displeasure. No risers are used and the chorus can stand on the platforms behind the "rock wall," and sit on the park bench, etc. It should be a relaxed, unstructured atmosphere with plenty of interaction. The chorus is the supporting cast.

GUEST QUARTETS

Since this is a one-act playlet, the use of guest quartets within the confines of this show are limited. All the songs are seasonal and most likely not part of the guest quartet's repertoire. If guest quartets are used, they probably could serve as the second half of the show.

COSTUMES

At Harmony College, the CHORUS was instructed to wear clothing that would typify carolers out on a brisk winter evening. This includes sweaters, coats, scarves, hats, gloves, mittens, etc. The more colorful these garments, the more variety in the stage picture.

ERNIE: Ernie was costumed in a red and white, striped, floor-length nightgown with slippers and sleeping cap. It was old fashioned as if Ernie felt it would be a waste of money to replace.

JACK: An old worn black tuxedo or tails, formal in appearance yet tattered due to his confinement to roam the earth until his task is accomplished. He is wrapped in chains like Jacob Morley.

SPIRIT OF THE PAST: The Spirit of the Past was costumed in a new white suit. The concept of this character implied the person of youth, striving for acceptance in the spirit world. Therefore, his desire to impress is visually shown by his attire. He should be dressed "older" than his age to show his desire to fit in and be accepted: conservative, impeccable, and semi-stoic, hoping this costume will earn him the respect of the position. Or a "Jimmy Olson" look with bow tie and oxford shoes would be fun.

SPIRIT OF THE PRESENT: Maintaining the parity concept, this character was lavishly costumed in a large, plush robe that bespoke royalty. Again, like the traditional Christmas Carol character.

SPIRIT OF TIME-YET-TO-COME: As representative of death, he stood on stilt-like shoes to give him unusual height. Costumed in a hooded robe from head to toe to hide his face and a skeleton-type hand attachment, this character represented an ethereal type being.

STAGE MANAGER: In very casual work attire, jeans or overalls with flannel shirt or t-shirt and headset. If used to throw the snow for the second snow effect he can be dressed in a white union suit.

LIGHTING

Lighting will differ with every stage and with the equipment that is available. To give you just one idea, here is a description of the lighting that was used when "What The Dickens" was first presented at the 1987 Harmony College.

Lekos (ellipsoidal reflector spotlights) were used to light the downstage area from the apron to just upstage of the curtain line. There were also two rows of striplights. The downstage row consisted of two six foot units. The upstage row consisted of three six foot units. Each unit could be circuited to provide for three separate banks of lights, i.e., red, green, blue. These strips were used to light the center and upstage areas. There was one bank of red lights to two banks of white lights per strip. The red was used as a highlight and to add some tint on the uptunes. Fresnels could be used to light the center and upstage areas if strips were not readily available. The gels recommended for the lekos are as follows No Color Pink, (Roscolene No. 825, or Roxcolus No. 33) and a No Color Straw, (Roscolene No. 804, or Roscolus No. 6).

The general mood of the show is one of excitement and this can be reflected in the intensity of the lights. There are few moments when the intensity of the lights is less than 90%. The general focus of the lights was designed to highlight the stage into three distinct areas, stage left, center, and stage right. This allowed for even stage lighting when all the instruments were used but also provided a means of isolation. Isolation could be achieved between the downstage area (covered by the lekos) and the upstage area (covered by the strips) by increasing or decreasing the intensity of either the strips or the lekos. Separation was provided by using any one or a combination of the three pools of light available, i.e., stage right and center, center and stage left or center only, or full general lighting that lit stage left, center, and stage right.

One or two follow spot lights could be used nicely for quartets appearing from both the chorus.

SOUND

As with the lighting, the sound reinforcement will differ with stages and available equipment. Generally, several omni directional microphones properly hung over the main stage areas and several more at the front edge of the stage should do a pretty fair job.

These front microphones would ideally be PCC or PZM microphones but if these are not available, use a microphone in a foam "mouse" or put the microphones in stands which are set on the floor and angled just over the edge of the stage. This will eliminate obvious microphone stands on stage where they can

destroy the scenic illusion. Even the quartets should be able to work around a floor mike.

Have someone knowledgeable set the microphones, adjust them during the technical rehearsal and "ride gain" on the microphones during the show. You will find two excellent articles on sound reinforcement at the back of the Show Production Handbook.

The only two sound effects called for in the show are an alarm clock and boxing bell. Sound effects records or tapes can be purchased which contain these effects. A record would be best transferred to tape for easier cuing and use. Other sound effects to create atmosphere can be added, but remember, the more cues, the more you need a sharp sound man to cue and play them.

CONCLUSION:

Please take all the preceding suggestions as just that. Your personnel, theater and audiences will dictate how you present the show. If you make changes, make them with intelligence.

We have purposely left out cues for lighting, sound, spot lights and pin rail movement (hanging backdrops, etc.) since these will vary with each production. We have provided the space for these, however, on the right edge of the script. This is an excellent way to smoothly "call" a show. The show Production Handbook explains how to use the cues.

Announcements before or after the show or during the intermission should be eliminated. Let your show program be your message board.

THERE IS ONE LAST, BUT VERY IMPORTANT POINT ABOUT STAGING A SHOW OF THIS TYPE. TIMING AND PACING ARE CRITICAL. THERE CAN BE NO DEAD SPOTS OR THE PRODUCTION WILL SLOW DOWN AND BECOME DULL. EACH SONG MUST BEGIN IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE DIALOGUE WHICH SETS IT UP. PITCHES MUST BE BLOWN UNOBTRUSIVELY AND TUNE-UPS SHOULD BE HUMMED QUIETLY UNDER TALK. YOU MAY EVEN FIND THAT TUNE-UPS ARE NOT NECESSARY IF ALL THE SINGERS CONCENTRATE ON THE PITCH BEING BLOWN. IN ANY CASE, THE DIRECTOR SHOULD GIVE THE DOWN BEAT AS SOON AS THE SET-UP IS DELIVERED. THE MOVEMENT OF SCENERY CANNOT HOLD UP A SHOW EITHER.

"What The Dickens" is a very exciting entertaining show that is designed to take a light look at a traditional, well-known Charles Dickens' story. The potential for the cast and audience to have a lot of fun with the show is very high. It also provides a great amount of holiday repertoire for your chorus. With the flexibility built into the script and the characterizations it can be adapted by almost any chorus to provide an audience an evening of entertainment.

WHAT THE DICKENS!
OR
A PARTRIDGE IN A PARODY

A HARMONY COLLEGE SHOW

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WHAT THE DICKENS!
OR
A PARTRIDGE IN A PARODY

(MAIN CURTAIN OPENS AND LIGHTS COME UP ON FOUR POSTER BED, DOWN RIGHT, HOUSE INTERIOR SCRIM IS SET RIGHT BEHIND THE BED. MAN - ERNIE SCAROLLI - IS ASLEEP IN BED. IMMEDIATELY, ALARM ON NIGHT STAND RINGS AND ERNIE WAKES UP WITH A START AND SHUTS OFF ALARM).

(ERNIE)

(GROUCHY, AS HE GETS OUT OF BED) Confounded alarm! Enough to drive a man insane! A bell wakes you up, a bell tells you when to start work, a bell tells you when it's lunchtime, a bell tells you when it's time to quit working, a bell tells you when to answer the door, when the microwave is through, when the round is over (A BELL THAT WOULD END A BOXING ROUND DINGS AND ERNIE CASUALLY LOOKS AT AUDIENCE, THEN SPEAKS TO THEM, DROPPING CHARACTERIZATION). By the way, I'm talking to myself so you can figure something out about me. This is called character development. It's a short show, so we can't be too subtle. You gotta get the idea real fast that I'm a grouchy old cuss. (BOXING BELL RINGS AGAIN AND HE IS BACK IN CHARACTER) Bells, bells, bells, they're a pain in the . . . (HE REALIZES IT IS STILL DARK OUT) Hey, it's still dark out. (HE PICKS UP CLOCK AND FOOLS WITH IT) Must be this darn block gone haywire. (AS HE SETS DOWN THE CLOCK HE BUMPS THE SCRIM.) Hmmm, got to move out of this cloth house; it's just not practical. (IF A SCRIM IS NOT USED, ELIMINATE THIS LINE. HE TURNS HIS BACK TO THE SCRIM AND AS HE DOES, LIGHTS REVEAL TOWN SKYLINE, ETC. BEHIND SCRIM. CHORUS BEGINS "JINGLE BELLS" UNDER ERNIE'S NEXT LINE. CHORUS IS IN FREEZE BUT BREAKS IT AS SCRIM RISES.) Where was I? Oh yes, if I hear another bell I think I'll go crazy. (HE HEARS BASS, "JINGLES," THEN RUNS WILDLY OFF STAGE. SCRIM FLYS REVEALING TOWN EXTERIOR AND WINTER-CLOTHED TOWNSMEN SINGING UP AND DOWN THE STREET. POPULATION SIGN READS: "MIDDLEVILLE, POPULATION 2879.")

JINGLE BELLS (Society Publication 8527)

(AFTER SONG, ERNIE COMES BACK ON STAGE RANTING AND RAVING. CHORUS IS CURIOUS.)

(ERNIE)

What's all this noise about? Jingle Bells?
(DISGUSTEDLY) Bad Hamburger!

(CHORUS REACTS TO ONE ANOTHER, PUZZLED)

(CHORUS MAN 1)

(INCREDULOUSLY) Bad Hamburger? You man, "Bah Humbug!"

(ERNIE)

Never mind! Just get out of here.

(CHORUS MAN 1)

But it's the holiday season. We're caroling.

(ERNIE)

Holidays?! Caroling?! Big Hamhocks! (AGAIN, CHORUS IS UPSET)

(THREE CHORUS MEMBERS)

(EMPHATICALLY, TOGETHER) You mean, "Bah Humbug!"

(ERNIE)

Whatever! Just get out of here!

(CHORUS MAN 2)

(EXCITED) But it's time for our big production number with the special effects. (CHORUS IS EXCITED, TOO.)

(ERNIE)

(BAFFLED) What?!

(CHORUS MAN 2)

Let's hit it guys. (CHORUS RIGHT INTO NEXT SONG. ERNIE EXITS STAGE RIGHT, SHAKING HIS HEAD.)

LET IT SNOW (Society Publication 7693)

(DURING THE NUMBER CHORUS BEGINS LOOKING SKYWARD EXPECTANTLY, BUT NOTHING HAPPENS. AFTER THE KEY CHANGE, WE SEE STAGE MANAGER CREEP OUT FROM STAGE LEFT WINGS AND LOOK UP TO A CONTROL BOOTH...

WITHOUT MAKING A SOUND HE PANTOMIMES THE FACT THAT THERE SHOULD BE THE EFFECT OF SNOW FALLING DURING THE SONG. GESTURES COULD INCLUDE SNOWFLAKES FALLING, MAKING SNOWBALLS AND THROWING THEM, MOUTHING THE WORDS "SNOW," ETC. FINALLY, IN DESPERATION AFTER THE FINAL CHORD OF THE SONG, HE YELLS AT THE TOP OF HIS LUNGS "SNOW!." EVERY CHORUS MEMBER LOOKS AT HIM AND THE STAGE MANAGER REALIZING HIS INTRUSION, EXITS THE SIGHT LINE OF THE AUDIENCE OBVIOUSLY EMBARRASSED. ON APPLAUSE, ERNIE COMES BACK ON STAGE, STILL IRASCIBLE.)

(ERNIE)

(SHOOS CHORUS OFFSTAGE) Get out of here. Special effects, indeed! Bald Hoboes!

(ENTIRE CHORUS)

(VEHEMENTLY, AS THEY EXIT) "Bah, Humbug!"

(ERNIE)

(AS CHORUS MEMBERS QUICKLY EXIT IN SEVERAL DIRECTIONS, HE MUMBLES AND GRUMBLES TO HIMSELF. HE STEPS FORWARD AND SCRIM DROPS BEHIND HIM, PUTTING HIM BACK IN HIS HOUSE. HE THEN BEGINS MONOLOGUE) I don't think I'd dislike the holidays so much if it wasn't for that dratted music. Everywhere you look carolers, merrily singing. I hate it!

(FROM OFF STAGE WE HEAR AN ASCENDING/DESCENDING MUSICAL SCALE BEING MOANED BY SOMEONE.)

(ERNIE)

(STARTLED) What was that!?

(JACK MURLEY COMES SHUFFLING ON STAGE LEFT. HE IS PALE, GHOST-LIKE. HE IS DRESSED IN AN OLD TUXEDO AND WRAPPED IN CHAINS. AS HE WALKS ON HE IS STILL PITEOUSLY MOANING SCALES.)

(ERNIE)

(LOOKING AT JACK CURIOUSLY AND A BIT FRIGHTENED) Who are you?

(JACK)

I am the ghost of Jack Murley, your old high school chorus director. I must roam the earth until I can bring music back into the heart of at least one of my old students.

(ERNIE)

(HE LAUGHS, LIKE HE'S IN ON A JOKE) Oh, come on, I suppose we're going to run through this whole bit? (JACK LOOKS AT HIM WITH A FRANTIC "COME ON, PLAY ALONG" LOOK. ERNIE STRAIGHTENS UP AND SAYS WITH MOCK SINCERITY) Oh, . . . please tell me more about your wanderings.

(JACK)

Hey, we don't have time. This isn't Shakespeare.

(ERNIE)

Shakespeare?! This isn't even good Dickens.

(JACK)

Let's cut right to the good stuff so we can get back to some singing. Tonight, you will be visited by three spirits. They'll convince you to bring music back into your heart or my name isn't Jack Murley, and I didn't get the final draft of the script.

(ERNIE)

When can I expect the first spirit?

(JACK)

After this brief musical interlude which cleverly sets the next scene. (HE LEAVES, MOANING A SCALE. ERNIE WATCHES, THEN EXITS WHILE QUARTET STEPS IN SPOT CENTER STAGE AND BEGINS SONG.)

SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN
(Society Pub. 7703)

(ON APPLAUSE, ERNIE COMES BACK ON STAGE.)

(ERNIE)

I'll bet I was dreaming before. No spirits are going to visit me. (HE PAUSES, THEN LOUDER) I say, no spirits are going to visit me. (HE PAUSES AGAIN, THEN IN DESPERATION YELLS) No spirits are going to . . . (HE IS INTERRUPTED BY THE SPIRIT OF THE PAST RUNNING ON STAGE. HE IS YOUNG AND EAGER, THOUGH A BIT RUMPLED. HE TRIES TO COLLECT HIMSELF AS HE RUNS ON.)

(SPIRIT OF PAST)

Hi. I'm the Spirit of the Past. I'll bet you weren't expecting me.

(ERNIE)

Actually, I was expecting someone a little older . . . you're the Spirit of the Past? How long past?

(SPIRIT OF PAST)

Last Tuesday. This is my first assignment. But I have the ability to show you your past.

(ERNIE)

Good. Last Tuesday was pretty slow. Come to think of it, ALL of my past was pretty slow.

(SPIRIT OF PAST)

True, but it was filled with some wonderful music like this. (HE GESTURES TO QUARTET WHO HAS COME TO CENTER STAGE NOW AND SINGS.)

MY TWO FRONT TEETH (Society Pub. 7694)

(ON APPLAUSE, SCRIM FLIES TO REVEAL TOWN EXTERIOR ONCE AGAIN. NOW, TOWN IS FORTY YEARS YOUNGER - SEE PRODUCTION NOTES. POPULATION SIGN READS: "LITTLEVILLE POPULATION 879." CHORUS IMMEDIATELY BEGINS SINGING.)

I SAW MOMMY KISSING SANTA CLAUS
(Society Pub. 7691)

(ON APPLAUSE ERNIE AND THE SPIRIT COME BACK ON STAGE.)

(ERNIE)

All right. I enjoyed a few songs as a kid but that doesn't change things now. Haven't you got something more convincing.

(SPIRIT OF PAST)

(EAGERLY) We've got something that will knock your socks off - one of your favorites from the past.

(CHORUS MAN 2)

(EXCITED) Yeah, it's our big production number with the special effects. (CHORUS SHARES IN EXCITEMENT.)

(ERNIE)

(SARCASTICALLY) Again? How could you possibly top the last one? (CHORUS GOES RIGHT INTO NEXT NUMBER.)

WHITE CHRISTMAS (Society Pub. 7701)

(AS SONG PROGRESSES CHORUS MEMBERS LOOK SKYWARD FOR SNOW AND SHOW MILD DISGUST THAT THERE IS NONE. NEAR LAST QUARTER OF SONG STAGE MANAGER SNEAKS SHEEPISHLY ON STAGE DRESSED IN WHITE UNION SUITE [LONG UNDERWEAR]. HE HAS A PILLOW CASE UNDER HIS ARM AND HE SNEAKS ABOUT THE CHORUS THROWING HANDFULS OF FEATHERS AS IF THEY WERE SNOW. ABOUT 15 SECONDS OF THIS AND THEN HE GETS FRUSTRATED AND LEAVES STAGE. CHORUS MEMBERS SHAKE THEIR HEADS IN DISGUST AND FINISH SONG. ON APPLAUSE, ERNIE AND SPIRIT RETURN TO STAGE.)

(ERNIE)

Spirit, I have an important question to ask.

(SPIRIT OF PAST)

(HE SMILES KNOWINGLY) Ah yes, you want to ask why the music went out of your life.

(ERNIE)

No. I want to know why I walk off stage during each song?

(SPIRIT OF PAST)

(A BIT ANNOYED) Theatrical license! (HE LOOKS OFF STAGE, PAST THE AUDIENCE, KNOWINGLY) I see another vision from the past. A pitiful creature with a glowing red nose.

(ERNIE)

(CASUALLY TRYING TO SEE WHERE SPIRIT IS LOOKING) Oh, that must be my Uncle Ned, stumbling home.

(SPIRIT)

(GIVES HIM A REPRIMANDING SLAP TO THE CHEST, DISGUSTED.) Come on, give me a break, will you? Listen.

(DOUBLE QUARTET HAS COME ON STAGE AND GOES RIGHT INTO SONG)

RUDOLPH, THE RED NOSED REINDEER
(Society pub. 7695)

(ERNIE)

(BACK ON STAGE, WITH THE SPIRIT) These memories are too painful. Come to think of it, so are these shoes. Take me back to my own room so I may think upon what I have seen (pause) and take a load off my feet.

(SPIRIT OF PAST)

I do not have the power to return you, but you have always had the power to go home. Just tap your heels together three times and you can catch the Santa Claus Express. (DURING PRECEDING, SPIRIT SHOULD WAVE HIS HAND IN A CIRCULAR MOTION, BEHIND ERNIE'S HEAD LIKE THE GOOD WITCH DID TO DOROTHY IN THE "WIZARD OF OZ".)

(ERNIE)

Oh, don't tell me, a train with a little elf engineer, right?

(SPIRIT)

What? Train? Didn't you get the final draft

either? No, no, it's the next song. (CHORUS RIGHT INTO SONG, ERNIE LEAVES.)

THE SANTA CLAUS EXPRESS
(Society Pub. 7700)

(AFTER SONG, SCRIM DROPS AND ERNIE IS BACK IN HIS BED.)

(ERNIE)

(WAKING UP ALA DOROTHY IN "THE WIZARD OF OZ")
There's no place like home . . . There's no place
like home . . . There's no . . . (SHAKES HEAD) Oh,
boy! Maybe I was dreaming . . . Nope, my tootsies
still hurt. Say, I'm still against music. The
spirits haven't won yet. So how come I feel the
agony of de-feet? (HE GIVES KNOWING TAKE AND SMILE
TO AUDIENCE)

(SPIRIT OF PRESENT)

(COMING ON STAGE DURING LINE) I'm sorry you said
that. (CHORUS FROM BEHIND SCRIM ECHOES WITH "SO ARE
WE!" SPIRIT AND ERNIE LOOK ALL AROUND FOR VOICES,
DUMFOUNDEDLY.)

(ERNIE)

Which Spirit are you?

(SPIRIT OF PRESENT)

I'm the one they make such a stink over. I am the
Spirit of Ammonia (HE LAUGHS THEN CHORUS FROM BEHIND
SCRIM LETS OUT LOUD GROAN. AGAIN ERNIE AND SPIRIT
DO TAKE TO EACH OTHER AND LOOK ALL AROUND.)

(SPIRIT OF PRESENT)

But seriously, I am the Spirit of the Present. Let
me take you out amongst your fellow man so you can
see how they share the season.

(SCRIM FLYS ON TOWN EXTERIOR. TOWN IS AS IT WAS IN
FIRST SCENE. POPULATION SIGN BACK TO: MIDDLEVILLE,
POPULATION 2879. CHORUS GOES RIGHT INTO SONG.)

THE CHRISTMAS SONG (Society Pub. 7696)

(ON APPLAUSE QUARTET STEPS OUT AND GOES INTO NEXT
SONG)

FROSTY THE SNOWMAN (Society Pub. 9697)

(AT THE END OF SONG CHORUS STRIKES A CONTENTED
WISTFUL POSE. ERNIE AND SPIRIT COME ON STAGE.)

(ERNIE)

(LOOKING AROUND), You know there's something very
mystifying and unearthly about this.

(SPIRIT OF PRESENT)

(HE SMILES KNOWINGLY) Ah yes, the harmony and
serenity the music creates.

(ERNIE)

No. That there are never any women around. (SPIRIT
GLARES AT ERNIE FOR A SECOND THEN:)

(SPIRIT OF PRESENT)

Theatrical license! (PAUSE AND THEN CHANGES TONE)
But aren't you beginning to see how important the
music is?

(ERNIE)

I'm not totally convinced and besides there's seven
more songs left in the show.

(SPIRIT OF PRESENT)

Good point. Well perhaps a musical story of giving
and sharing will persuade you. (THEY LEAVE STAGE ON
SONG.)

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS
(Society Pub. 7702)

(ERNIE AND SPIRIT HAVE RETURNED.)

(ERNIE)

(FEELING DUPED) Wait a minute! The last song was a
parody, in a parody! How can you do that?!

(SPIRIT LOOKS AT ERNIE FOR A SECOND, THEN EVERYONE,
IN UNISON!)

(ERNIE, SPIRIT AND CHORUS)

Theatrical license!

(ERNIE)

Well, someone should revoke your license. And furthermore, I still can't believe music is that important to the holiday.

(CHORUS MAN 2)

You will after our big production number with the special effects. (CHORUS IS EXCITED BUT ERNIE GROANS AND LEAVES THE STAGE FOLLOWED BY THE SPIRIT. CHORUS BEGINS SONG.)

WINTER WONDERLAND (Soc. Pub. 7629)

(AGAIN, DURING THE SONG, THE CHORUS MEMBERS LOOK UP FOR THE SNOW - NOTHING. THE SNOW EFFECT IS A LARGE AMOUNT OF THEATRICAL SNOW HELD IN A SINGLE FOUR FOOT, SHEET SUSPENDED BY TWO BATONS. DURING THE LAST PART OF THE SONG, THE TWO BATONS ARE LOWERED WITHIN THE SIGHT LINES OF THE AUDIENCE. AFTER THE FINAL CHORD, THE UPSTAGE BATON IS DROPPED QUICKLY ALLOWING THE SNOW TO FALL IN AN ISOLATED CLUMP ON A PORTION OF UNSUSPECTING CHORUS BELOW. ON APPLAUSE CHORUS EXITS, DISGUSTEDLY. THE SCRIM DROPS AND ERNIE IS BACK IN HIS HOME, SITTING ON THE BED.)

(ERNIE)

(HE IS VISIBLY SHAKEN) Boy, those were a couple of rough experiences. I feel like death warmed over. (AT THAT SECOND SPOT COMES UP ON BLACK-DRAPED, SKELETON-HANDED, SPECTER OF DEATH: THE SPIRIT OF TIME-YET-TO-COME. ERNIE SEES IT AND DOES TAKE) Wow! You LOOK like death warmed over. (HE APPROACHES SPIRIT.) You must be the Spirit of Time-Yet-To-Come. How's Mrs. Time-Yet-To-Come? (HE LAUGHS, THE SPIRIT IS SILENT) You gotta real good sense of humor, big guy. Oh well, what do you have in store for me. (SPIRIT POINTS TO DOUBLE QUARTET, CENTER STAGE. THEY BEGIN SONG)

I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS
(Society Pub. 7626)

(ERNIE)

What are you trying to say, "if only in my dreams."
You're not talking about the ultimate dream are you?

The one that you don't awake from even with Big Ben as your alarm clock? (THE SPIRIT SLOWLY NODS) Wow! You're a real fun guy. (SARCASTICALLY) Oh, I'm really convinced all right. Is that the best you get? (AGAIN, SPIRIT POINTS TO CENTER STAGE. QUARTET IS IN PLACE AND BEGINS SINGING)

THE LITTLE BOY THAT SANTA CLAUS FORGOT
(Society Publication 7241)

(ERNIE)

(HE HAS SOBERED) You know, maybe music could have brought joy into that little boy's life? (HE STARES AT MOTIONLESS SPIRIT) Maybe music could postpone my "big sleep". (HE AGAIN STARES AT MOTIONLESS SPIRIT ALMOST LOOKING THROUGH HIM, THINKING OUT LOUD) And, perhaps, music could even bring harmony to the world? (HE LOOKS AT SPIRIT) Boy, for a guy that doesn't say much, you sure say a lot! (SPIRIT SLOWLY TURNS AND EXITS. ERNIE IS NOW FRIGHTENED AND BEGINS RAMBLING AS HE WALKS TOWARD HIS BED.) I CAN change. I WILL bring music back into my life. I will have a song in my heart for all mankind (HE HAS REACHED HIS BED AND COLLAPSES STILL RANTING) I will NOT remove the tags from my furniture under penalty of law. Please say there's still time . . . please . . . please (Blackout THEN AFTER A FEW BEATS THE LIGHTS COME BACK UP AND ERNIE SITS BOLT UPRIGHT IN BED).

(ERNIE)

I'm still here. Maybe it's not too late. Maybe there's still time. Maybe the check really is in the mail. Well, here goes nothing. (HE BEGINS SINGING "DECK THE HALLS" TERRIBLY OUT OF TUNE AND METER THE THREE SPIRITS ENTER, HEARING THE TERRIBLE SOUND AND SAY:)

(THREE SPIRITS)

(IN UNISON) Bold Hiccups!

(ERNIE)

That's Bah, humbug . . . Hey, I was only kidding. (HE BEGINS TO SING THE SONG CORRECTLY. THE SPIRITS JOIN HIM AND THEY FINISH AS A QUARTET. IF THERE ARE NON-SINGERS IN THE ROLES OF THE SPIRITS, ERNIE CAN SING A BIT OF "DECK THE HALLS" or "JINGLE BELLS" BY HIMSELF.)

DECK THE HALLS (Society Pub. 7692)

(AFTER SONG THEY ALL AD LIB CONGRATULATIONS)

(ERNIE)

Thank you for helping me see the light and hear the chords. Now I'm off to see what good exists in this wonderful world. (ERNIE GOES TO THE SCRIM, PAUSES THEN TURNS TO THE AUDIENCE AND ADDRESSES THEM) I'm just about done talking to myself. My character's developed just about as much as it's going to. By the way, this is called a scrim and it's the last time we'll use this cheap effect, so let's hear some applause (AUDIENCE APPLAUSES. THEN ERNIE YELLS) Scrim, Scram! (SCRIM RISES AND CHORUS GOES INTO SONG. THIS TIME ERNIE STAYS AND WALKS ABOUT CONGRATULATING ALL THE SINGERS DURING THE SONG.)

JINGLE BELL ROCK (Society Pub. 7690)

(CHORUS ON APPLAUSE GOES RIGHT INTO NEXT SONG. LIGHTING SOFTENS TO CREATE MELLOW EFFECT. DURING SONG THE SNOW BEGINS TO GENTLY FALL. THIS CAN BE DONE WITH THEATRICAL SNOW AND A "SHAKER" IN THE FLY SPACE OR A SNOW-EFFECT LIGHT MACHINE.)

I WANT TO WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS
(Society Pub. No. 7699)

(ON APPLAUSE, LIGHTS COME UP FULL AND CHORUS REPRISES, "JINGLE BELLS" DURING WHICH THE ACTORS COME OUT, ONE BY ONE, AND TAKE THEIR BOWS UNANNOUNCED.)

FINAL CURTAIN