

Tennessee Rep Celebrates the Season with *Jacob Marley's Christmas Carol*

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It's the long unanswered question of Western Christmas lore: Whatever happened to Jacob Marley?

Everyone knows the story of Charles Dicken's beloved classic *A Christmas Carol*. We've seen it done on stage and in movies, with everyone from George C. Scott to Bill Murray to Mr. Magoo playing the part of Ebenezer Scrooge.

But did you ever wonder what happened to Marley – the long-dead business partner who warns Scrooge about his impending ghostly visits?

Playwright Tom Mula did, and that curiosity inspired a whole new twist on the time-honored tale. In *Jacob Marley's Christmas Carol* – now playing at Tennessee Repertory Theatre – we get to experience the familiar story from an entirely new perspective.

Here Marley takes center stage as he struggles to redeem Scrooge's soul – along with his own. And while a basic knowledge of the original story will no doubt add to your appreciation, *Jacob Marley's Christmas Carol* stands on its own with a beautifully crafted script full of warmth and humor.

Scot Copeland is “on loan” from Nashville Children's Theatre to direct this enchanting play. Indeed *Jacob Marley's Christmas Carol* offers the same magical quality that marks so many NCT productions.

Copeland demonstrates both a love for the material and his confidence in the cast with an incredible eye for detail. He makes the very most of his space at Johnson Theater, with players easing in and out of scenes without the slightest distraction.

Of course, it doesn't hurt that he is working with some of Nashville's finest character actors. Henry Haggard is perfectly cast as old Marley, capturing a lifetime of bitterness in each word and gesture. Brian Webb Russell is equally nasty as Scrooge, full of vinegar and “Bah-Humbugs.”

Peter Vann plays the part of Bogle, a devilish little sprite that guides Marley on his roller coaster ride to Hell and back again as he searches for redemption. And Sam Whited brings a brisk, yet unflappable approach to his role as the Record Keeper. In fact, each performer manages to conjure up a host of characters, effortlessly moving between narration and believable characterization.

Once again scenic designer Gary C. Hoff transports the audience into another world with his shadowy set. Christopher Wilson's lighting design also contributes to the production's success.

A true holiday treat, *Jacob Marley's Christmas Carol* offers a story that is both moving and irreverent. You would have to be a real Scrooge to walk away from this show without a smile on your face.