

Photo of Kristen Garaffo, Ariel Russell, Jonathan Atkinson, Justine "Icy" Moral by Christopher Mueller.

A Christmas Carol: Behind the Scenes

Sensory-Friendly Performance

Behind the Scenes



Photo of Justine "Icy" Moral and Craig Wallace by Scott Suchman.

One of the things that makes *A Christmas Carol* at Ford's Theatre so special is all of the stage magic.

Stage magic is the name for the tricks that theatre people know and use to make something that seems impossible happen on stage during the show.

Lights, sound, costumes and special construction all go in to making stage magic possible. Here are a few behind-the-scenes peeks so you can be part of the magic too.

Behind the Scenes

LOOK FOR:

- The Doll Vendor's cart is a miniature model of Ford's Theatre.



Photo by Gary Erskine.

- The doll in the white dress, the Fruit Vendor's cider and the Clock Vendor's clock all connect directly to the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future. Can you spot them as they appear when each ghost visits Scrooge?



Photo of Joe Mallon, Rick Hammerly and Craig Wallace by Carol Rosegg.

- Each ghost visits Scrooge at a specific time. The big clock that hangs over the stage shows us what time it is and the bell tolls when a new ghost is coming.



Photo by Scott Suchman.

Behind the Scenes

WATCH:

- **The Ghost of Jacob Marley:**
  Marley is one of the show's scariest ghosts. But in real life, actor Stephen F. Schmidt is not a scary guy at all. Watch Hair and Make-Up Supervisor Danna Rosedahl transform Stephen into Jacob Marley. Stephen Schmidt played Marley from 2019-2025.

  Video: youtu.be/-0ehLKyzi-g



Video still of Stephen F. Schmidt.

- **Flying:**
  It takes two stagehands, one stage manager and a brave actor who is not afraid of heights to fly 20 or 30 feet above the stage. Everyone's safety is very important, and it takes practice to get it all just right.
- Go behind the scenes with Justine "Icy" Moral.

  Video: bit.ly/3LiwgyG



Photo of Justine "Icy" Moral by T. Charles Erickson.

Behind the Scenes



Photo of Craig Wallace and Stephen F. Schmidt by Gary Erskine.

SPECIAL EFFECTS:

Every magical thing that happens onstage helps to tell the story of *A Christmas Carol*. Many of these moments are surprising or startling or even scary. Scrooge is meant to have these feelings, and it is part of the experience of seeing this play for us to feel these feelings with Scrooge too.

The actors and the crew members have all practiced every part of this play many times. They are just pretending and it is part of telling the story.

This production's special effects include fog and smoke. For example, in the above image, there is stage fog in the room with Scrooge and Marley.

Behind the Scenes

LIGHTING AND SOUND:

Lighting in this play comes in many forms. Sometimes the lighting helps us know where to look, like when one character is in bright light under a spotlight. Sometimes the lighting is a distraction so we look at one thing on stage so we don't see something else until just the right moment, like when Scrooge's fireplace lights up bright red: we are supposed to watch Scrooge chase the lights around his room, and share in his surprise when the Ghost of Marley suddenly appears.

Loud sounds like thunder are used to make stage magic too. Often there is a loud crash of thunder when something scary is happening on stage, like when the Ghost of Marley or the Ghost of Christmas Future appear. The lights and sound together surprise us; it might even make us jump! In the story, Scrooge is startled and surprised at these events, and we as the audience get to share his feelings too.

Sometimes the loud noises can be joyful. When Scrooge is about to meet the Ghost of Christmas Present, we hear her laughter all over the theatre before we see her. Scrooge is supposed to feel like his home is bursting with her joyful laughter, and we get to feel that way too.

Behind the Scenes

SUDDEN APPEARANCES AND DISAPPEARANCES:

- The Ghost of Jacob Marley can be seen in the framed portrait above the fireplace, and quickly appears onstage with Scrooge.







Photos of Stephen F. Schmidt by Carol Rosegg.

Behind the Scenes

- The lights and the sound work together to help characters magically appear and disappear.

  We see this with the Undertaker who appears in a green light and then disappears into darkness.



Photo of Michael Bunce by Carol Rosegg.

- The Ghost of Christmas Future suddenly appears with a big flash of light and loud thunder crash.

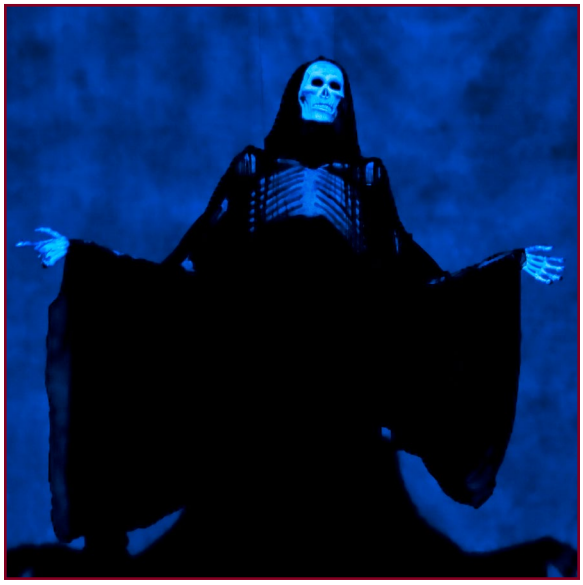


Photo of Justine "Icy" Moral by T. Charles Erickson.

Behind the Scenes

STAGE EFFECTS:

- When the Ghost of Marley appears, Scrooge doesn't want to believe in him. To prove he is there, Marley makes Scrooge's bed spin. In the show, this terrifies Scrooge.

  In real life, the spinning bed is a special machine that is controlled from backstage and the actor playing Scrooge has practiced this part many times.



Photo by Gary Erskine.

- Most of the scenery moves on and off stage from the sides or from above. (When it comes down from above, theatre people say it is "flying in" and when it goes back up, it is "flying out.")

  One important piece of scenery comes up from the stage floor, just like a pop-up book. It is a very big gravestone. When the scene is done, it goes back down again.



Photo by Carol Rosegg.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL BEHIND THE SCENES – CREDITS

All stage photos, unless otherwise noted, are from the Ford's Theatre 2023 production of *A Christmas Carol*.

The pre-visit materials were developed by:

Ford's Theatre Access Committee

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