

Carol vs. Christmas

*By Lisa Nanni-Messegee
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DEDICATION

For Evangeline

STORY OF THE PLAY

In this modern reimagining of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, a struggling theatre company is rehearsing a Christmas show. Carol, the hard-driving real estate agent who owns the building, interrupts, demanding rent.

Later, deceased business partner Marlene appears, weighed down by obsolete office equipment. Three spirits will appear to Carol: a sage child who speaks in Victorian slang, a gregarious game show host who forces Carol to play along, and finally a dark-cloaked figure who takes Carol to a hospital morgue.

Carol is transformed when the last ghost reveals his identity and she discovers the true meaning of Christmas.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Carol vs. Christmas was produced by AFYP Stages / Acting for Young People and Lucy 8 Productions. It was produced by Mary Lechter at TheSPACE in Fairfax, Virginia, opening on January 10, 2010. It was directed by Lisa Nanni-Messegee. The set and costume design was by Todd Messegee, lighting and sound design was by Mark Ormesher. The production stage manager was Patrick Magill. The cast was as follows:

Carol Strickland - Emily Adler; Marlene's Ghost / Singer - Emily Bubeck; Ghost of Christmas Past / Singer - Michael Rosegrant; Ghost of Christmas Present / Singer - Josh Reiter; Mr. Strickland / Ghost of Christmas Future - Patrick Magill; Mrs. Strickland / Head Nurse - Nina Fowler; Producer - Margaret Murphy; Director - Maggie Dickinson; Stage Manager / Ghost's Assistant - Chessy Falvo; Choreographer / Ghost's Assistant - Erica Messenger; Accompanist - Nichi Lewis; 8-Year-Old Carol / Singer - Clara Ruthinoski; 13-Year Old-Carol / Singer / Ghost's Assistant - Laura Baker; Naomi / 20-Year-Old Carol - Claire McCleskey; Darren / Singer - John Ferri; Donna / Older Donna / Singer - Georgia Mae Lively; Hanna / Older Hanna / Singer - Maddie Henris; Theresa / Older Theresa - Carla Calderon; Patrick - Jack Herrin; Eliza / Singer - Makeda Thomas; Nurse - Katie Summers ; Attendant / Singer - Danny Caress; Mr. Reed - Daniel Seidman.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

*This play is flexible in cast size and gender. Roles with gender flexibility are indicated with an *. Character names may be changed to accommodate casting. With some triple casting the play can be done with as few as 16 actors (3 m, 7 w, and 6 flex) and can expand up to 33 plus extras. The role of Mr. Strickland and the Ghost of Christmas Future must be played by the same actor. This actor should not play any other roles.*

Carol Strickland: A woman so consumed by business that she has lost a sense of what matters most; 30-50 years old.

***Jamie, the Director:** A kind-hearted theatre director; 20-30 years old.

***Gwen, the Producer:** Dedicated to this Christmas show but struggling financially; in her 30s.

***Nancy, the Stage Manager:** Friendly, mid to late 20s.

***Kira, the Accompanist:** The accompanist and a character in the play as well; must be able to play piano; 30-40 years old.

***Tracy, the Choreographer:** Enjoys working with the cast; in her 20s.

Naomi Jones: Carol's overworked, apologetic assistant; in her 20s.

Marlene's Ghost: Deceased partner of Carol, filled with regret and heavily burdened; 50-60 years old.

***Ghost of Christmas Past:** to be played by a young actor between 6-10 years old; British dialect, wistful, urgent, from another time.

Mr. Strickland / Ghost of Christmas Future: Double cast as Carol's father and the Ghost of Christmas Future. Loving, amused by his daughter; also able to play the distant yet bittersweet quality of the Ghost; 40-50 years old.

Mrs. Strickland: Carol's loving mother; 30-40 years old.

8-Year-Old Carol: May be played by an actor of that age or, if triple cast, can be played by an adult actor; sweet but practical.

13-Year-Old Carol: May be played by an actor of that age or, if triple cast, can be played by an adult actor; somewhat stubborn, wants to be the leader.

20-Year-Old Carol: In love with Darren. May be played by an actor of that age or, if triple cast, can be played by an adult actor; flirtatious, teasing.

Hanna: Should look 13; friend of 13-year-old Carol.

Theresa: Another teen friend.

Donna: Another teen friend.

Older Hanna: Reuniting with her old friends; curious about Carol's whereabouts; close to Carol's age.

Older Theresa: Another friend.

Older Donna: Another friend.

Darren: An aspiring painter in love with 20-year-old Carol. Actor must be flexible to play the younger Darren at age 20 and the older Darren in his 30s.

Ghost of Christmas Present: Very gregarious, high-energy ghost; like a game show host; 20-40 years old.

Eliza: Wife of Darren and former assistant to Carol; 30s.

Mr. Reed: A businessman who's found perspective; 50-60 years old.

Patrick: A fun-loving, caring friend of Naomi. In his 20s.

Bill: First day on the job as an ambulance attendant; questions his career choice. Early 20s.

Caitlin: A nurse, good at her job; mid 30s to mid 40s.

Ms. Allen: Head nurse, professional but can soften; 40-50 years old.

Extra speaking roles:

***4 Young Singers:** Excited about their show, eager to help

Extra non-speaking roles:

Lady holding the applause sign

***Three assistants** (for Ghost of Christmas Present)

***Additional Singers, Crew Members**

TIME AND SETTING

Carol vs. Christmas is set in present day and all the action takes place over the course of a single night. The stage is adorned with Christmas decorations. The overall look should be very festive. There should be at least one Christmas tree with wrapped gifts underneath. The stage transforms into various locations throughout the play as Carol takes her journey. These locations can be suggested using simple set pieces and props. Although scene changes are indicated for ease of rehearsals, the action should flow seamlessly before and after intermission.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The Ghost of Christmas Past occasionally uses Victorian slang that was popular around the 1850s.

Regular stunner: something really good; "isn't that cool?"

Tin: money.

Don't kick up a shine: don't create a problem or a quarrel; "chill out, Carol."

Face the music: to cope or deal with a difficult situation.

Go around Robin Hood's barn: take a round-about way instead of a direct route.

Shilly-shally: to waste time, hesitate.

Ugly customer: a savage looking thing.

In addition to little phrases, Victorians were wild about their quotes. They were told to children and were passed on to many people as advice in matters ranging from love to finance.

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child": a thankless child is worse than the bite of a snake.

"When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out the window": love is great when you're rich but lose all the money and your lover will leave you.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: Our setting is a theatre, cheerfully decorated for the Christmas holiday, including Christmas trees sparkling with ornaments on each side of the stage. Under the larger tree, SL, there is a large pile of festive-looking presents. Two ACTORS / TECHNICIANS are putting up the last of the decorations. Two women enter the stage, talking. They are JAMIE, the director, and TRACY, the choreographer, of the show. KIRA, an accompanist, is near the piano, organizing her sheet music.)

JAMIE: How did it go, Tracy?

TRACY: I think the changes to the dance are much better. We've got a couple of hours left. As long as we can rehearse the songs a few more times we'll be fine for opening later tonight.

JAMIE: Can I see it?

TRACY: Sure.

(TRACY gives a nod to KIRA who gives her a "thumbs up.")

TRACY: *(Cont'd. Calling out.)* Actors, please set up for the top of our Christmas show.

(A group of ACTORS of various ages enter and /or work their way to the stage. They are chatting quietly and cross into their arranged places. KIRA begins to play a traditional Christmas song and the ACTORS sing and dance. NANCY, the stage manager, enters with a CREW MEMBER, looking over the cues in the script. As the song continues we suddenly hear the voice of CAROL STRICKLAND.)

CAROL: *(Offstage.)* Ms. Jones, pick up the pace!

(CAROL appears. She is speed walking and makes her way to the center of the stage, followed by NAOMI JONES, her

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assistant. CAROL claps her hands to stop the song. When that doesn't work she shouts...)

CAROL: (Cont'd.) OKAY, OKAY, let's close up shop, boys and girls!

(The SONG abruptly stops. NANCY hurries over to them.)

NANCY: We are in the middle of a rehearsal! No one is allowed—

JAMIE: (Interrupts them.) Carol! Ah...I mean, Ms. Strickland. Thanks for coming by.

CAROL: I want to see your so-called producer.

JAMIE: Nancy, would you tell Gwen she has a guest?

(NANCY exits quickly. JAMIE tries to draw CAROL away from the actors.)

CAROL: No time for chit-chat. We had a deal. You broke it. I want you out. My assistant has the paperwork.

JAMIE: Gwen is in the dressing room. If you'd just wait a moment, I'm sure she...

CAROL: Does it look like I have all day?

(Just then GWEN, the producer, enters, followed by NANCY. They surround CAROL. OTHER ACTORS onstage drift off.)

GWEN: Hi Carol! What seems to be the problem?

CAROL: Do you have a check for me?

GWEN: Not yet. We were planning on paying you from ticket sales. So if you could just wait until--

CAROL: Rent is due tonight.

NANCY: But it's Christmas Eve!

CAROL: Don't remind me.

JAMIE: Ms. Strickland, these kids don't get the opportunity to do Christmas shows in their schools anymore.

CAROL: Good.

JAMIE: Good? What's good?

End of Freeview

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