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## Entertainment

# REVIEW: 'Ebenezer Scrooge's BIG Playhouse Christmas Show' at Bucks County Playhouse is a 'treat'

By Frank Burd



Ebenezer Scrooge's Big Playhouse Christmas Show Bucks County Playhouse Don Stephenson as EbenezerScrooge0106.JPG Don Stephenson as Ebenezer Scrooge in "Ebenezer Scrooge's BIG Playhouse Christmas Show" at Bucks County Playhouse.

"A Christmas Carol!" Is there anyone out there who can't connect to one of the scores of stories in print, on film, or on the stage? Even I played the infamous "Ebenezer Scrooge" in a production when I was in 6th grade. Charles Dickens' classic has been translated, adapted, and

staged into so many forms, we are constantly fascinated by its interpretations. And Bucks County Playhouse has a new one — “Ebenezer Scrooge’s BIG Playhouse Christmas Show” It’s smart. It’s funny. It’s got a talented cast of five portraying dozens of characters. It’s a strong adaptation of the Dickens story, and the direction, by Josh Rhodes is first rate.

It is Christmas time in New Hope, Pa. and old Scrooge is as miserly as ever. He won’t contribute a dime to help the poor. He works his clerk Bob Cratchitt, to the bone. He ignores the entreaties of his nephew Fred to come to Christmas dinner. In short, he is a miserable old man. But there’s more to this adaptation by Gordon Greenberg and Steve Rosen.

This Playhouse Christmas Show is full of humor on so many levels- from claiming “Bah Humbug” is French, to the throwing of snow as people enter, to the marvelous sounds created by the ensemble. And that ensemble of Tracey Conyer Lee, James Ludwig, Even Alexander Smith, and Kate Wetherhead does it all. Whether they are playing the fireplace or clock or moving around the simple but multi-faceted set so rapidly, we are drawn into the amazing energy playing out before us. I was amazed and delighted at how fast they changed costumes as well as characters.

They help with the narration, though all will recognize so many of the Dickens lines we know so well from classic 1951 movie of “A Christmas Carol” with Alistair Sims. We see how Scrooge turned into the man he became, about his lost love, about his greed. And we see it with regular funny remarks about New Hope locations, and its environs.

Don Stephenson is a perfect Scrooge- simply rude and annoying, without going over the top. But I’d like to single out Rhodes, the director, for taking all that we know and moving it so rapidly, yet effortlessly, into a most amusing piece of Christmas fare. To top it off, the production is just one hour in length, and it is a perfect length. When you exit the theater, onto the New Hope streets, you feel good, and you feel energized.

What a treat!