

Voices in the Wind Audio Theatre, December 2011

Anthony Palermo's version of the tale, adapted by George Zarr, left us in no doubt as to its moral stance. The Narrator (Bob Telfer) clearly despised Scrooge (Michael Dick) for his lack of Christmas spirit and meanness towards the Cratchit family. As Scrooge spoke, however, the tick-tock of a grandfather clock could be heard in the background, resembling the clock on a time-bomb: an explosion would be not far off.

Our suspicions were proved correct, as Scrooge was taken on a mental journey beginning with his childhood and continuing right up until his death. This was designed to help him confront his faults, and persuade him to reform. As the journey unfolded, the Narrator's comments helped to shape our judgment: Scrooge had to experience this for his own good, especially at Christmastime - a period of goodwill towards all people.

George Zarr and Noelle Dupuis' production used sound-effects to underline the significance of Scrooge's journey. He was taken to an imaginative fair-ground, full of celebration and good cheer, in which "the spirit of Christmas left her blessing." Later on he confronted his own death - a bleak world of echoing voices and a ghostly presence (resembling the Devil) who hissed like a serpent. As Scrooge witnessed his so-called friends joking about the fact that no one would attend his funeral, he whimpered like a child; this was not the kind of send-off he would have expected.

When Scrooge woke up in his own bed once more, he expressed a sense of relief that the journey was nothing more than a dream. However it was clear he had understood its significance, as he bestowed gifts of money on the poor, and buying a huge turkey for the Cratchit family. In Dick's performance, he came across as a jovial figure, embellishing his lines with deep belly-laughs, as he sampled the Christmas spirit. The production ended with the sound of tubular bells in the background, as the Narrator described how Scrooge became a "second father" to Tiny Tim (Celeste Dupuis).

Zarr and Dupuis' production for the Canada-based Voices In The Wind Audio Theatre was notable for its lack of sentimentality: despite the happy ending, they emphasized the significance of Christmas as the time of year when individuals should take a long hard look at themselves and consider whether they need to reform. Would that everyone could follow Scrooge's example.

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