

A CHRISTMAS CAROL
By Charles Dickens
Virginia Stage Company
Dec. 5-22, 2007
For tickets call (757)627-1234

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

The story takes place in an attic. It's the kind of attic we've all imagined but few of us have ever been in. It's a vast, spacious intriguing place that stirs one's imagination. It's a space that is a perfect setting for all sorts of things to happen amidst the clutter and dust of time. Ghosts would love to live there. And, of course they do.

A young boy enters through a trap door and sets everything into motion. In quick time, Anita Tripathi Easterling's set quivers with life. When A. Nelson Ruger's IV artful lighting comes in to play, it's a veritable feast of theatrical magic enriched by Kate Foretek's exciting sound design.

Dickens' story of redemption has been placed in countless settings, times and places. In this well done rendition, the time as stated in the program is the present, even though Jeni Schaefer's costumes suggest another era. We are seeing Dickens through the eyes of the boy. I assume.

Scrooge, in a masterful performance by Peter Moore, is a sort of everyman. He makes us realize that the elements of greed, insensitivity and isolation exist in all of us to some degree.. Moore avoids the clichéd caricature of Ebenezer we are accustomed to seeing. He is, instead, a person of the present, a person who might work in your office.

Director Patrick Mullins lets his theatrical muses run wild. He approaches the tale with child like innocence as he explores that fantastic attic. The result is a lighter version of Dickens with lots of laughter. One might argue that it is a bit of a Cliff Notes reading that moves so rapidly in its staccato pacing that one loses key moments of the story. Even Tiny Tim tends to get lost in the melee. Nonetheless, because of the realistic view that Mullins takes with his actors, one tends to empathize with the characters and become very emotionally involved

The ten actors play multiple roles with exceptional competence. They nearly all, however, with the exception of Mr. Moore, have problems of articulation. They speak as if their mouths were full of Mrs. Fezziwigg's Christmas pudding.

Virginia Opera's Joseph Walsh has been brought in to provide some musical interludes that add warmth and merriment to the festivities.

I've seen more performances of A CHRISTMAS CAROL than any other theatrical work that I can think of. I even saw the mammoth extravaganza at Madison Square Garden in New York which featured real snow falling on the audience. This version is somehow especially pleasing. I left the theatre with a feeling of warmth and a sense that it is indeed beginning to look a lot like Christmas.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.