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Sweet Dreams?

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Cabrillo Stage welcomes 'Scrooge'

Christmas Carol" may be a tale as old as time, but for 33-year-old award-winning actor Tony Panighetti, Cabrillo Stage's winter playbill is an opportunity to breathe new life into one of literature's most reviled villains.

Ebenezer Scrooge is a complex fellow. Stingy to a fault, the rickety old businessman would be the last person to lend you a quarter for the parking meter. He is, however, not impervious to change.

With the help of his deceased business partner Jacob Marley and the Ghosts of Christmases Past, Present and Yet to Come—think Jiminy Cricket meets Sleeping Beauty's Three Good Fairies—he finds the spirit of the holiday.

For Panighetti, therein lies the beauty of the Dickensian anti-hero.

"Classic and legendary characters have the tendency to fall really flat," he says. "It's easy to make Scrooge a 2-D bitter old man; it's challenging to make him not only a believable human being, but to make you care about him."

Finding those new levels of character

interpretation is the foundation for Director Andrew Ceglio's fresh spin on Leslie Bricusse's musical, to run Dec. 17-30 at Cabrillo College's Crocker Theater.

Whether you grew up with the book, watched one of the many film adaptations—Bill Murray, Jim Carrey and Tim Curry have all taken turns as Scrooge—or you're seeing it for the first time, Dickens' masterpiece is as much of a Christmas tradition as stockings on the fireplace. Dating back to 1843, the plot and characters may never change, but for Panighetti, the story is in the telling.

"You don't go to 'Romeo and Juliet' wondering what's going to happen, but how," he says. "'Scrooge' is the retelling of a story everyone knows in a unique and beautiful way."

The Los Gatos native, who starred in Cabrillo Stage's "Some Like It Hot" (2001) and "Annie Get Your Gun" (2005), graduated from the American Academy of Dramatic Arts-West and has performed throughout California, in Alaska, Canada, Europe and the Bahamas. While he was thrilled to return to Cabrillo Stage, having had positive experiences in past productions, he jumped at the opportunity to work under Ceglio, with whom he has a history of performing.

"Andrew has this passion and unparalleled energy for his projects," says Panighetti. "He has taken a real, honest piece and turned it into a huge spectacle of a musical." With a 37-member cast that has to sing in harmony at the top of each act, an orchestra and moving set pieces crafted around the concept of time and clocks, Ceglio's production promises to be an all-ages feast for the eyes and the ears.

Though some of the actors are returning from last year's production of "Scrooge," including Michael Stark, Brie Michaud and Elizabeth Shipton, you'll find several new faces in this year's cast.

"Andrew takes some people from last year and some new people and helps them find their own strengths and interpretations of the roles," says Panighetti.

Panighetti may be partial to villains, himself—he has always preferred them over storybook heroes due to their complexity—but he believes that every character in the musical, from the Cratchit family to Tiny Tim (to be played by adorable eight-year-old Ginger Hurley) is of equal importance when it comes to finding the true meaning of Christmas.

And if Trevor Little's trademark



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choreography, carols sung a cappella and a craving for warm fuzzy feelings still don't get you in the door—did I mention it's going to snow on stage?

For more information about "Scrooge," visit cabrillostage.com or call 479-6154. "Scrooge" will be showing at Cabrillo College's Crocker Theater Dec. 17-30. Ticket prices range from \$16-38.

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