

The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge

by Mark Brown



Teacher Resource Guide



Story Synopsis

The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge is a sequel to *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. *A Christmas Carol* is set in 19th century England where Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge is a miserly old man who owns his own business in London. He is known around the town for being extraordinarily mean and disagreeable to his employee Bob Cratchit and to the townspeople. One night Scrooge receives a visit from the ghost of his dead business partner Jacob Marley who tells him that he will be visited by the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future. From each visit, Scrooge is shown a portion of his life and the lives of others. At the end of the last visit, the Ghost of Christmas Future shows Scrooge a vision of his own death. After seeing this horrible vision, Scrooge wakes up in his bed terrified. As a result, Scrooge instantly changes his selfish ways and goes out on Christmas day to donate to the poor, feed the hungry, and right any wrongs that he has done to people over the years.

The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge picks up a year later where we see that Scrooge has reverted to his old self. A year after his transformation, Mr. Scrooge contends that he was kidnapped and tricked into being a changed man for the year following Christmas. As a result, Mr. Scrooge draws up a whole list of criminal charges: breaking and entering, kidnapping, attempted murder, and theft. He charges the three ghosts as well as the other characters in the story. The play becomes more interesting and hilarious when Mr. Scrooge is the prosecuting attorney in the trial, opposite the compassionate defense attorney, Nancy Rothschild, who represents all of the accused. In an effort to show the absurdity of the trial, Mrs. Rothschild brings all of her clients to the witness stand in order to get down to all the facts. During the proceedings, each witness contributes his or her account of the story that is in some way contradicted by Mr. Scrooge. There are also characters that cause Mr. Scrooge's confidence to temporarily disappear. When Scrooge's old fiancée Belle takes the stand, she forces him to face the mistakes of his past where he chose money over happiness.

After all the testimonies are given, Judge Pearson declares that the three ghosts and Jacob Marley (Scrooge's deceased business partner) are "guilty of all said charges" after which she calls for a "termination of all their ghostly duties." The ghosts' careers are saved when Scrooge drops the charges based on the agreement that the ghosts carry out the Christmas spirit every day in addition to Christmas. It is a nail-biting comedy that ends with all parties being satisfied.

A Note About Our Production

Merry Christmas! Those words alone can fill our senses with memories of the most joyous time of the year. Too often, it is the season where life can become unbalanced – too many gifts to purchase, too many lists of “things to do” – an overabundance of pure American materialism. In reality, if we are honest with one another, at one time or another we have all gotten “lost” in Christmas.

When perusing Christmas scripts, I am often drawn to the funny. Who doesn't want to have a few jolly “St. Nick” belly laughs during the happiest time of the year?! *The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge*, although classified as a courtroom comedy, has much more to offer to our patrons. Sure it includes the characters from Dickens' classic, *A Christmas Carol*, but the background story of how the playwright, Mark Brown, came to write the play touched a heartstring.

“Several months after the tragic events of 9/11, I found myself longing for the days immediately following 9/11. Not the tragedy and horror, but the kindness and generosity shown by mostly everyone in the world. It was a truly wonderful time. Eventually, though, that kindness and generosity disappeared and we were back to our old ways. I imagined that's how Scrooge must have felt around April. Here he made a vow to keep Christmas in his heart all year long, but those who chastised him for not having the Christmas Spirit were just as guilty. When you think about it, Scrooge's nephew only came around every December 24th to wish his uncle Merry Christmas. Where is he the other 364 days of the year? The solicitors collect money for the poor but never show up any other time of the year. I feel those characters are self-righteous and hypocrites for not showing up any other time of the year. Why can't Scrooge's nephew stop by some random Friday just because he wants to see his uncle? Why don't the solicitors come by to collect money in summer? The poor and destitute need help all year long, not just at Christmas.” – Mark Brown

Wow! Talk about preaching to the choir. As Christians we need to live ALL the days of our lives with Christmas in our hearts and souls. We need to spread joy and happiness; demonstrate generosity and compassion!

Rather than getting “lost” in Christmas this year, why don't we take the time to teach our children, and ourselves, that the spirit of giving and caring is not set aside for one day a year; but is to be lived out – 365 days a year.

As Ebenezer Scrooge in *The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge* had to go to extraordinary measures, I am thankful for the extraordinary measures made for me through God's love and salvation. *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Luke 2:11-14 (KJV)*

Take time during this wondrous season to discuss the life lessons we can learn from Ebenezer Scrooge: 1) *When we focus on the past, we miss the precious present;* 2) *We cannot always control what happens; but we can control our response to what happens;* 3) *It's only when we exercise our right to choose that we can experience the joy of change;* 4) *It takes courage to be happy;* 5) *I do myself a favor when I forgive others;* and 6) *The presence of problems doesn't mean the absence of God. (Life Lessons from Mr. Scrooge by Kevin Gerald)* In the words of Tiny Tim, “God bless us, everyone!”

--Becky Saunders, Circle Theatre Company Producer/Artistic Director 2000-2015

Meet the Characters

The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge

Based on the book *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens

Adapted by Mark Brown

CAST

EBENEZER SCROOGE

JACOB MARLEY Scrooge's deceased business partner

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE

NANCY ROTHSCHILD Defense attorney

JUDGE PRISCILLA R. PEARSON

MRS. CONNOLLY The bailiff

FRED Scrooge's nephew

BELLE Once engaged to Mr. Scrooge

FAN Scrooge's younger sister

BOB CRATCHIT Scrooge's employee

MRS. CRATCHIT Bob's Wife

MISS WAINWRIGHT Solicits donations for the poor

MRS. DILBER A thief



About the Author

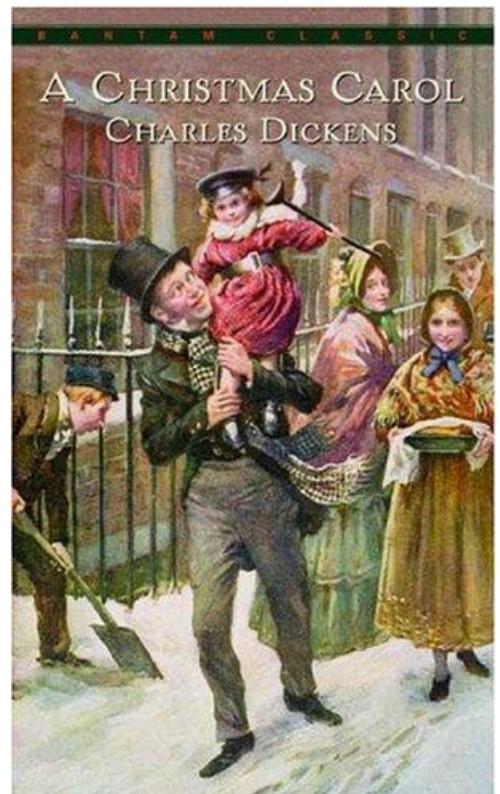


CHARLES DICKENS was born in Portsmouth, England, on February 7, 1812. He was the second in a line of eight siblings. He wrote some of our most well-read beloved classic novels, like *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *David Copperfield*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations* and of course, our focus, *A Christmas Carol*, featuring the protagonist, Ebenezer Scrooge, an old miser who finds the Christmas Spirit with some help.

His father, John Dickens, was a naval clerk, but always had bigger aspirations, which spurred on John's dangerous habit of living beyond the family's means. He was unfortunately sent to prison for debt in 1824, when Charles was just 12 years old.

Charles was forced to leave school to work at a boot-blackening factory near the Thames River. Dickens had stated that he felt cast away at such a young age, saying goodbye to his youthful innocence, feeling abandoned by the adults that were supposed to take care of him. These thoughts became recurring themes in his writings.

Dickens was permitted to go back to school when his father received an inheritance and paid off his debts. However, when Dickens was 15, he had to drop out once again, but this time, became an office boy. This job helped launch him into his writing career.





Within a year of being hired, he had begun freelance reporting in the law courts of London. This led to reporting for two major London newspapers in just a few short years. In 1833, he was submitting sketches to papers and magazines under the pseudonym "Boz." His first book was born, *Sketches by Boz*. His early success caught the eye of

Catherine Hogarth, and they were married. They later separated in 1858 after having ten children.

Dickens may have been the first modern day celebrity, as he made his first U.S. tour in 1842, and spoke of his opposition to slavery and support for reform. His lectures were so widely attended that ticket scalpers would gather outside his events. Dickens was a bit of a show-off and bragged about his celebrity status: "They flock around me as if I were an idol," however, he grew to resent the invasion of privacy. He later expressed his view of American gregariousness and crude habits in something he wrote entitled *American Notes*. He then later launched a more apologetic U.S. tour hoping to set things right with the public through reprints of *American Notes for General Circulation* and *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*.

During the 1850s, Dickens suffered some devastating losses: the deaths of his daughter and father. It was during this decade that he separated from his wife. His novels began to express a darkened worldview. He came out of his dark novel period, publishing *A Tale of Two Cities* in 1859, a historical novel that takes place during the French Revolution.

In 1865, Dickens was in an unfortunate train accident and never fully recovered. He continued to tour until 1870. Dickens died of a stroke on June 9, 1870, at the age of 58, in Kent England. He was buried in Poet's Corner at Westminster Abbey. He left his final novel, *Mystery of Edwin Drood*, unfinished.

Dickens' London

Dickens routinely walked the streets of the city and used what he saw to immerse the reader into the time and place of what he was writing. Victorian London was the most spectacular city in the world. They were in the midst of the Industrial Revolution and the price of this growth and rise to world trade was the extremes of wealth and poverty. Rich and poor alike were walking shoulder-to-shoulder, quickly polluting the streets and Thames River with soot and raw sewage.

Sanitation and Disease

London residents were still drinking water from the same part of the Thames River into which open sewers were dumping until the second half of the 19th century. Cholera outbreaks and The Great Stink of 1858, which caused Parliament to recess, finally brought about a cry for action.

In the Streets

Traffic in 1850 showed a thousand vehicles an hour passing through the areas of Cheapside and London Bridge during the day. This traffic added up to an incredible amount of manure which had to be removed from the streets. During wet weather straw could be found scattered in walkways, storefronts, and in carriages to try to soak up the mud and wet. Cattle were driven through the streets until the mid-19th century.

In his novel, *Oliver Twist*, Dickens describes the scene as Oliver and Bill Sikes travel through the Smithfield live-cattle market on their way to rob the Maylie home: *"It was market-morning. The ground was covered, nearly ankle-deep, with filth and mire; a thick steam, perpetually rising*



Smithfield Market

from the reeking bodies of the cattle, and mingling with the fog, which seemed to rest upon the chimney-tops, hung heavily above. All the pens in the centre of the large area, and as many temporary pens as could be crowded into the vacant space, were filled with sheep; tied up to posts by the gutter side were long lines of beasts and oxen, three or four deep. Countrymen, butchers, drovers, hawkers, boys, thieves,

idlers, and vagabonds of every low grade, were mingled together in a mass; the whistling of drovers, the barking dogs, the bellowing and plunging of the oxen, the bleating of sheep, the grunting and squeaking of pigs, the cries of hawkers, the shouts, oaths, and quarrelling on all sides; the ringing of bells and roar of voices, that issued from every public-house; the crowding, pushing, driving, beating, whooping and yelling; the hideous and discordant din that resounded from every corner of the market; and the unwashed, unshaven, squalid, and dirty figures constantly running to and fro, and bursting in and out of the throng; rendered it a stunning and bewildering scene, which quite confounded the senses."

Smithfield live-cattle market was finally moved out of the city to slaughterhouses in Islington in 1855.

The Law

The Metropolitan Police was created in 1829 by Home Secretary Sir Robert Peel, which is where the name Peelers and Bobbies comes from. This first police force was born with headquarters in what would become known as Scotland Yard.



The Poor

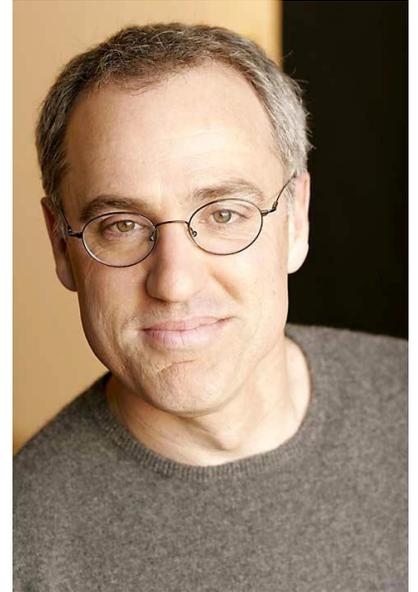
Until 1834 with the enactment of the New Poor Law, parishes were solely responsible for caring for the poor. The new law required parishes to come together and create regional workhouses where the poor could apply for aid. But the workhouse was basically a prison for the poor, where families were separated, civil liberties denied, and human dignity destroyed. The poor often went to great lengths to avoid this relief, understandably so.

After the turn of the century and Queen Victoria's death in 1901, many of the problems of the 19th century were improved upon through education, technology, and social reform...and of course, by the social awareness raised by the champion of the poor, Charles Dickens, in his extremely popular novels.

"Dickens' London." *David Perdue's Charles Dickens Page*. Web. 1997-2014.

About the Playwright

MARK BROWN is an award-winning writer. He has also been an actor in theatre, TV, and film for more than 20 years. However, he grew weary of the last-minute fast-paced lifestyle that came with the life of an actor. His play *Around the World in 80 Days* (playing in Circle Theatre soon), has been produced around the world, from NYC to Bangladesh. It has received many awards since its premier in 2001. *The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge* has been called “a sequel worthy of Dickens’ approval” and is the number one selling show in the Taproot Theatre’s history. His adaption of *The Little Prince* (co-written with Paul Kiernen) set records at the Orland Theatre Project and Hippodrome Theatre. The play *Deep Into Darkness Peering* (co-written with Mark Rector) premiered at the Orlando Shakespeare Festival and has been produced all over the country.



Mark received his acting training at the American Conservatory Theatre and has appeared in many Tony Award-winning companies, such as South Coast Repertory, the McCarter Theatre, and the Utah Shakespearean Festival. He has also appeared in several films, such as *Out of Sight* with George Clooney, and *Holy Man* with Eddie Murphy, Jeff Goldblum, and Stephen Herek. TV credits include the Emmy Award winning series *From the Earth to the Moon* (with Tom Hanks), *Ally McBeal*, *Providence*, and *Diagnosis for Murder*.

Mr. Brown’s inspiration for this play was humanity and how they responded to the tragic events of 9/11: he was so touched by the kindness and generosity shown from around the world. However, as he watched that kindness and generosity eventually disappear and the world slip back to the old ways, he imagined that by April, just a few short months after Christmas, Scrooge, who vowed to keep the Christmas Spirit in his heart all year long, would fall back into his old ways too. Brown blames the others who chastised Scrooge for not having the Christmas Spirit either, since they very well could have stopped by to visit more, or could come collect money to help the poor in the summer and not just at Christmas. He feels that it is self-righteous and hypocritical to not help the poor and destitute all year long.

"Mark Brown Writer." *Bio*. Three Lane Hamsters, Web, 2012.

Resources

Suggested Reading:

[A Christmas Carol](#) by Charles Dickens

Suggested Listening:

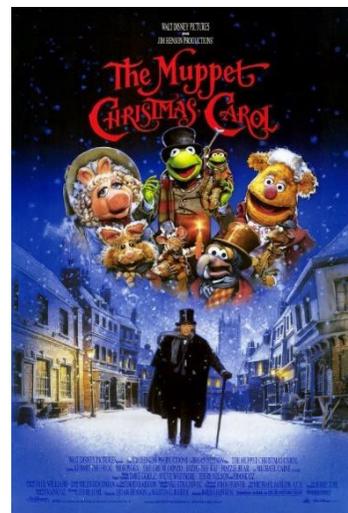
Free online audio [A Christmas Carol](#) audio books:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/subjects/english/a_christmas_carol

<http://www.storynory.com/2005/12/02/a-christmas-carol-part-one/>

Suggested Movies:

There are many wonderful versions of [A Christmas Carol](#). These are some of the most popular:



Online Resources:

How to roast chestnuts:

<http://startcooking.com/how-to-roast-chestnuts>

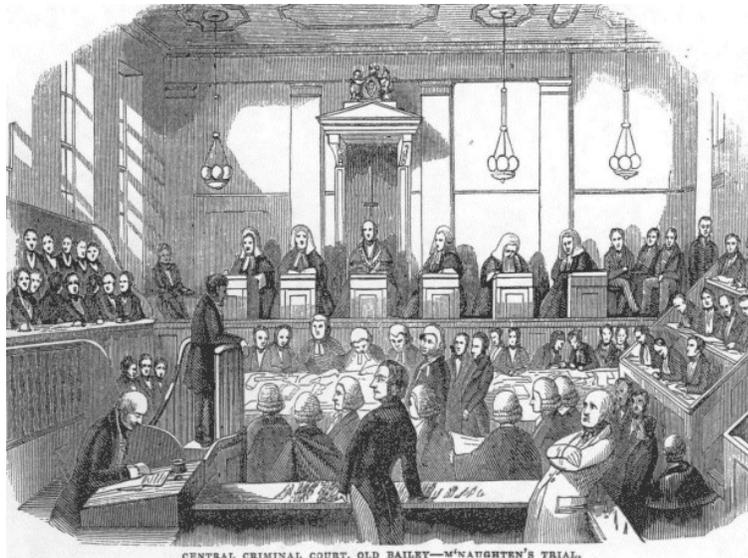
A fantastic website for traditional English Christmas crafts, recipes, songs and traditions:

<http://www.victoriana.com/christmas/dickenschristmas.htm>

An online quiz to test your knowledge of theatre terms:

<http://quizlet.com/42804/theatre-vocabulary-flash-cards/>

British Courtroom Terms



Court Officials

Bailiff: A legal officer responsible for overseeing the courtroom and keeping things under control and in order

Grand Jury: a type of common law jury responsible for investigating alleged crimes, examining evidence, and issuing indictments if they believe that there is enough evidence for a trial to proceed

Lord Mayor: the Mayor of London

Magistrate: a judicial officer with limited authority to administer and enforce the law

The Clerk: responsibilities include maintaining the records of a court and the custodian of the court's seal, which is used to authenticate copies of the court's orders

Court Terms

Opening Statement: the first statement made by the attorney for both the defense and prosecution. It outlines what they hope to accomplish during the trial.

Perjury: lying or making verifiably false statements under oath in a court of law

Indictment: a formal charge of having committed a serious criminal offense

Testimony: a form of evidence that is obtained from a witness who makes a solemn statement. Testimonies can be written or oral.

Court Rulings

Objection: when a witness is asked a question, the opposing attorney can raise an objection which is a legal move to reject the question. An objection is either sustained (allowed) or overruled (not-allowed).

Contempt of court: a failure to obey a lawful order of a court, showing disrespect for the judge, disruption of the proceedings through poor behavior, or publication of material likely to jeopardize a fair trial. A judge may fine or jail someone found guilty of contempt of court.

Provoking: causing annoyance; irritating

Sovereigns: a monarch; king, queen or supreme ruler

Treachery: betrayal of trust

Twiddle: twist, move, or fiddle with something nervously

Tyranny: cruel and oppressive government or rule

Vanquish: defeat thoroughly

Vicious: deliberately cruel or violent

<http://taproottheatre.org/wp-content/uploads/Study%20Guides/2005%20Study%20Guides/TrialOfEbenezerScroogeStudyGuide.pdf>

Discussion Questions and Writing Prompts

1. What are the moral lessons learned in this story?
2. How does Scrooge change from the beginning of the story to the end? Compare & contrast.
3. Discuss the consequences of our choices in life and how they affect others.
4. What is a sequel? Give some examples of sequels to books or movies.
5. Why do you think the playwright decided to write a sequel to this beloved story?

On With the Show!

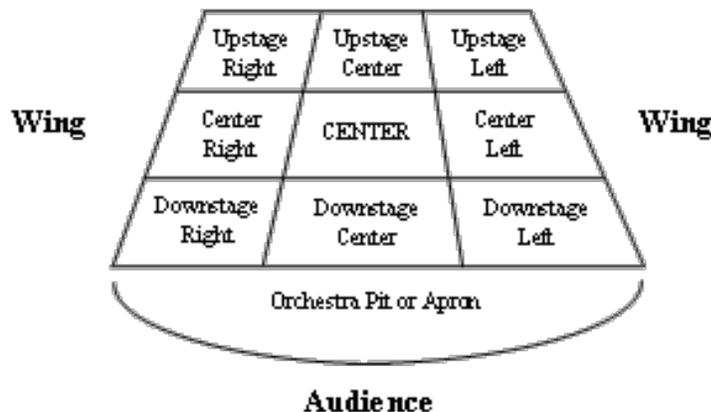
Theatre etiquette: How to be a great audience!

- Plan to arrive at least 15 minutes early. This allows time to find a parking spot, make your way to the Commons, and be seated by the time the show starts!
- Be respectful of other audience members and performers by not talking during the show.
- Our actors use all walkways and aisles during the performance. Please stay seated during the show. It's best to use the restroom before the show or during intermission.
- Turn off all cell phones and electronic devices.
- Photography and videos are not allowed to be taken during in the performance. Not only is it distracting to the actors, but it breaks our licensing agreement.
- Enjoy the show! Feel free to laugh, cry and applaud when appropriate.



Stage Directions

How do you tell the difference between stage left and stage right? Downstage and upstage? Stage directions are detailed in the diagram below.



Theatre Terms



Ad-lib: To make up words or dialogue on the spot, to speak at liberty

Blocking: Stage directions and movements given to an actor by the script or director

Call time: The time actors or production crew must be at the theatre

Callback: A second, more specific audition where a director looks closer at a given actor

Center Stage: The middle point of the performance space

Cue: A signal or line that prompts the next action

during a performance

Downstage: The area of the performance space that is closest to the audience

Dress Rehearsal: The final rehearsal of the play before it opens to the public utilizing all costumes, props, lighting, sound, and set changes

Dry Tech: A rehearsal that is run without the actors, bringing together all the technical aspects of a show

Fourth Wall: The imaginary divide that separates the audience from the performance space

House: The area of a theatre where the audience sits or watches from

Major Role: A character part that is dominant in the plot of the play, having many scripted lines

Minor Role: A supporting character to a story. Having less stage time and lines than a major

Monologue: A speech performed by one actor, giving depth and insight into a character's thoughts or feelings

Pit: The area, usually below the front part of the stage, where the orchestra is set up to play music for the performance

Sides: Selections taken from a script used for an actor to read a scene aloud usually at an audition



Stage Manager: The head technician for a production; responsible for all backstage duties and jobs

Stage Right/Left: Side of the stage that is determined according to the actor's point of view facing the audience

Strike: To take down a set and remove scenery, props, and costumes from the theatre. Happens immediately at the end of a production

Technician: One who works on a crew for a production doing lights, sets, sound, costumes, etc.

Understudy: A performer who studies the role of another actor, so that they might perform it in the absence of the actor who was originally cast

Upstage: The area of the performance space that is farthest away from the audience

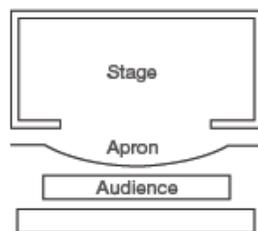
On the Stage!



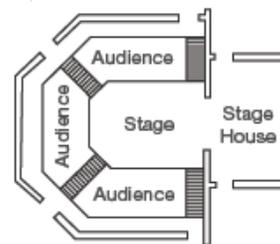
There are several types of theatre stages. Some are used for a smaller audience and give a more intimate feel to the production. Others are better for larger productions with larger sets or for musical productions which require more room for dancing and movement. The most common stage is the **proscenium stage** also called an end stage. For this type of stage, one side of the stage is open and the other sides are hidden from the audience and used as back stage area with the audience located on the front side of the stage. The **thrust stage** extends out into the audience area. The audience is located on three sides of the stage. In the **theatre in the round**, the stage is located in the center of the audience which is located on all four sides of the stage. Similar to the theatre in the round, the **traverse stage** divides the audience into two sections with the stage in the middle, and like the thrust stage and the theatre in the round, allows for a more intimate experience for the audience. **The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge will be performed on a proscenium stage.** <http://www.ia470.com/primer/theatres.htm>

Four types of stage

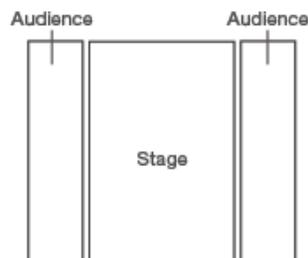
Proscenium arch



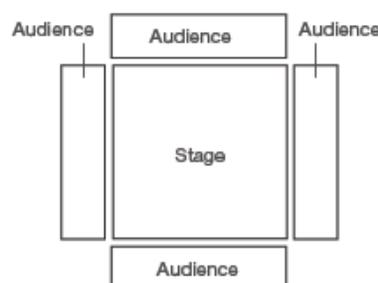
Thrust



Traverse



In the round



Circle Theatre Company Information

Circle Theatre Company is part of Circle Christian School's School of the Arts, offering classes from grades K-12. At the high school level, students audition to be part of Circle School of the Arts theatre track (Company). Our CSA Theatre Track is a pre-professional program geared towards the serious high school student that focuses on four years of training through a rigorous, supportive environment that requires dedication, commitment, and a strong sense of responsibility.

Students who successfully complete a four-year track will be eligible to receive an ARTS HONOR DIPLOMA distinguishing them and their time in high school as dedicated to a specific arts discipline. Having successfully completed four years of intensive study in a discipline and receiving an ARTS HONOR DIPLOMA will give the student a stronger advantage as they apply, audition, and compete for placement in universities and conservatories with other seniors graduating from public and private performing arts high schools.

Circle is dedicated to providing opportunities for artists to develop their God-given gifts and abilities while creating an innovative learning environment that transcends disciplinary boundaries including mentoring and leadership classes specially designed to prepare the young Christian artist to be a "light" in a dark world. We believe not only in academic excellence in the arts; but also in traditional academic subjects to prepare our students to reach their full potential educational and artistic goals. If you are interested in learning more about our K-12 theatre program, please contact Circle Christian School Arts Director Erin Theriault (erint@circlechristianschool.org).

