



Adrienne Sweeney in a promotional photo for the upcoming Commonweal Theatre production of "A Christmas Carol" in which she plays Scrooge. Submitted photo.

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## Scrooge wears Prada

Adrienne Sweeney plays a female version of the classic miser in Commonweal Theatre's upcoming production of "A Christmas Carol."

Written By: [John Molseed](#) | 6:00 am, Nov. 4, 2021

LANESBORO — Adapting Charles Dickens' classic "A Christmas Carol" with a female Scrooge requires more than changes to costumes at Commonweal Theatre.

Adrienne Sweeney plays Ebenezer Scrooge — a female version of the miser. Her late business partner, Marley, also is played by a woman as are the ghosts that help Scrooge reclaim her humanity.

"Three men going around telling a woman how to be a better person is probably not the message we want to put out," said Sweeney.

Sweeney found that playing a single woman and business owner in Victorian England gave the role depth.

"There's a lot more desperate fear," she said. "It's a much more juicy acting opportunity than I thought it would be."

The role now includes pressure to succeed without a spouse and societal expectations of femininity, grace and poise.

"In some ways it makes the role — I don't want to say easier," Sweeney said, "but it does fuel me much more."

When Scrooge's would-be suitor rejects her for putting business ahead of personal relationships, implying Scrooge fears the world, Sweeney responds with an adapted line, saying women like her must fear the world.

"She can't just be light because any way she steps out of line, it could be a trap for her," Sweeney said.

That scene carries extra weight, said director Craig Johnson. A woman remaining single in the Victorian Era would have faced tremendous pressure, he said.

"The stakes, the objective for the characters get that much higher," he said. "She says to herself, 'I must succeed to meet my needs myself.'"

Even though the story is set more than 160 years ago, the pressure Scrooge faces is female business owners can likely relate to today, Johnson added.

"That's really the core of the conflict," he said. "If we keep it faithful to the Victorian Era, does that give lessons for us today?"

That Scrooge would shut herself off from close human contact has different connotations even if the results are the same, he said.

Many of the changes to the story were done by Philip Muehe, former assistant director of marketing at Commonweal, said Sweeney and Johnson.

The core of the classic story stays intact, which adds to the delight of playing the role, Sweeney said.

Scrooge is such a cultural icon, that Sweeney said she finds herself thinking of notable performances of the role when she delivers his lines. Alistair Sim's in "Scrooge," a 1951 movie adaptation of "A Christmas Carol."

"That was my all-time favorite," Sweeney said of Sim's performance. "It's almost impossible to take it out of my brain."

However, some classic characteristics have to be left behind, including Scrooge's shabby dress due to his miserly ways. Sweeney's Scrooge will be dressed sharp, if cold. Think of a Victorian Era "Devil Wears Prada" look.

"She needs to look impeccable," Sweeney said.

"She can't be in shabby clothes," Johnson said. "If a woman in her era, as a business owner, presented herself that way, they'd say, 'you're not even a respectable person.'"

Taunted by ghosts, and she can't even dress comfortably? A woman can't catch a break.

The show opens Nov. 19 and runs through Dec. 19. Tickets are available at 507-467-2525 or [online](#).