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Ghost of one-man carol returns

By **LOUIS B. HOBSON, CALGARY SUN**

Last Updated: December 11, 2010 10:09pm

Joe Morris is getting in touch with his inner Scrooge.

He's also wrangling with his inner Tiny Tim, Bob Cratchit and a quartet of ghosts.

Because it was such a success last year, Morris is reviving One Christmas Carol, his one-man show, for the Cornerstone Dinner Theatre in Canmore.

"About 40 percent of the show was still in my head. The other 60 percent slowly found its way back in. The reason so much of it slipped away is that I've learned four other scripts since I did One Christmas Carol last year," says Morris, whose busy schedule this season included the Stephen Sondheim musical Putting it Together, Cornerstone's summer show Oh Canada, Eh? and the musical Lucky Stiff.

He agreed to revisit One Christmas Carol for performances on Dec. 17 and 18 because he loves "the challenge and the catharsis of doing a one-man show. In 80 minutes you're literally doing through almost ever emotion conceivable. For an actor that's very cleansing."

Using only a simple costume and three unmatched chairs, Morris brings 33 characters from The Christmas Carol to life.

He says his favourite Dickens character is the Ghost of Christmas Present.

"He's wonderfully boisterous. He is the embodiment of the Christmas spirit that we all wish we had and that so many of us strive for at this time of year."

The most difficult character for him to access is Scrooge's humble clerk, Bob Cratchit, father of Tiny Tim.

"Bob is the emotional heart of Dickens' story and of the show. His pain is the audience's pain just as it has always been the reader's pain. You can't act Bob's emotions. You have to feel them. They have to become part of you each time you do the show."

Morris did his first show for Cornerstone Dinner Theatre in 2004 when it was the Oh Canada, Eh? Dinner Theatre and has starred in more than 20 shows for that company in Canmore and its sister theatre in Niagara Falls.

"Before that, I travelled Canada from coast to coast for seven years. It was nice to find a temporary home but I wouldn't mind being back on the road again.

"We'll see what happens for me in 2011. I'm pretty much a free agent come January."

Tickets for One Christmas Carol and Cornerstone's other holiday show Plaid Tidings are available by calling 1-800-773-0004.

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