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Miserly actor snatches all Carol roles

By LOUIS B. HOBSON, SUN MEDIA

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Ebenezer Scrooge had it easy.

The old Victorian miser of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol was only haunted by four ghosts.

These days, Joe Morris has to contend with 33 intrepid spirits. The Calgary actor is the star of Cornerstone Theatre's holiday production of One Christmas Carol.

It is an adaptation of Dickens' classic by Douglas H. Baker that calls for one actor, three mismatched chairs and 33 characters.

"It's basically all of the major characters in A Christmas Carol," says Morris, who is that one actor who must play them all.

"It was really not all that difficult to find that many different voices. Once you understand where each character lives in your heart, the voices and their physicality just flow from you."

Morris says he loves playing Scrooge because "he has such a wonderful character arch. He starts with a world of avarice and greed on his shoulders. When that burden is lifted by the ghosts, Scrooge becomes the man he always should have been."

Morris says the Ghost of Christmas Present "is an exuberant life force. He embodies everything about the true spirit of Christmas.

"Marley's ghost is suffering for the sins of his life, but he still reaches out to help Scrooge from suffering the same fate. I feel this redeems Marley and redemption is one of the main themes of A Christmas Carol."

Morris' favourite female character is Mrs. Cratchit.

"She is a wonderful, loving mother and playing her allows me to tap into that feminine side we all have, but don't get to explore often enough.

He says A Christmas Carol is timeless because "we all know somebody like Scrooge and maybe there is a little of Scrooge in us.

One Christmas Carol plays at the Cornerstone Theatre, formerly Oh Canada Eh? Dinner Theatre in Canmore until Dec. 24. Call 1-800-773-0004 for dates and times of performances.

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