

A Saskatoon Christmas Carol

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For over 170 years Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* has been captivating the hearts and minds of readers with its tale of change, redemption, and hope. While the story has been told in many different ways, from public readings to the silver screen, it remains most powerful in small intimate settings where the separation between actors and audience is kept to a minimum.

In Saskatoon, no location is better suited for that than Persephone Theatre. This year they will be doing just that with a performance of this beloved Dickens classic running from Nov. 23 until Dec. 11.

For Persephone, this marks the second time they have presented *A Christmas Carol*, as they first did so in 2008. With that in mind, this year's production features several returning elements from the original production that may be familiar.

First off, Director Johnna Wright will be returning, bringing her superb skills to this show, and ensuring that the ethos and feel of the story shines through. Additionally, audiences will be delighted to see Kent Allen reprising his role as the curmudgeonly Ebenezer Scrooge. "It's a real coup having Johnna and Kent back for this performance," says Lisa Bayliss, director of marketing and development at Persephone Theatre, "as they were both big contributors to the success of the previous run."

While these elements provide a link to the past, Persephone is working hard to ensure this production is full of new and exciting features as well. Among the many surprises planned for the audience is an overarching desire to accent the 'spectacle' of *A Christmas Carol*. For many people this centers on the three ghosts who visit Scrooge and guide him on his journey of personal transformation. However, as Bayliss notes, "the entire story is imbued with power, and our goal is to capture that in every facet of our production."



Persephone Theatre, located in the Remai Arts Centre, will perform the Christmas classic Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Story*. The classic tale of a changed heart continues to captivate hearts over 170 years since it written. *TOURISM SASKATOON/CONCEPTS PHOTOGRAPHY & DESIGN*

To do this, the theatre has gone all out recruiting top designers from across Canada to lend their talents. This includes Karyn McCallum, an award winning set designer from Toronto, as well as Bonnie Deakin, an internationally recognized designer, who will be creating authentic, detailed, and captivating period costumes. Finally, lighting design will be handled by the nationally renowned Guido Tondino. The final result will be a visual experience that immerses the audience in the world Dickens was portraying.

Beyond spectacle, the production will also feature several local actors and actresses. Among them is the Brandon family, who reside in Saskatoon, that together will be playing the Cratchit family with Skye Brandon portraying Bob, wife Kristi Friday as Mrs. Cratchit, and young Pyper playing Tiny Tim. "Having a family take on these roles together creates an interesting dynamic," says Bayliss, "as the natural ease they have with each other really adds to the overall experience." In addition to the Brandons, there will be other familiar faces on stage including Kevin Williamson and Joshua Beaudry.

However, the real heart of this Dickens story is the message it has for all humanity, namely the power we all have to change. The journey of Scrooge throughout *A Christmas Carol* is something that has resonated with readers and audiences for generations, and given hope that we can all become better individuals. In this way, it has become part of our collective culture.

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That importance is something that Persephone is well aware of, and which they want to highlight. As Del Surjik, artistic director for Persephone Theatre, says "With the distressing events in our international news, I'm even more glad that we programmed this play. Now more than ever, we need to remember our potential for profound change – and the transformation that can result. This classic story of redemption reminds us all that this is possible, at a time when we need to hear it most."

Tickets are on sale now and can be purchased from the Persephone Theatre box office, or by visiting www.persephonetheatre.org. Due to the popularity of this production, anyone interested in attending is encouraged to buy their tickets as soon as possible before performances sell out.