

**GREAT  
LAKES  
THEATER**

# THE 35TH ANNUAL *A CHRISTMAS CAROL* WRITING CONTEST



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**CLEVELAND  
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SCHOOL DISTRICT**



# The Thirty-Fifth Annual “A Christmas Carol” Writing Contest

Every year since 1989, Great Lakes Theater has partnered with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District in producing our annual “A Christmas Carol” writing contest. Over two thousand CMSD students per year, in grades six, seven, and eight compose original stories inspired by the universal themes in Charles Dickens’ timeless classic. Then, each school selects one winner per grade level to submit to Great Lakes Theater for judging. Of these submissions, a panel of judges vote for the top six grand prize-winning entries.

Each grand prize winning writer will receive a plaque commemorating their achievement, a beautifully illustrated hardcover edition of *A Christmas Carol*, and audio recordings will be created featuring Great Lakes Theater acting company members reading their work.

## **The 2023 grand prize stories are:**

### **“Pain” by Anonymous – page 1**

Grade 6, Cleveland Metropolitan School District

### **“Mortal Madness” by Lucas Tolson – page 2**

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### **“Christmas Morning” by Solij Bernard – page 5**

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Grade 7, William Rainey Harper, Teacher: Alexa Klesta

### **“Ghostly Connections” by Isabella Akins – page 8**

Grade 8, Newton D. Baker, Teachers: Nicole Mucci

### **“Spirit of the Past” by Gabrielle Hudson – page 10**

Grade 8, Douglas MacArthur Girls’ Leadership Academy, Teacher: Veronica Wessel

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## **Support Provided By – back cover**

*Great Lakes Theater “A Christmas Carol” production photography by Roger Mastroianni.*

PAIN

By ANONYMOUS



Ebenezer Scrooge (Lynn Robert Berg) is frightened by what is to come.

Started back when I was younger  
I tell all the people to love their self  
I'm surrounded by the streets  
And we are loyal for ourselves  
It's a lot up on my mind  
Can I win some time  
I'm just trying to keep my distance  
Everybody say I'm acting different  
I don't give a crap Bro  
They don't feel the pain I'm feeling  
Going through it going like me  
That the life I'm living  
It's a lot up on my mind  
That I sacrifice, I'm just always regretting  
What I do I cannot handle  
All this pain when when I'm constant to hurt  
That why I hope the pain stops and start  
again first.

~ End ~



MORTAL MADNESS

By LUCAS TOLSON

"Blah, blah, blah! Nag, nag, nag!" Zeus bellowed from the heavens. "All you ever do is complain, woman!"

Hera continued to remind Zeus of the sins that the mortals had taught him: "All you ever think about is money, money, money! What can you ever do with your precious money? You cannot buy the love of your children or win the respect of your brother! Meanwhile, the world is falling apart! Real power lies in making the world a better place. Your works reflect poorly on the heavens! Take this warning before all is lost – and while you're at it, take out the trash!"

Without notice, Zeus became aware of his brother's voice. Poseidon rose up from the sea.

"Zeus, my dear brother, can you spare some of your precious money so I can continue my research on global warming? On top of the wildfires and droughts, the ocean is becoming warmer every day. The hurricanes are giving me whiplash and the heat is making me feel sick. Think of the things that your mortal money can do! Please help, before it's too late!"

"Blah, blah, blah! Nag, nag, nag!" Zeus shouted at his brother. "You sound just like Hera! Always asking for something! How is it my fault that you do not have the strength to fight these things! What kind of God are you – too weak to handle his own business?"



The Cleaveland family (Michael Burns, Morgan Lehman, Esme Page, Maddie Halapy, Sutton Garver, and Hanako Walrath) celebrate the holiday season with the Charles Dickens classic *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*, as read by Mother Cleaveland (Laura Welsh Berg)

Although they were covered in seaweed, Poseidon could not believe his own ears. "I remember, brother, a time when you would have done anything to help the world. What has become of you?" A large wind appeared and Poseidon returned to the sea with a broken heart.

"Hey Pops!" said Zeus's son, Ares. "What's up? You look a little angry. I hope this is a good time because I need to borrow some cash. You see, there is a war in Ukraine and the people there are really having a hard time. They need medicine, food and shelter. Children are suffering and people are desperate for comfort and an end to their pain! I am a god, but you have the power to save them. It's all about money, which I do not have. I know about your



The Ghost of Jacob Marley (David Anthony Smith) makes a frightening appearance.

dealings with the mortals. They have taught you to love money more than anything else in the heavens. What do you say, pop? Will you help? Time is running out!"

"Blah, blah, blah! Nag, nag, nag. You sound just like your mother. You're supposed to be the god of war! You are not the son that I raised. Gather your army and fight your own battles. These mortals have caused their own problems! They have nothing to do with me! Now leave me alone! I have to get to the bank!"

Ares was crushed. He had worked hard to gain his father's love. Now it all seemed lost. Ares left with a broken heart.

"La, la, la." The singing rose above the clouds until it reached Zeus in the heavens. "Hello Father!" It was his daughter, Aphrodite, the goddess of love. "I hope you are having a good day. It's so beautiful here in the clouds and the sun is so bright and shiny! I'm going to a Civil Rights march today! There will be so many people

there and I just love them all! Do you think you could contribute some money for the cause? I just want everybody to feel special and loved. Mother told me that you have a lot of money and I know it can help. What do you say? Will you help spread love to the world? Your money could make a big difference."

"Blah, blah, blah! Nag, nag, nag! You sound just like the rest of the family! Always asking for money! I'm tired of it! Besides, you interrupted my counting! You're always talking about love! Use that for your cause! It's not my job to make people feel better about the world! Be gone and take your singing with you! Use your own power! Your begging does not make you look like the goddess I raised you to be!"

Aphrodite was crushed. She had always loved her father but now he just made her feel sad. She left the sky and floated back to Earth feeling like all was lost.

"ZEUS!" Hera screeched her husband's name. "I hope you're happy!"

Zeus popped his head above a pile of money and shouted back, "Blah, blah, blah! Nag, nag, nag! Not again!"

Hera was furious! "You have destroyed your relationship with everyone you have, even your own children! When will you learn?!!! I warn you! You will be sorry! Money can't buy you love! I have had enough! Goodbye!" With a bolt of lightning, Hera disappeared and Zeus settled down for a long nap in a soft bed of hundred dollar bills.

[illegible]

“Pops! Father! Zeus! Brother! Help us!” Zeus could hear his family call. In the distance he also heard birds screaming, wild winds blowing, volcanoes erupting and the sound of ice shattering. People were crying out in the streets! Not just any people, his people and all the gods in heaven. They were the ones who needed his help. They were the ones who had warned him!

Zeus wanted to say, “Blah, blah, blah! Nag, nag, nag,” but the words got stuck in his throat. “What have I done? What have I created?” As soon as these words left his lips, he knew what he had to do!

With a wave of his hand, all of the chaos disappeared. The clouds left the sky.

Ice bergs reformed. Lava returned to the volcanos. People began to sing in the streets as the sun shone down upon the world. Softened by the cries of his loved ones, Zeus invited his family to sit down for a great feast, including fried chicken and macaroni and cheese! (These were Zeus' favorites).

“Thank you all for staying by my side! I’m so sorry for listening to the words of the mortals over those of my own family!”

Poseidon, Ares, Aphrodite and Hera  
all forgave Zeus and all was right in the  
heavens, and on Earth.

~ End ~



Scrooge (Lynn Robert Berg) relives memories of Fezziwig's party as Fezziwig's guests (Aled Davies, Jessie Cope Miller, Leilani Barrett, Laura Welsh Berg, Joe Wegner, Michael Burns, and Hanako Walrath) celebrate.



CHRISTMAS MORNING  
BY SOLIJ BERNARD



**The Ghost of Christmas Present (Leilani Barrett) makes an impressive and magical entrance.**

Once upon a time, in a cozy little house nestled in the snow-covered countryside, lived two siblings, Emily and Ethan. They eagerly awaited Christmas morning, their hearts filled with anticipation and excitement. The night before, they had carefully placed their stockings by the fireplace, hoping that Santa Claus would fill them with surprises.

As the first rays of morning light peeked through their bedroom window, Emily and Ethan sprang out of bed, their eyes sparkling with joy. They rushed downstairs, their footsteps echoing in the quiet house. As they entered the living room, they gasped in awe at the sight before them.

The room was transformed into a winter wonderland. A beautifully decorated

Christmas tree stood tall, adorned with twinkling lights and colorful ornaments. The air was filled with the sweet scent of pine and the soft glow of candlelight. Beneath the tree, a mountain of presents awaited their eager hands.

With glee, Emily and Ethan began unwrapping their gifts, their laughter and excitement filling the room. Each present revealed a treasure, carefully chosen with love. They exchanged grateful glances, appreciating the thoughtfulness of their parents and each other.

As they continued unwrapping, they discovered a gift hidden behind the tree. It was a small, beautifully wrapped package with a note that read, "To Emily and Ethan, from Santa Claus." Curiosity filled their hearts as they tore open the wrapping.

The snow globes were magical, depicting scenes of winter wonderland. As Emily and Ethan shook them gently, snowflakes danced and swirled around miniature houses and sparkling trees. Their eyes widened in wonder as they realized that the snow globes were more, than they appeared.

Suddenly, a soft whisper filled the room, and the snow globes began to glow. Before their astonished eyes, the room around them transformed into a breathtaking snowy landscape. They were no longer in their living room but standing in the heart of a winter wonderland.





Bob Cratchit (Nick Steen) lifts Tiny Tim (Parker Towns) as the Cratchit family (Maddie Halapy, Michael Burns, Esme Page, Jodi Dominick) looks on.

Hand in hand, Emily and Ethan ventured forth, exploring the enchanted world around them. They built snowmen, had snowball fights, and even skated on a frozen pond. The air was filled with laughter, rosy cheeks, and the warmth of sibling love.

As the day drew to a close, the snow globes began to glow once again. Emily and

Ethan found themselves back in their living room, their hearts still filled with the magic of the day. They realized that the snow globes were a gift beyond measure, a reminder of the joy and wonder that Christmas brings.

With gratitude in their hearts, Emily and Ethan hugged each other tightly, cherishing the memories they had created together. They knew that no matter where life took them, the bond they shared as siblings would always be their greatest gift.

And so, on that magical Christmas morning, Emily and Ethan learned that the true meaning of Christmas lies not in the presents or the enchantment but in the love, joy, and togetherness that family brings. It was a day they would treasure forever, a day that reminded them of the magic that can be found in the simplest of moments, especially when shared with loved ones.

*~ End ~*

SPARKS OF EDEN - GIVEN  
BY ANALIESE BURGOS



Master William (Parker Towns) and Scrooge (Lynn Robert Berg) marvel at the spectacle in front of them.

Through thy empty halls of gloom  
Many think there shall be no bloom  
Plants go cold and unbothered  
Coldness shown, son to daughter  
All thy gold shimmers, shines  
Happiness lost to time  
Though thy heart be full of coal  
All it takes, a spark to ignite thy soul  
Though all the clouds cover the sky  
The sun may shine.

~ End ~

GHOSTLY CONNECTIONS  
BY ISABELLA AKINS

Winds whispering weeping,

Gasping for air suffocating souls lost in  
Limbo.

Will warnings and worthy words peek and  
pierce into the waking world?

What connection is needed for Family,  
Friendship, and Love?

Cosmically communicate between the two  
planes: Life and Death.

Completing the circular connection between  
ones we love.

Life ends but love will endure.

Love one's presence remains, A dream, A vision,  
A link.

A chance encounter with a sweet stranger is a reminder of a loved one gone.

A whiff of a treasured perfume, Empanadilla, and a taste of Flan can conjure up sweet memories.

Treasured tunes reduce us to tears.

Weeping whispers in the wind.

As my heart aches I know our love will endure.

Our ghostly conjuring and communication are cosmically comforting.



The Ghost of Christmas Past (Ángela Utrera) summons Ebenezer Scrooge (Lynn Robert Berg) for a journey to his past.

~ End ~

CONEXIONES FANTASMALES  
POR ISABELLA AKINS

Los Vientos susurran llorando,

Jadeando por el aire sofocando a las almas  
perdidas en el Limbo.

¿Las advertencias y las palabras valiosas se  
asomarán y entraran en un mundo despierto?

¿Que conexión se necesita para la familia, la  
Amistad y el amor?

Comunicarse cósmicamente entre los dos  
pianos: Vida y Muerte.

Completando la conexion circular entre  
aquellos que amamos.

La vida termina pero el amor perdurara.

Amar la presencia de uno permanece, Un sueño,  
Una visión, Un vínculo.

Un encuentro casual con un dulce extraño es un recordatorio de que un ser querido se ha ido.

El olor de un perfume Preciado, Empanadilla, y el sabor de un flan pueden evocar dulces  
recuerdos.

Las melodías preciadas nos hacen llorar.

Susurros llorosos en el viento.

Mientras me duele el corazón, Sé que nuestro amor Perdurará .

Nuestros conjuros y Comunicaciones fantasmales son cósmicamente reconfortantes.



Scrooge (Lynn Robert Berg) returns home on Christmas Eve.

~ End ~



SPRIT OF THE PAST  
BY GABRIELLE HUDSON



Actor Lynn Robert Berg greets a school winner onstage following a special matinee performance of "A Christmas Carol."

Buzz, the fluorescent lights of the yellow tint office lights the cubicle. "I have a new file for you," a mysterious voice reaches out to me.

I started as the 'Ghost of Christmas Past' about four years ago. The position was heinous to achieve. Ever since Ebenezer Scrooge and 'The Christmas Story' became famous; everyone wants to be a spirit.

"Waylon Fitzgerald," I read aloud, I can't focus on my own thoughts, my mind racing. I trace my bony fingers across the paper. *Waylon has been displaying severe hostile tendencies towards his family, according to his wife, he has been making threatening remarks.* I could only wonder what occurred. I read the address and arrived at Waylon's door. The lights are off, I don't see anyone. I enter through the window and look at the gold frames around the intricate

picture painted above the couple's bed. Reaching my hand out, my cold hands touch Waylon's sleeping head. In an instant I can see his past.

"Mom, please, don't leave us out here, I'm cold!" a young Waylon begs while his mother leaves him and his younger siblings on the curb. I walk behind the children, knowing I can't be detected, I still can't help but walk quietly.

"Where is mom going? Is dad coming for us?" the children question their older brother.

I watch Waylon wipe his tears and lower his head. No answer, just a brief silence before all the children start to cry. After a few minutes, they curl together and fall into an intoxicating rest. I've seen enough to know what is going on. Returning to the present, I influence Waylon's current dream.

According to his wife, he has not been respecting her the way he used to. Waylon comes home and trashes the house, threatening to leave them, followed by reckless behavior with his children, constantly endangering them by taking them in the car and driving recklessly.

"Who are you?" Waylon says, looking me dead in the eyes.

"Ghost of Christmas Past, pleased to meet you."

He looks at me, dissatisfied with my introduction. "You can't be, he doesn't talk,"

Waylon snickers. I know he means the first ghost that talked with Scrooge, but, since then the 'Boss' requests a formal introductory statement before each experience due to lots of employees being assaulted, thinking we were criminals.

"Waylon, I'm here to figure out what's wrong." I say, ignoring his comments.

"Why would you? I'm leaving my family for Christmas, anyways. Was it Mary? Did she tell you her lies about me? I didn't do anything to her! She's my wife!" Waylon says, lying through his coffee-stained teeth. I can tell by his swift response he has a short temper.

"I'm not here to justify your actions. You need to learn what happened in your life, you know? Become a changed man," I state calmly.

"Nothing happened! Mary is just crazy. I'm fine!" More lies.

I gesture for him to follow me as I take him to the harsh winter of 1987. I walk with Waylon down the street to the curb he grew up on. His first Christmas alone, and his first time without a comforting family. A young Waylon walks with his hood up. I notice many box-shaped bulges in the pockets. Young Waylon pulls out gifts for his siblings.

"I'm sorry, it's all that would fit in my shirt without the security guard noticing," he blurts out while his siblings look at him, eyes welling up with tears.

"I was only 10," Waylon says, his tone is changing from earlier, he's less hostile.

"You did what you had to – providing for three children while being a child yourself is hard," I say, attempting to reach his realization.

"She left us that day for a job," Waylon explains. "Right after our dad left; she had been working so hard." His eyes are tearing up. I see some emotion in his soul.

"Let's go to next Christmas, just a year after this," I say. He responds with a nod. We walk down the street to a Juvenile Detention Center. Waylon is reluctant to go in. My curiosity is getting the best of me as I begin to speak. "You need to face your past to come to happiness in present, Waylon."

He walks towards me and lowers his head. "Fine," he blurts out, his words seeming unhuman.

Instantly there is screaming. Not enraged, but agonized yells. I see a young Waylon, but he is on the other side of the glass in the visiting room. The guards are pulling him by his arms.

"Your time is up, Fitzgerald," the guards say calmly, despite Waylon's howls. His siblings are on the other side clawing at the glass. They are sobbing, even I feel their emotional aura. I look up at the present Waylon beside me, his face blank.

"How do you feel about seeing how you were?" I question, but my question is led with silence. I can feel Waylon is done with me. He seems remorseful, but how much?

"Waylon. I need you to answer me."

"I don't feel anything. I was too young to remember any of it!" he snaps back



Young Scrooge (Joe Wegner) shares a tender moment with Belle (Laura Welsh Berg) as The Ghost of Christmas Past (Ángela Utrera) shows Ebenezer Scrooge (Lynn Robert Berg) the memory.

at me. I sigh, realizing we're back to square one. At least I know the root of his trouble. I wonder if his mother is alive, maybe I could meet with her.

"Waylon," I say, my words seem to bounce off the walls. "What is your mother's name?"

His eyes meet mine; he looks appalled. For a minute he considers my question but instantly looks puzzled.

"What do you need that for?!" he snaps.

"Curiosity?" I lie.

"If you must know, I believe her name was Elizabeth Fitzgerald, but I don't remember. Will you leave now?!"

I walk away from Waylon's street and look at my notes. Elizabeth Fitzgerald. The name slips away from me, coming back in a chilling wave. I recognize the name, but from where I do not know. She is at least

twenty years older than me, close to death. I must search for her, maybe a reunion would help Waylon.

I'm back in my damp cubicle the next day, searching for Elizabeth. First, I check the obituary, assuming the worst, but I find nothing of the sort. Ghost of Christmas Future's Assistant, John, comes up behind me.

"Mrrrph What are ya lookin' for?" He says, mouth full of complimentary donuts.

"I'm working on a confidential client," I say, hoping he leaves.

"Come on, what's the deets? You don't have to hide from me!"

I'm sick of him. If I ignore him maybe, he'll leave. Soon enough he walks away, but not before using my pen to sign papers, leaving glazed donut residue all over the side. Some days I wonder how some are selected. I continue my research, ignoring the bustle behind me. LinkedIn – I chuckled at the idea that it would be so easy. But sure enough, searching Elizabeth Fitzgerald shows forty-three results. I must filter by something; I decide age would be the easiest. If Elizabeth was an estimated thirty when I saw her in Waylon's memory, occurring in 1987, the year is 2008, she must be... pause to do the math ... about fifty-five. By coincidence, three Elizabeths are fifty-five. Sifting through, I find a woman with no children. If you abandoned your kids, would you still put them in a job site? The other women have kids, but only one or two. She is fifty-five and looks like the woman I saw that day. I might as well contact her.

*Hey Elizabeth, I see you want to be a waitress, I have an opening at my restaurant but would love to meet you. Meet me at 3984 Seldom Avenue on Tuesday at 3:00 PM. I will have me and my team to meet you to see if you're a good fit.*

*Yours,*

*Bartholomew*

I've emailed her, but all of it is a complete lie. I hate doing that, but it comes with the job. 3984 Seldom is a coffee shop, so she shouldn't suspect a thing. We meet on Tuesday, today it's Friday. My thoughts race until the clock hits 6:30. This is the most effort I've put into a project like this, my body is taking the toll. I'm becoming bonier but at least it's fitting for my job.

After a swift weekend I'm ready to meet with Waylon today and convince him to meet "a friend of mine" Tuesday. I arrive at night after a day of research and plotting. I reach my hand out to enter his dream. I notice myself anxious to repair a broken man. Before I could even think about it more Waylon swings at me.

"Go away evil man! I hate you!" Waylon displays his anger very apparent, but I need to keep calm.

"Waylon Fitzgerald, how would you feel if I threatened you? You need to listen to me, I'm here to help," I empathize with him. He punches a brick wall behind me, leaving pebbles falling to the floor.

"I have someone I want you to meet, he is a delight and should help you channel

your anger." A lie. Prior to this, I was debating if I should lie to Waylon, too. If I told him I talked to his mother, who knows what he could've done to me.

Waylon looks puzzled. "Anything to get away from Mary, lying scum woman, never washing my clothes on time," he states, rambling on about his wife who is just worried about him under his breath, stopping when my face scrunches in disgust, even the grim reaper would be appalled by the disrespectful nature of the man standing right in front of me.

"That's all for tonight, since you want to display behavior like a feral animal. Maybe you should say goodnight to your wife," I say, a tinge of anger between each word. I can't tell why I am so tired of this. It seems like I'm trying to help a person who just wants to be a terror. At this point I don't care if he hates me or not.

Tuesday morning hits me like a ton of bricks. Should I feel guilty? I shake the cloud off my head and go to the office. I have an email from Elizabeth!

*"Thanx Bartulumuow! ..?11 ? I'll be ther odd teme tubedae ){@("*

Woah. I can't believe my eyes. I check my pulse to see if I'm having a stroke. Surely, she must be intoxicated, but at least she answered. My skin is itching due to the poor grammar and misspellings. I breathe out and finish my files from last year. My nerves are rising by the hour. Time goes heinously swiftly, the opposite of the day I





School Winners at the November 21, 2023 matinee of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol"

worked on my grandmother's birthday. Maybe I'll ask "Boss" for a raise after this.

After I sift through my thoughts, I look at the clock, 2:34 PM burns into my retinas. I rushed to the coffee shop.

Waylon's rusted Chevy is waiting outside, he is occupied fidgeting with the radio. Next to the street is a woman, dressed in ragged clothes. And another behind her in revealing and provocative clothing. I'm pleading to myself to not believe either of them could be Elizabeth. A car beeps behind me, and a hand knocks at my window.

"A...re you Bartholoomoo ?" Elizabeth says, her alcohol scented breath pierces my senses. She is dressed in business casual, presumably she drank after.

"Indeed, let's meet over here to ... talk." My nose scrunches as she breathes through her rancid mouth. I begin to think this isn't such a good idea, maybe I'm interfering and not being a traditional ghost. Before I could ruin the moment, Waylon

walks over to me, his jet-black hair is greasy, grey strands flying away. He stands above my car, banging on the top.

"Hurry up, Face Ache!" I'm appalled by his disrespectful comments. His mother sits on a bench smoking a cigarette. I exit my car, closing the door slightly so Elizabeth doesn't hear. I walk Waylon past her. His eyes follow her, at this point I know I must say something.

"Hello Elizabeth," I say, nervous about Waylon. She burps at me and ashes her cigarette.

"Who..oose this handsome younng mane?" Her words trail off.

"Elizabeth this is your son," I state quickly.

"Mom," Waylon says, his words sounding like a dead body expelling the last air left. He collides his limp body with hers in a twisted hug.

"Who...whooooo are you? Wait! Wait! I remember. Johnny!" his mother spurts out, spit falling from her wrinkled face.

"How could you do those—" Waylon begins before she interrupts

"Ohh ! Way... Wayloon, hi honey! Mommy miss....misssed you!"

The two share another hug, but more awkward. The weather is getting worse by the second as we go inside.

"So, mom, why would you leave us?" Waylon questions.

"I had to work; I didn't want to endanger you... youngsters," Elizabeth says,

her drunkenness wearing off. Waylon tears up, reaching in for another hug. The two share stories of what has happened in their lives, I become a spectator, but I'm glad.

"Mom, can you come for Christmas?" Waylon says under his breath. His mom nods before tipping over a little. The touching exchange makes me cheerful, knowing I won't be invited, I walk out to let the two talk about personal stories.

Several days later I decided to walk home past Waylon's house. It's Christmas

Day at 6 pm, so it is freezing. I look in his window, my eyes hit with wind.

"Mommy can I give this to grandma?" A young child holds a card next to Waylon.

"Of course!" Mary excitedly answers. Everyone is eating a plate of food and smiling. My eyes meet Waylon. His hair is slicked back, and he is wearing a nice, sophisticated outfit. His eyes gleaming with joy. For once I'm able to feel an emotion, pure bliss.

*~ End ~*



The company of the Great Lakes Theater production of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol"

## ABOUT GREAT LAKES THEATER



**Charles Fee, Producing Artistic Director**

The mission of Great Lakes Theater, through its main stage productions and its education programs, is to bring the pleasure, power and relevance of classic theater to the widest possible audience.

Since the company's inception in 1962, programming has been rooted in Shakespeare, but the company's commitment to great plays spans the breadth of all cultures, forms of theater and time periods including the 20th century, and provides for the occasional mounting of new works that complement the classical repertoire.

Classic theater holds the capacity to illuminate truth and enduring values, celebrate and challenge human nature and actions, revel in eloquent language, preserve the traditions of diverse cultures and generate communal spirit. On its mainstage and through its education program, the company seeks to create visceral, immediate experiences for participants, asserting theater's historic role as a vehicle for advancing the common good, and helping people make the most joyful and meaningful connections between classic plays and their own lives. This Cleveland theater company wishes to share such vibrant experiences with people across all age groups, creeds, racial and ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

The company's commitment to classic theater is magnified in the educational programs (for both adults and students) that surround its productions. Great Lakes Theater has a strong presence in area schools, offering an annual series of student matinees and, for over 30 years, an acclaimed school residency program led by teams of specially trained actor-teachers.

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[greatlakestheater.org](http://greatlakestheater.org)

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and to our reader-judges:

*Carol Dolan*  
*Beks Freeman*  
*Lisa Ortenzi*

*Kelly Elliott*  
*Rachel Gold*  
*Gregory A. Pribulsky*

*Kelly Schaffer Florian*  
*David Hansen*  
*A'Rhyan Samford*

*Kelly Schaffer Florian*  
*Andrea Lyons*  
*Kristine Tesar*

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