



Cast

Lucy/Mrs Pringle/Phantom – Sarah Berney
Hugo Harty/Fezziwig – Paul Boyle
Urchin/Turkey ‘Boy’/Schoolchild/Party Guest – Niamh Burke
Mrs Carstairs/Helen/Isabel – Zoe Chamberlain
Nephew/Young Ebenezer/Bissett – Tom Corsi
Ghost of Christmas Past – Nikki Cross
Urchin/Schoolchild/Party Guest – Freya East
Ghost of Christmas Present – John Fenner
Urchin/Schoolchild/Party Guest – Frances Foley
Mrs Dilber/Mrs Fezziwig – Elaine Freeborn
Mary/Miss Dilber – Sam Harris
Party Guest/Belinda Cratchit/Urchin/Schoolchild – Darcy Harrison
Tiny Tim – Freddie Heynes
Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come/Pringle the Toy Shop Owner – Jeremy Heynes
Bob Cratchit – Oli Jones
Tom Jenkins/Schoolteacher – Toby Jones
Kathy Cratchit – Alisha Long
Urchin/Martha Cratchit – Alexandra Mackie
Party Guest/Schoolchild/Urchin – Harry Mckinty
Jacob Marley – Richard Nelhams
Lizzi/Phantom/Bess the Apple Seller – Emma Sansom
Charles/Dick Wilkins/Jocelyn Jollygoode – Jack Sargent
Phantom/Topper/Wine Merchant/Punch and Judy Man – James Seymour-Grant
Sarah/Beggarwoman – Laura Simmons
Ebenezer Scrooge – Steve Smith
Phantom/Ethel Cratchit/Bakerwoman – Judy Wellicome
Shopper/Phantom/Party Guest – Anne Wood
Party Guest/Jenny – Elizabeth Woolley
Ebby/Peter Cratchit – Nathan Woolley

Production team

Musical Director – Matt Flint
Choreographer – Robin Stokoe
Director – Tim Willis

It’s something we don’t see very often these days – a full-sized cast of men, women and children on stage in a large-scale musical.

The show may be *Scrooge*, but there’s nothing mean about this Loft production. Director Tim Willis and his team have gone to town – in this case, Dickensian London’s Cheapside – to bring it to vivid and sparkling life. It bustles, it shuffles, it soars to crescendo. And even if the company chorus work does not always reach operatic proportions, it all packs a tunefulness and likeability that are worth a dozen divas.

We have a glorious set design by Richard Moore which straightaway plunges us into a world of poor but mainly honest hard-working and hard-done-by folk struggling to ensure that Christmas can be a jolly time whatever a person’s circumstances. There may be the skinflint rich, but they can always be set up for ridicule and a laugh, thank you very much. Striding above this tight-knit community is the eponymous Scrooge, superbly brought to life in the hands of Steve Smith. What makes him tower above the whole production is the subtlety of this portrayal. No panto nasty here, just a miserly old soul with what we suspect could be a long-buried heart simply waiting to be summoned from the vaults of past misfortunes. He’s sour enough to dislike at first sight but there is a strong hint of credibility in a performance most closely equated with that of the great Alastair Sim in the early non-musical film.

But Leslie Bricusse’s breezy musical gives us more to enjoy. Despite some rather stolid songs early on, it leaps into life with the arrivals of the ghosts, most notably in this version an attractively ethereal Christmas Past from Nikki Cross and a boisterous Christmas Present delivered in Brian Blessed style by John Fenner. It’s only a pity their entrances are not more highlighted than by mere walk-ons.

We can savour a nicely sung duet by Zoe Chamberlain and Tom Corsi, which embodies a lost romance from Scrooge’s younger days, and Oli Jones’s portrayal of the put-upon Bob Cratchit as less of the traditional wimp and more a man forced to make the best of trying times.

Above all, however, this is a mammoth seasonal effort worthy of high praise in every department.

Peter McGarry



