

# 'Christmas Carol' tradition continues at Coaster Theatre

Many versions of  
'The Dickens Play' have  
stood in the stage lights

By **NANCY MCCARTHY**  
FOR COAST WEEKEND

Every time Ebenezer Scrooge steps on stage at the Coaster Theatre this season, he continues a tradition that began in Cannon Beach nearly 45 years ago.

This year, Scrooge is Darren Hull. He is playing the role for the first time, backed by a cast of 30 community members. Many of those children and adults in "A Christmas Carol: The Musical" have never been on the stage before, but after months of rehearsals, they are retelling the 19th century story about the metamorphosis of a miserly tightwad to an enlightened, generous uncle.

While this is Hull's first time as Scrooge, it's not his first time participating in "Christmas Carol." Like some of those newbie cast members this year, Hull, who moved to town in 1989, decided to follow the suggestions of his coworkers and joined the annual Scrooge celebration at the Coaster.

"It was a wonderful way to get involved in the community," Hull said. "Some of the people I met that first year are still my dear friends all these years later. It was really a feeling of community and family that I've never forgotten."

That year, the homespun musical was called "The Dickens Play," which Hull described as a "mash-up of 'Christmas Carol' and 'Oliver.'"

"There were different versions every year. A lot of times whoever was directing that year interpreted their own version of it," Hull said. "That year there were three narrators, and we were on the stage and kind of moving in and out of the story."

## Many different 'Dickenses'

The year after the Coaster opened in 1972, the gas crisis kept visitors away from Cannon Beach. Vickie Hawkins, Cannon Beach Gazette owner, suggested that the town develop a Dickens theme. Store clerks dressed in Dickens-era costumes, including bowler hats, aprons and sleeve bands; window displays hearkened back to the mid-19th century; and

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COURTESY COASTER THEATRE

A Coaster Theatre production of "The Dickens Play" in the 1970s



NANCY MCCARTHY PHOTO

Bill and Sally Steidel led the community effort to produce a version of the 'Christmas Carol' story at the Coaster Theatre. The theater has had a holiday play there since 1973, and at least 24 of those plays have been about Ebenezer Scrooge.

## IF YOU GO

**What:** A Christmas Carol: The Musical

**Where:** Coaster Theater, 108 N. Hemlock St., Cannon Beach

**When:** Fridays and Saturdays, 7:30 p.m. through Dec. 23; Sunday matinees, 3 p.m. Dec. 10 and 17; and Thursday show, 7:30 p.m., Dec. 21



COURTESY COASTER THEATRE

A Coaster Theatre production of the "The Dickens Play" in the 1980s