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NBHS Drama Club presents new take on ‘A Christmas Carol’

Dickens’ holiday classic the basis of devised theater production by students, Dec. 2-4

How do you take a time-honored holiday classic and make it relevant for today’s audiences and issues? This year, the New Bedford High School Drama Club tackled that challenge as a devised theater project – “a process in which the whole creative team develops a show collaboratively” (Walton, 2014). Come see the results of their work during the first weekend of December as they debut their original adaptation of the Charles Dickens’ classic “A Christmas Carol” at NBHS Bronspiegel Auditorium.

Sarah Cadieux Pacheco, co-Director notes, “We knew we wanted to do a holiday-themed show this year, and A Christmas Carol felt like the right story to tell. However, all of the scripts available left us uninspired so we decided to do something original. The other directors and I have some experience and training in devising theatre, and we thought it would be a new challenge for the NBHS students to create a show without a script.”

The collective creative process in devised theater requires a well-known narrative as a starting point. Cadieux Pacheco explains, “Everyone already knows A Christmas Carol so our devising process was really about updating the story so that it remained true to the themes, but felt more realistic and gave our team ownership.” She shared that the students spent weeks working through theatre exercises to explore the characters and to modernize the circumstances and then things started coming together to tell a cohesive story.

In the NBHS devised version, the stingy Christmas-hating Scrooge is ever-present and recognizable, but the play explores contemporary reasons why she is the way she is – including experiencing a tough childhood, struggles to climb the corporate ladder as a woman, and the trauma of losing her childhood best friend (Marley.) The NBHS students even came up with a modern take on the troubles that face the Cratchit family, as Bobbie Cratchit keeps asking Scrooge for full-time hours so she can qualify for the medical benefits that her sick son (Tiny Tim) requires.

“I’m very proud of what our team has created,” shared Stephanie Donnelly, the other drama club co-Director and NBHS Theatre Teacher. “Our directors have always challenged our

company to do a variety of different styles of theater, but devised theater was definitely the biggest shock to our club. Starting from scratch was so unique and having everybody make a contribution into how the show should go truly let us express our creative side and really feel heard,” said senior Makenna Calvao, Drama Club President, who appears in the production as The Ghost of Christmas Present.

“Overall I think we’ve struck a nice balance between honoring a beloved holiday classic with updating it to feel really fresh. I keep saying that I can’t believe no one has created this modern version before, so much of what we came up with aligned to the story so naturally that once we got going things fell into place really nicely,” said Cadieux Pacheco.

Come check out what they have cooked up as we kick off December and get into the holiday spirit with the NBHS Drama Club presentation of “A Christmas Carol” at the NBHS Bronspiegel Auditorium. Performances begin at 8:00 p.m. on Friday, December 2 and Saturday, December 3 with a matinee performance at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 4.

Tickets are \$10 for students/seniors and \$12 for adults, and – to limit large groups in the lobby – can be purchased ahead of time online at <http://our.show/nbhscarol>. A limited number of tickets will be available for purchase in person via cash or check at the box office beginning 1 hour before each performance. Tickets purchased in person are subject to a \$2 processing fee, per ticket.

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Photo Caption:

‘A CHRISTMAS CAROL’ REIMAGINED – Olivia Viera, New Bedford High School senior as Eleanor Scrooge and sophomore Mariam Hasab as The Ghost of Christmas Past are at odds over Scrooge's behavior in the NBHS Drama Club’s original devised production of Dickens’ holiday classic, Dec. 2-4. (Submitted photo)

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