

Playhouse puts a twist on 'Carol'

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the program. Lambrecht said this is the first time he has played Scrooge since he was a student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1992.

That year, he was a stand-in as Scrooge in the weeks leading up to the play until the equity actor got there the week of the performance.

"It is a challenge to play Mr. Scrooge because it is easy to fall into doing a caricature of him - you know, trying to do the bent-over, old-man type of character," Lambrecht said. "Scrooge was only 60, and even in the 1800s that was by no means decrepit."

"Trying to keep him real and also playing someone 30 years older than myself has been the biggest challenge," he said.

Lambrecht said he has an advantage in playing Scrooge because he

Theater Preview The Facts

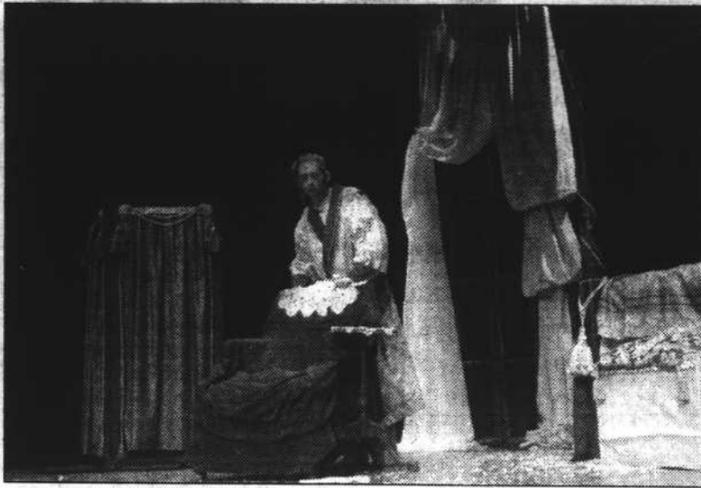
What: "Mr. Scrooge"
Where: Lincoln Community Playhouse
When: Opens Saturday at 2 p.m.
The Skinny: Playhouse brings new twist to Dickens classic.

has seen it done so many different times.

"I've seen Mr. Scrooge done so many different ways that it is actually a good thing because you are able to pull bits and pieces from other performances," he said. "You can do things you've seen and liked and incorporate them into your own character."

Lambrecht described working with this particular cast as incredible.

"Sometimes when you get into a show with this many children it gets unruly," he said. "But the kids have been really great and cooperative."



SHARON KOLBET/DN
PATRICK LAMBRECHT plays the infamous miser, Ebenezer Scrooge, in the musical "Mr. Scrooge."

Variations keep play fresh

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Shell-True said the Lincoln Midwest Ballet's production also differs in that it presents Clara as an older girl. Because of this, the production does not play into the Candyland theme.

Instead, Clara visits the Jewel Palace filled with candy and jewels. The dancers, representing different countries, act as different jewels and present Clara with a gift.

Differences such as these make the story of the Nutcracker refreshing for audiences year after year, Shell-True said.

"The books don't have a set story. It doesn't have to be one set thing," she said. "It's fun to come up with new takes on different parts of the show. It would be boring to leave it the same year after year."

Shell-True said she changes some of the choreography for the ballet about once every two or three years. This year, she decided to change the Marzipan, which are usually flute players or candy, to sherbert ice cream.

Although this is the Omaha Theater Company Ballet's first production of "The Nutcracker," Welch said it plans on changing things every couple of years as well.

"We are talking about getting a whole new set in a couple of years and then alternating between the two," she said. "But the main, beautiful story is always going to be the same."

Although Shell-True's production does have professional dancers in it, the Omaha Theater Company Ballet is a professional dance company, and all

the dancers in its production are resident professionals.

"All of our dancers are professional, and they have worked all over the world," Welch said. "This is our premiere performance as a professional ballet company, as well as the OTC's 50th anniversary. 'The Nutcracker' just seemed like a logical season opener for us."

The dancers for the Omaha Theater Company Ballet will continue to perform throughout the season, whereas the Lincoln Midwest Ballet presents its biggest performance of the year with "The Nutcracker."

Shell-True said this is partially because of a small budget but also because the dancers in the show are mostly local students, not professionals.

"This is a stepping stone for the kids to find out what it's like to be in a professional company," she said. "They get a chance to work with the professionals we bring in to fill some of the parts of the show, and they make connections with them. It's like a springboard for young dancers."

"These kids do it because they love it. They live and breathe it, and they bring that spirit onto the stage with them."

In order to decide who gets what part, open auditions are held, and judges are brought in to cast the show. Whatever parts are left are filled by professional dancers.

Shell-True believes this is the best way for the production to be cast.

"I want the best person for every show," she said. "When you are a director, you want the best person for every

Tickets, locations and times

The Lincoln Midwest Ballet will be performing at the Lied Center for Performing Arts, 301 N. 12th St., on Dec. 18 at 2 and 7 p.m. and on Dec. 19 at 2 p.m.

Tickets are \$18, \$22 and \$26 with half-price tickets for students. For more information, call the Lied Center Box Office at (402) 472-4747.

The Omaha Theater Company Ballet will be performing at the Orpheum Theater, 409 S. 16th St. in Omaha, Thursday through Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m.

Tickets are \$17.50 to \$33 for adults and \$11.50 to \$21 for children 12 years and younger. For more information, call TicketMaster at (402) 475-1212.

part because it makes your show look good. I believe in the system, and I believe it works."

This year, Shell-True said, the dancers' ages vary from 6 to 60, but most of the principal characters are juniors and seniors in high school.

Holiday Ballroom Dance

Hosted by the UNL Ballroom Dance Club

Date: December 17, 1999 (Friday)
Time: 7:30pm to 11:30pm
Location: UNL (downtown) Union Ballroom
Attire: Semi-formal to Formal
Ticket: \$3 for college students, \$5 others
Available only at the door

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