

THE MORGAN EXPLORES THE PERSONAL STORY BEHIND THE CREATION AND PUBLIC RECEPTION OF CHARLES DICKENS'S BELOVED *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*

Charles Dickens and the Spirit of Christmas
November 3 through January 14, 2018

Press Preview: Thursday, November 2, 2017 10:00 – 11:30 am

New York, NY, October 3, 2017 — It has been said that no single person is more responsible for Christmas as we know it than Charles Dickens (1812–1870). In 1843 he published *A Christmas Carol* and the story and cast of characters—from Ebenezer Scrooge to Tiny Tim—immediately became part of holiday lore. Even today, almost 175 years after the debut of the book, it is unusual for a year to go by without a new stage or screen adaptation.

Beginning November 3, the Morgan Library & Museum explores the genesis, composition, publication, and contemporary reception of this beloved classic in a new exhibition entitled *Charles Dickens and the Spirit of Christmas*. On view through January 14, 2018, the show demonstrates how the enormous popularity of *A Christmas Carol* catapulted Dickens out of his study into international stardom, launching a career of public dramatic readings that the author heartily embraced. The exhibition gathers together for the first time the Morgan's treasured, original manuscript of *A Christmas Carol* and the manuscripts of the four other Christmas books Dickens wrote in the years following. Complementing these works are a selection of



CHARLES DICKENS.
Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1867, by J. GURNEY & SON, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, for the Southern District of New York.
J. Gurney & Son
70 N. Broadway, N.Y.

Jeremiah Gurney (1812–1895), *Charles Dickens*, 1867, black and white photograph, The Morgan Library & Museum, MA 7793. Purchased for The Dannie and Hettie Heineman Collection as a gift of the Heineman Foundation, 2011.

illustrations by Dickens's artistic collaborators, photographs, letters, tickets and printed announcements for his public performances, and even the writing desk used by the author.

“For many years now the Morgan has exhibited the manuscript of *A Christmas Carol* every December,” said museum director Colin B. Bailey. “*Charles Dickens and the Spirit of Christmas* is our most comprehensive look at the creation of this masterpiece and Dickens's personal motivations. The success of *A Christmas Carol* was a turning point in the author's career as he found himself in wide demand not only as a writer, but as a performer capable of captivating audiences with his public readings. Dickens himself, it could be said, was the most unforgettable of the countless actors who have brought the cast of *A Christmas Carol* to the stage.”

The Exhibition

Christmas was Charles Dickens's favorite holiday. Each year he celebrated exuberantly, entertaining family and friends with theatrical performances, dinners, dances, and games. For him, Christmas was a time for storytelling—particularly ghost stories—and each of his tales is based on an implicit belief in the supernatural and emphasizes the moral benefits of imagination and memory. As the author moved from his writing desk to the stage for public readings, *A Christmas Carol* became the most popular story in his repertoire and strongly influenced his decision to devote a considerable amount of his prodigious energy to theatrical performance up until his death in 1870. The exhibition brings together important holdings from the Morgan's permanent collection, the Charles Dickens Museum in London, the New York Public Library, and the Victoria & Albert Museum.



John Leech (1817–1864), *Scrooge's Third Visitor*, 1843, watercolor over pencil, The Morgan Library & Museum, 2006.21, purchased in 1941. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2011.

Why Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol*

What inspired Dickens to write one of the most famous, enduring, and widely adapted stories in all of literature? First, he was in urgent need of money. His novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, brought out in monthly installments, was not selling well. The author had recently moved into a spacious London house to accommodate his growing family and his personal expenses were rising. Moreover, members of his extended family repeatedly sought him out for financial assistance.

Coupled with these personal imperatives, Dickens was conscience-stricken at the appalling condition of the urban poor. Britain's economic depression of the early 1840s—the so-called “hungry forties”—was a time of rising

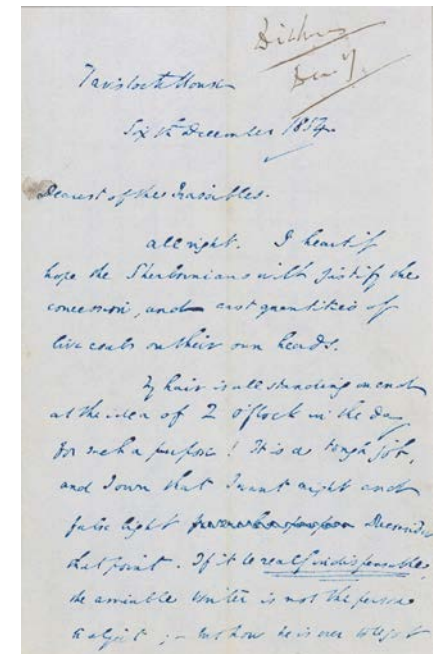
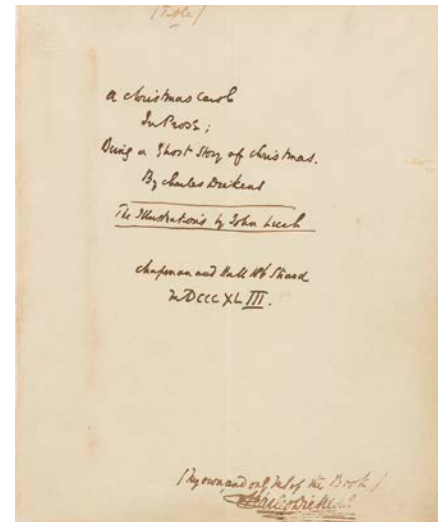
unemployment and widespread malnutrition. Following his September 1843 visit to Samuel Starey's "Ragged School" for severely deprived children living in London's slums, Dickens contemplated writing an article that would deliver a "sledge-hammer blow" for social justice.

Instant Bestseller, Enduring Classic

A Christmas Carol appeared in bookshops on December 19, 1843 and by Christmas Eve every one of the six thousand copies of the first print run had completely sold out. Dickens declared it "a most prodigious success—the greatest, I think, I have ever achieved." Most reviews were laudatory. In *Fraser's Magazine* William Thackeray proclaimed the book "a National Benefit," while the *Sunday Times* called it "sublime." One American industrialist, after reading the story, gave his employees an extra day's holiday. In early 1844, second and third editions of three thousand copies were printed and, as its popularity continued to grow, a total of fifteen thousand had been sold by the end of the year. Because of a plethora of pirated editions, which infuriated Dickens, he earned considerably less in the short term from his instant bestseller than he had anticipated. Nevertheless, the book would endure—it has never been out of print to this day—and has been described as the most perfect of Dickens's work.

The Later Christmas Books

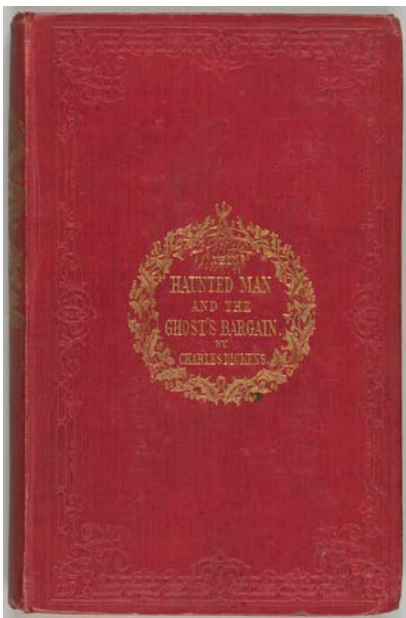
The popular and critical success of *A Christmas Carol* initiated the lucrative series of Christmas books that Dickens published over the next several years: *The Chimes* (1844), *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845), *The Battle of Life* (1846), and *The Haunted Man* (1848). Each of these was written largely in response to public demand for a Christmas book unleashed by the success of *A Christmas Carol*, and also created the market for the later Christmas stories that Dickens wrote and published in his magazines *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*. In 1883 Vincent van Gogh wrote to his friend and fellow painter Anthon van Rappard: "This week I bought a new 6-penny edition of



Top: Charles Dickens (1812–1870), *A Christmas Carol in Prose*, autograph manuscript, December 1843, The Morgan Library & Museum, MA 97, purchased by Pierpont Morgan before 1900. Photography by Graham Haber, 2011.

Bottom: Charles Dickens (1812–1870), Autograph letter signed: London, to William Macready, December 6, 1844, acquired by Pierpont Morgan before 1913, The Morgan Library & Museum, MA 107.20. Photography by Janny Chiu, 2017.

Christmas carol and *Haunted man* by Dickens . . . I find *all* of Dickens beautiful, but those two tales—I've read them almost every year since I was a boy, and they always seem new to me."



Left: Charles Dickens (1812–1870), *The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1848), The Morgan Library & Museum, PML 132119, bequest of Gordon N. Ray, 1987. Photography by Janny Chiu, 2017.
Right: *Charles Dickens as He Appears When Reading*, wood engraving after a sketch by C. A. Barry, published in *Harper's Weekly*, 1867; The Morgan Library & Museum, MA 7800, Vol. X, fol. 83r. Photography by Graham Haber, 2011.

The Public Readings—A Second Career

Starting in 1853 Dickens gave public readings of *A Christmas Carol* in provincial English cities to raise money for local charities. The reaction of audiences was so rapturous that in 1858, he embarked upon a series of weekly paid readings in London. He went on to tour other cities in Britain and expanded his repertoire to include scenes from *The Pickwick Papers*, *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Oliver Twist*. Dickens rehearsed intensively, memorizing his texts so that he could perform rather than read them, and improvise according to his enthralled audience's reaction. In 1866 he gave a series of thirty readings in London and elsewhere, receiving a fee of fifty pounds per night. Prior to his reading tour of the United States Dickens embarked on another tour of England and Ireland between January and May 1867, and a so-called "Farewell Tour" in 1870, by which time his fee had risen to eighty pounds. At the end of his last reading, in March 1870, he said: "From these garish lights I vanish now for evermore with a heartfelt, grateful, respectful and affectionate farewell."

American Reading Tour, 1867–68

Dickens visited the United States twice, first traveling extensively in 1842. His experience of those travels is recorded in *American Notes for General Circulation* (1842) and his novel *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843–44). Twenty-five years later, in 1867, he returned to the United States for an extensive—and exhausting—

reading tour. During both visits, he received an enthusiastic and extravagant welcome, as befitted the world's first literary superstar.

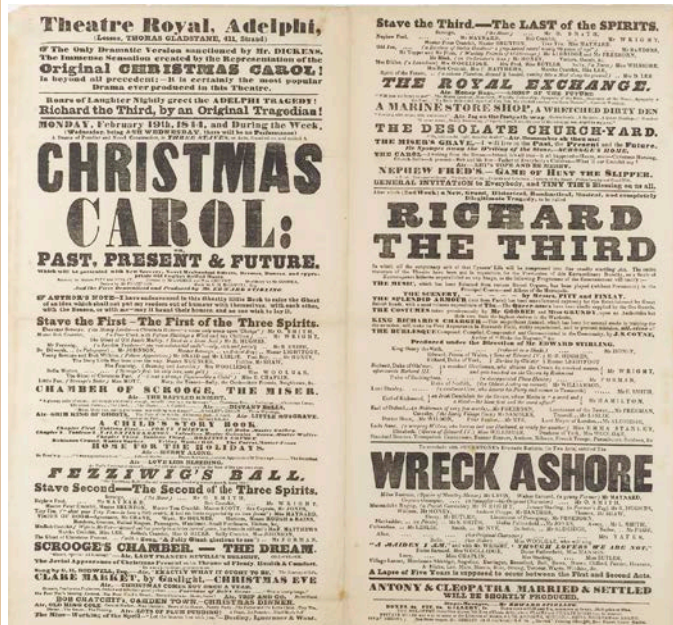


Tickets for readings by Charles Dickens, 1867–68, The Morgan Library & Museum, MA 7800:9.24r. Photography by Graham Haber, 2011

He began his reading tour in Boston in December 1867 and ended in New York on April 1868 and was lionized in every city he visited. In seventy-six public readings, he performed his work for more than one hundred thousand people and earned \$95,000, equivalent to approximately \$1.5 million in today's money. The tour was a critical and financial success, but it accelerated the decline of the author's health and he died two years later.



Left: Charles Dickens, wood engraving, The Morgan Library & Museum, MA 7800, Vol. X, fol. 61r. Photography by Graham Haber, 2011.



Right: Playbill for a production of *A Christmas Carol* at the Theatre Royal, Adelphi, 19 February 1844, The Morgan Library & Museum, PML 25092, purchased in 1927. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2011.

Public Programs

FILM ***The Man Who Invented Christmas***

Director: Bharat Nalluri
(November 2017)

Join us for a special preview screening of *The Man Who Invented Christmas* and discover the magical journey that led to the creation of Ebenezer Scrooge (Christopher Plummer), Tiny Tim, and other classic characters from *A Christmas Carol*. The film shows how Charles Dickens (Dan Stevens) mixed real life inspirations with his vivid imagination to conjure up unforgettable characters and a timeless tale, forever changing the holiday season into the merry celebration we know today. Also starring Jonathan Pryce, Simon Callow, and Miriam Margolyes. A post screening discussion with Christopher Plummer will follow. Courtesy of Bleecker Street.

Tuesday, November 14, 6:30 pm

Tickets: \$15; \$10 for members

The exhibition Charles Dickens and the Spirit of Christmas will be open at 5:30 pm for program attendees.

GALLERY TALK ***Charles Dickens and the Spirit of Christmas***

Declan Kiely, former Robert H. Taylor Curator and Head of the Department of Literary and Historical Manuscripts at the Morgan; current Director of Exhibitions at the New York Public Library.

Friday, November 17, 6 pm

Friday, December 8, 1 pm

Tickets: Free with museum admission. Advance reservations for members only.

CONCERT **Chamber Orchestra of New York**

Join music director Salvatore Di Vittorio and the Chamber Orchestra of New York for a Christmas inspired concert of Baroque works to coincide with the exhibition *Charles Dickens and the Spirit of Christmas*. Featuring Davide Alogna, violin.

Sammartini, Concerto grosso in G minor, Op. 5, No. 6 "Natale"

Vivaldi, Concerto for Violin in E Major, RV 270 "Il Riposo per Natale"

Vivaldi, Concerto for Violin in D Major, RV 212a "per la Solennità della S. Lingua di S. Antonio in Padua"

Tartini (transc. by Respighi), Pastorale for Violin and Strings, P. 86

Di Vittorio, Ode Corelliana per archi e clavicembalo, (New York premiere)

Corelli, Concerto grosso in G minor, Op. 6, No. 8 "Fatto per la Notte di Natale"

The exhibition *Charles Dickens and the Spirit of Christmas* will be open at 6:30 pm for concert attendees.

Friday, November 17, 2017, 7:30 pm

Tickets: \$35; \$25 for members.

FAMILY PROGRAM **Winter Family Fair**

Kick off the holiday season with the Morgan's annual display of the original manuscript of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. This year celebrate the exhibition *Charles Dickens*

and the Spirit of Christmas which assembles all five manuscripts of Dickens's different Christmas books. Families can meet Dickens, Scrooge, Cratchit, and the Ghosts of Christmas Present and Past as well as strolling musicians and entertainers. Appropriate for ages 3–12.

The Morgan's family programs offer a unique and engaging museum experience to learn about the process of creative expression. Our innovative art workshops and gallery experiences are designed for adults and children to enjoy together. They are limited to families and caregivers with children. Workshops may use special art materials and are intended for the age range listed.

Sunday, December 3, 2–4:30 pm

Tickets: Free with museum admission.

**ADULT
WORKSHOP**

Reading Dickens's Christmas Books

Jennifer Minnen, scholar of Victorian literature and PhD candidate at Princeton University, leads a reading group on two of Charles Dickens's Christmas books, *A Christmas Carol* and *A Cricket on the Hearth*. The group will explore Dickens's play with style, type, and genre in the founding of a modern holiday tradition. Participants will be reading from the Oxford World's Classic 2008 edition of *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Books* edited by Robert Douglas-Fairhurst. Advance tickets are required, as space is limited.

Tuesday, December 5, 2–4 pm

Tickets: \$45; \$35 for members.

FILM

A Christmas Carol

Director: Brian Desmond Hurst
(1951, 86 minutes)

This classic adaptation of Charles Dickens's beloved novel follows the stingy businessman Ebenezer Scrooge (Alastair Sim) as he is visited by the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future in Victorian London. Scrooge is given one last chance to change his ways and learn the meaning of Christmas to save himself from the grim fate that befell his unfortunate business partner Jacob Marley (Michael Hordern).

Friday, December 8, 7 pm

Tickets: Free with museum admission. Advance reservations for members only.

**LECTURE/
DISCUSSION**

**Le Conversazioni: Films of My Life
Emma Cline & Erica Jong**

In celebration of the relationship between art, literature, and film, join Emma Cline, author of *The Girls*, and Erica Jong author of *Fear of Flying*, in a conversation on the films that have inspired their lives and work. Moderated by Antonio Monda, Artistic Director of Le Conversazioni festival.

The exhibition Charles Dickens and the Spirit of Christmas will be open at 6 pm for program attendees.

Wednesday, December 13, 7 pm

Tickets: \$20; \$15 for members.

DRAMATIC PERFORMANCE *Everyone's Carol*

Join us for this bespoke, stripped down, everyman's version of Dickens's classic text about one last opportunity to make the wrong right. Over the past six years, thousands of people have seen and been part of the work, from London to New York City. This semi-staged production focuses on the original text and is told in a timeless manner. Actor Austin Pendleton's portrayal as a surprisingly pensive Scrooge will haunt you! With Jim Graseck, busker violinist. Appropriate for ages 10 and up.

The exhibition Charles Dickens and the Spirit of Christmas will be open at 5:30 pm for program attendees.

Friday, December 15, 6:30 pm

Tickets: \$25; \$20 for members; \$10 for children 12 and under.

Organization and Sponsorship

Charles Dickens and the Spirit of Christmas is organized by the Morgan Library & Museum, New York. The curator of the exhibition is Declan Kiely, former Robert H. Taylor Curator and Department Head, Literary and Historical Manuscripts at the Morgan Library & Museum. He is currently Director of Exhibitions at the New York Public Library.

This exhibition is made possible with generous support from Fay and Geoffrey Elliott, the Parker Gilbert Memorial Fund, Ronay and Richard Menschel, and an anonymous donor, and assistance from Joshua W. Sommer, Susan Jaffe Tane, Susanna Borghese, and Mr. and Mrs. Clement C. Moore II.

The programs of the Morgan Library & Museum are made possible with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.



The Morgan Library & Museum

A complex of buildings in the heart of New York City, the Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan, one of the preeminent collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today it is a museum, independent research library, music venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. A century after its founding, the Morgan maintains a unique position in the cultural life of New York City and is considered one of its greatest treasures. With the 2006 reopening of its newly renovated campus, designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano, and the 2010 refurbishment of the original library, the Morgan reaffirmed its role as an important repository for the history, art, and literature of Western civilization from 4000 B.C. to the twenty-first century.

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