



Lone Wolf
Theatre Company

Resources

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Lone Wolf Howl: THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF REDEMPTION

(Originally published in [Cochrane Times](#): Oct. 25, 2006)

for the **Cochrane Times** — Rehearsals begin this week for Theatre Calgary's annual production of A Christmas Carol.

It opens in early December, so I'll be spending the next 40 days (and many nights) in the desert of the rehearsal hall as assistant to the director.

No... 'desert' is the wrong image... after all, I'll be driving through snow, sleet, and endless road construction to get downtown everyday. Forty days and nights on the ark, the ship of a new production.

No... 'ark' isn't right either (man, writing can be hard sometimes). I'm not sure what image I'm after.

Whatever the image, the creating of a new Carol will be somewhat of a biblical experience on many levels, not the least of which is found in the message that Dickens was aiming at sending: how we are all transformed through one man's redemption.

We have endless stories of redemption, some pulled from ancient texts, others from today's headlines. They play out on our screens and stages, in our hearts and minds. We tell them around the table, at funerals and weddings, in smoky pubs. We each have our favorites, of course, but the key myth for western culture for the past 1500 years has been the Passion of Christ (from the Latin 'pati/passus'... meaning 'to suffer')

Christ suffers. There's betrayal, scorn, and violence until the hero of the story is ransomed on a cross and is transformed into the great redeemer.

Come to think of it, if it were told during the midwinter, the passion of Christ would make for an excellent Christmas story.

Ebenezer Scrooge is haunted, subjected to the horrific memories of his past, the cruel realities of his present, and the dire, future repercussions of his actions: Tiny Tim dies, Scrooge's colleagues denounce him, vagrants loot through his personal possessions and leave him cold and dead upon his own bed.

He's escorted (like Christ before him) to the land of the dead – his own personal inferno – until he gives over to the grief and despair, weeping for everything he might have been, and wakes up Christmas morning a new man.

The transformative power of redemption.

Come to think of it, if it were told during the early spring, the passion of Scrooge would make for an excellent Easter story. So why are we telling Easter stories at Christmas?

Carl Jung observed that there are two sources of absolute truth in the universe: the workings of nature and the workings of the unconscious. Neither, he said, can be wrong for they occur independently of mankind's conscious actions and choices. Birds don't sing incorrectly, the wind does not blow in a mistaken direction, snow does not fall at the wrong time. Or – as the Irish like to say – 'there's no bad weather, just inappropriate clothing'.

Our dreams don't lie, what dreams may come. They are not wrong. Only ignored or forgotten or misunderstood.

This little Carol, this profound imagining of the human heart and mind and soul, this dream of Charles Dickens, brings truth to us by way of metaphor, symbol, and paradox. In other words, by way of story (which – for those of you who read my Howl in August – is really the only truth there is).

Where there is paradox, there truth will be also. It's a large ingredient in the transformative power of redemption.

Great word, that: redemption. It's from the Latin 'redimere' meaning 'to buy back',

HIGHLIGHTS

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which makes perfect etymological sense for redemption always comes at a price. The purest, most unpolluted, divine act of man is rooted in terminology explaining a financial transaction. ('What a relief!' you're thinking. 'Christmas isn't becoming more commercial. It was commercial from the beginning')

Stories bring us truth. Well, the good ones do. "Truth", as Tennessee Williams noted, "in the pleasant disguise of illusion".

Truth by illusion. It's a lovely paradox.

A Christmas Carol is, hands down, Theatre Calgary's most successful play, year in year out. The 750-seat venue fills to capacity every performance, and hundreds of thousands of dollars are raised each year for the Interfaith Food Bank through the post-show Toonies for Turkeys campaign.

Every half decade or so the play is completely overhauled with a new script adaptation, a new set design, and new costumes. 2006 is the year for the new Carol and the theatre is sparing no expense to make it a dazzling production once again. But why put on plays like A Christmas Carol every year? Why bother with bloody myths like the passion of Christ at all?

We have no deserts in Alberta. We have no impending floods caused by 40 days and nights of rain. We'll hardly have any snow to speak of this winter.

We do have something, however, right here, right now that merits a reminder; a little spot where the 'haves' and 'have way mores' are playing out an all-too familiar scene torn from the pages of a Dickensian script.

The story of a Carol is repeating itself before our very eyes in this town, complete with Scrooges and Cratchits and the shameful gap in between the two.

Okay, I've got my biblical image now. It's not a desert. It's not an ark. It's a trailer park.

To be continued.

(www.lonewolftheatre.com)

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