***BELLE (Age 16-25) AND SCROOGE (Age 30)***

*Belle’s Parlor scene is played out DOWNSTAGE CENTER facing the audience. Stage is empty.*

*AT RISE: SCROOGE appears as an older man appears and exchanges places with the 23 year old Scrooge. Perhaps he is 30 at this scene.*

*BELLE--a beautiful woman of 27--stands STAGE RIGHT with her back to SCROOGE and*

*the FIRST SPIRIT--who remain unseen. BELLE holds a music box in her hands, listening to*

*it play “The Coventry Carol.”*

9. LIGHTS: A SPOT ON SCROOGE AND THE FIRST SPIRIT AND A

SECOND SPOT ON BELLE.

*SCROOGE and the FIRST SPIRIT regard BELLE, who plays the scene to a bare stage--as if*

*she were speaking with Scrooge at age 30. (OLD) SCROOGE will speak to her, but she does*

*not see, nor hear him. BELLE faces away from him and the First Spirit.*

*OLD SCROOGE – (breathlessly) Ah! Belle! As lovely as ever!*

BELLE: "It matters little,To you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and, if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve."

30 Year Old SCROOGE: "What Idol has displaced you?"

BELLE: "A golden one."

30 YEAR OLD SCROOGE: "This is the even-handed dealing of the world! There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!"

BELLE: You fear the world too much.. All your hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond the chance of poverty’s sordid reproach. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master passion, Gain, engrosses you.

30 YEAR OLD SCROOGE: What then? Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you."

Belle Shakes her head sadly

30 YEAR OLD SCROOGE: Am I?

BELLE: Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor, and content to be so, until, in good season, we could improve our worldly fortune by our patient industry. You *are* changed. When it was made you were another man.

30 YEAR OLD SCROOGE: I was a boy,( impatiently.)

BELLE: Your own feeling tells you that you were not what you are, I am. That which promised happiness when we were one in heart is fraught with misery now that we are two. How often and how keenly I have thought of this I will not say. It is enough that I *have* thought of it, and can release you.

30 YEAR OLD SCROOGE: Have I ever sought release?

BELLE: In words. No. Never.

30 YEAR OLD SCROOGE: In what, then?

BELLE: "In a changed nature; in an altered spirit; in another atmosphere of life; another Hope as its great end. In everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight. If this had never been between us ---- tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now? Ah, no!

30 YEAR OLD SCROOGE: You think not."

BELLE I would gladly think otherwise if I could. Heaven knows! I have learned a Truth like this – and I know how strong and irresistible it must be. But if you were free to-day, I cannot believe that you would choose a dowerless girl. No, You weigh everything by Gain – you would not choose me, so I release you. With a full heart, for the love of who you once were.

*Younger Scrooge is astonished. He has no words. He was about to speak; but, with her head turned from him, she resumed.*

"You may—the memory of what is past half makes me hope you will—have pain in this. But it will be a very, very brief time, and you will dismiss it gladly –(tearfully) May you be happy in the life you have chosen!

*BELLE leaves the stage exiting DSR, and younger SCROOGE watches sadly, but then turns his back to the audience He moves far USC slowly with his back to the audience.*

OLD SCROOGE: Spirit! Show me no more! Why do you delight to torture me?" "No more!" "No more! I don't wish to see it!

The spirit conducts old Scrooge toward DSL, then turns toward the audience, and swirls it’s wand in large arcing circles…..