

# *A Christmas Carol*

## **A Conversation with Val Caniparoli, Choreographer for *A Christmas Carol***

### **HOW DOES THIS PROCESS FEEL DIFFERENT TO YOU FROM THE WORK YOU TYPICALLY DO WITH A DANCE COMPANY?**

It's been much more of a collaborative process, particularly in the workshop, with the performers and the students. It's struck me as so very different from the dance world. For one thing, dancers' careers are brief, so the intensity level is much higher in a room with dancers, which leads to a very different way of working. There is a kind of urgency to everything among dancers, this feeling that, "I have to do this now. If I don't get that part now, I'll never get it, and I have to get that part. I can't wait until I'm 50 or 60." So there's a sense of immediacy. Working on [*A Christmas Carol*] has been intense, but in a very different way.

### **WERE YOU INVOLVED PRETTY EARLY IN THE PROCESS?**

Yes, from the very beginning, since the initial workshops. I came in once there was already a draft script. It's been great watching the piece evolve musically with [composer] Karl [Lundeberg]. It's really wonderful working with a composer who is right there. It is a luxury.

### **HAVE YOU WORKED IN THEATER MUCH, AS OPPOSED TO BALLET?**

I started mostly in theater and music, at Washington State. So I have that background, but I haven't really done that in 32 years.

### **HOW ARE YOU APPROACHING THE PROCESS DIFFERENTLY, GIVEN THAT YOU ARE WORKING LARGELY WITH NONDANCERS?**

I don't treat it that much differently. Even in the dance world, I see what's in the room and we work together at making something happen. I'm more collaborative than many choreographers. Maybe that's because of my theater background, or something. So it's not so far removed from what I do already, but it's just on a different plane.

### **DO YOU WORK WITH THEMATIC CONCEPTS IN YOUR MIND? DOES THAT INFORM OR CHANGE YOUR APPROACH? FOR EXAMPLE, THE WORD "RECLAMATION" COMES UP A LOT IN CONVERSATIONS WITH CAREY ABOUT SCROOGE.**

I like her words [laugh], but I use them as a point of departure. This is similar to what I do when I work with opera, because I work with a director there, too. I like to hear what everyone has to say. I'm not a talker, but I like to listen and let everything sink in. Then I adapt it and see what I can do to offer more.