A photograph of Gary Neal Johnson as Ebenezer Scrooge and Dane Schnake as Tiny Tim. Scrooge is wearing a top hat and a dark coat, holding Tim. Tim is wearing a brown coat and a cap. They are set against a dark blue background with bokeh lights and stars.

# From “Bah, Humbug!” To “Whoop!”

Celebrating  
**GARY NEAL JOHNSON's**  
25 years as Scrooge at  
**KCREP**

Each holiday season in our fair city, audiences gather at Kansas City Repertory Theatre (KCRep), hot chocolate in hand, to share in a tradition. They watch candlelight glimmer, hear the carolers' voices, see ghosts walk among them, and witness Ebenezer Scrooge —harried, bitter, closed-off — enter into his transformation.

For **over 20 years** at KCRep, one man has carried that journey with an honesty, a warmth, and a gravitas that has come to define the tradition:

**GARY NEAL JOHNSON.**

As KCRep prepares for his final bow in the role this holiday season, it seems fitting to look back at what Gary has given to this character, to this play, and to this community.

Gary Neal Johnson as  
Ebenezer Scrooge and  
Dane Schnake as Tiny Tim in  
KCRep's 2003 production of  
A CHRISTMAS CAROL  
Photo: Don Ipock



## HIS JOURNEY TO SCROOGE

**J**ohnson's association with *A Christmas Carol* stretches back more than four decades—long before he donned Scrooge's coat. Before 2000, he appeared in various roles in KCRep's annual holiday tradition: Jacob Marley, the tormented partner, dragging his chains; Charles Dickens himself, telling the story; Old Joe, whose greed echoes Scrooge's own lurking shadows.

Then, in 2000, Johnson stepped into the role of Ebenezer Scrooge. Since then, he's played it **more than an estimated 1,100 times, over 24 consecutive years.** That long stretch has made him, by many estimations, the actor with the longest continuous run as Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* anywhere in the United States.

## ROLES BEYOND SCROOGE; A RICH THEATER LIFE

**W**hile Scrooge may loom largest in the public imagination, Johnson's stage life in Kansas City has been far broader. He is a seasoned veteran of not only KCRep's stage, but on stages around the region, having been in nearly 200 different productions for most of the city's professional companies. He is widely respected for transformative character work and for being a steady presence in both classic plays and new works. Over the decades, his presence has anchored productions, given depth to supporting roles, and helped bring new works to life in Kansas City.

At KCRep, Johnson's credits in addition to *A Christmas Carol* stretch back to when we were known as Missouri Repertory Theatre. His first performance with us was in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* in 1973. Since then, he has performed in over 100 of our productions. Selected highlights include *Nicholas Nickleby* (1983), *All My Sons* (1988), *Our Town* (1990), *Julius Caesar* (1994), *The Miracle Worker* (1999), *Give 'Em Hell, Harry* (2006), *Cabaret* (2011), and *Last Days of Summer* (2018).





# GARY NEAL JOHNSON IN A CHRISTMAS CAROL PAST

Three different looks for Gary Neal Johnson when he played the role of Charles Dickens during the early years of *A Christmas Carol*.

(Right)  
Gary Neal Johnson  
as Jacob Marley in  
Missouri Rep's 1984  
production of *A Christmas Carol*.

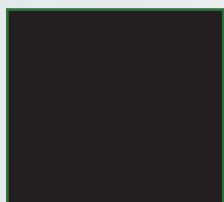
(Middle) Gary Neal Johnson (left) as Charles Dickens in Missouri Rep's 1983 production of *A Christmas Carol*.

All Photos from the Missouri Repertory Theatre/  
Kansas City Repertory Theatre Archives,  
curated by the LaBudde Special Collections  
Department at Miller Nichols Library on the  
UMKC Campus.

Gary Neal Johnson as Jacob Marley and Peter Umbras as Scrooge in Missouri Rep's 1985 production of *A Christmas Carol*.



Scan the QR Code below, or visit [KCRep.org/GNJ](https://KCRep.org/GNJ) to view his full show history on our website.



## HONORING TRADITION

**T**his role of Scrooge is more than just repeated performance; it is ritual. For many families, seeing *A Christmas Carol* at KCRep is as much the start of the holiday season as the Plaza lighting or snow on the ground.

From the worn contract that scrawls “paid to make contracts fly,” to the famous hop-skip and “Whoop!” after his transformation, Johnson’s Scrooge is one many Kansas Citians recognize not just as a character, but as part of their holiday story.

Artistic Director Stuart Carden said it best: “Johnson hasn’t simply made the role his own — he’s made it ours.”

What makes Gary Neal Johnson’s long run such a gift is not simply the endurance, but the evolution. Every year, no matter how many times he’s taken that first step as Scrooge—the grumble, the impatient flicker, the dread of Christmas—that scene must feel new, alive. The ghosts must still

breathe, the Cratchits still suffer, hope still burns. And he has kept that flame alive for more than 1,100 performances.

This consistency has given comfort. In troubled times—whether personal or collective—that annual journey from miserliness to generosity, from isolation to connection, has emotional power. Seeing Scrooge’s redemption and then sharing in the communal laughter, soft tears, renewed faith in goodness—this has meaning, year after year. That’s what Johnson has done, not just for Kansas City theatre, but for the city itself.





# GARY NEAL JOHNSON IN : OTHER REP SHOWS



Top: Gary Neal Johnson (right) as Willy Loman with (l-r) Chris Roady, Merle Moores and Kyle Hatley in KCRep's 2013 production of *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*

Middle: Gary Neal Johnson as the Earl of Gloucester in KCRep's 2006 production of *KING LEAR*

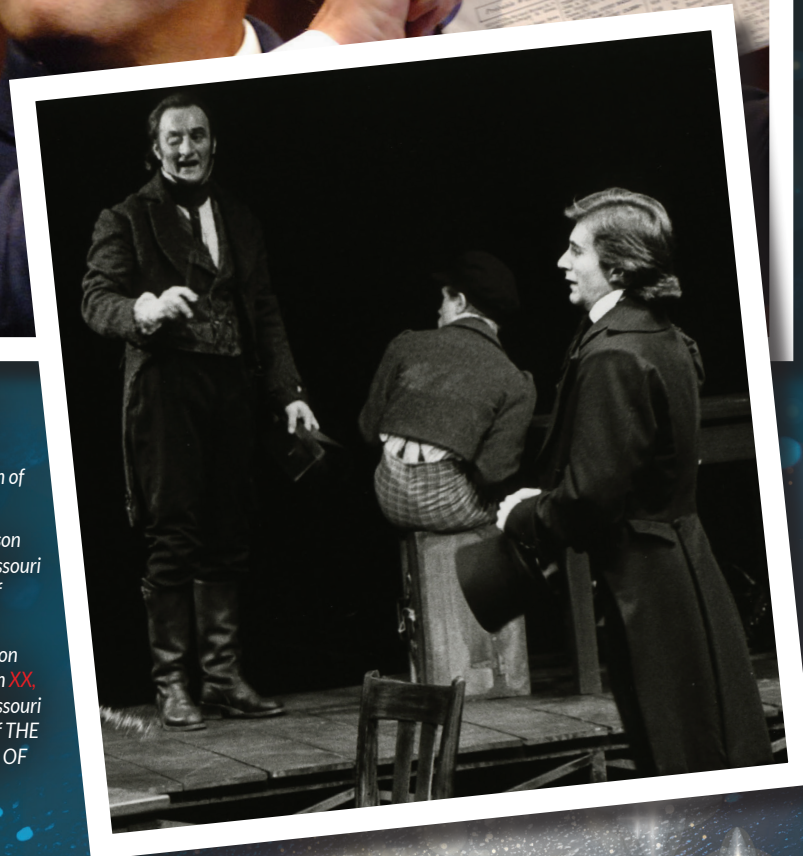
Bottom: Gary Neal Johnson as Charlie Aiken in KCRep's 2011 production of *AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY*



Top: Gary Neal Johnson (left) as Morgan & Gary Holcombe as Angus in KCRep's 2008 production of *THE DRAWER BOY*

Middle: Gary Neal Johnson as Harry S. Truman in Missouri Rep's 1983 production of *GIVE 'EM HELL, HARRY*

Bottom: Gary Neal Johnson (left) as Mr. Squeers, with XX, and Jeffrey Guyton in Missouri Rep's 1983 production of *THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF NICHOLAS NICKLEBY*





## ***A FINAL BOW AND A LASTING LEGACY***

**T**his holiday season is bittersweet. For those of us who love the theater, and love what *A Christmas Carol* has become in KC, we'll be in our seats, anticipating that final bow. We'll be thankful — for the laughs and jolts over past decades; for the tone set for holiday spirit; for the school children's wide-eyed wonder; for the conversations sparked around compassion and kindness.

Gary Neal Johnson has left behind more than memories. He has shown what it means to commit — to role, to craft, to community. He reminds us that classic stories endure because they speak to something human, and that an actor who lives generously in the role can make us see ourselves — our mistakes, our hope, our potential for becoming better.

Though Johnson steps away as Scrooge, the legacy remains. In every gaslight, in every caroler, in every child's gasp at Tiny Tim's struggle, the echo of his Scrooge will be there. Kansas City will not forget, and for many, the holidays will forever feel richer because of him.

## ***THANK YOU, GARY NEAL JOHNSON, FOR DECADES OF MAGIC!***

*With gratitude,  
From the stage, the audiences,  
and the KCRep family*

