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## ***Mime on Radio???***

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## ***A RED CAROL***

**An Activist Adaptation of the Dickens Classic as a Radio Play**

**Now returning and streaming online Nov. 24, 2023 thru Jan. 7, 2023**

**FREE (suggested \$20 donation)**

**Written and Directed by Michael Gene Sullivan**

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Dec. 11, 2020 marked another premiere and the first time the San Francisco Mime Troupe (SFMT) presents a Holiday Audio offering - A Radio Play Podcast with Music - **a NEW Activist Adaptation of the Dickens Classic as a Radio Play - A Red Carol**. *A Red Carol* will be available again streaming on-line **Nov. 26, 2021 thru Jan. 9, 2022**. With its particular blend of activism, comedy, music, and passion, the San Francisco Mime SFMT's revolutionary classic as a story not of the redemption of one bad man, but as the never-ending story of all of us making the world a more progressive place.

Written by SFMT actor, playwright and SFMT collective member **Michael Gene Sullivan**, *A Red Carol* will star SF Mime Troupe regulars, veterans of the ***Tales of the Resistance*** series and special new guest artists. Adding to the SFMT's growing podcast library, *A Red Carol* will be broadcasting on select public radio station and available online at [www.sfmt.org](http://www.sfmt.org) beginning **Nov. 26, 2021 thru Jan. 9, 2022**. Presented FREE and available to all. With the limited release of *A Red Carol*, the SF Mime Troupe hopes it will become an annual *alternative holiday tradition* for the workers of the world.

*A Red Carol*, written and directed by Michael Gene Sullivan, adapted from "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens, features a 10 person cast that includes present and veteran SF Mime Troupers including: **Keiko Shimosato-Carreiro** (*The Ghost of Christmas Past*); **Wilma Bonet** (*The Ghost of Christmas Present*); **Michael Gene Sullivan** (*Bob Crachit*); **Velina Brown** (*Mrs. Crachit*); **Lisa**

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**Hori-Garcia** (*Belle*); **Amos Glick** (*Fezziwig*); featuring: **Jarion Monroe** (*The Ghost of Marley*); **Andre Amarotico** (*Fred*); **Milo Carter-Daniels** (*Tiny Tim*), **Mike McShane** (*Scrooge*.)

Musical Direction by **Daniel Savio**. Musicians: **Daniel Savio**, **Patrick Byers** and **David Rokeach**.

In *A Red Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge is a corporate banker, busy foreclosing on the hapless masses. Bob Cratchit and his beleaguered family live in a chilly tent in an anonymous homeless encampment. The ghost of Christmas future sports a flowing black robe of taped-together trash bags and plastic sheeting. Tiny Tim dies. At least that's how the SF Mime Troupe's resident playwright, **Michael Gene Sullivan**, has reimagined *A Red Carol* for the troubled 21st century.

The idea for Sullivan's production speaks right to Dickens' main concern - the limitations inherent in modern capitalism - for a new time. The ghost of Christmas past still reminds Scrooge of the man he was and the paths he, sadly, did not choose. The ghost of Christmas present underscores the hard lives of the 99 percent - and the miserly banker's part in making them so. And the ghost of Christmas future still offers fear and the promise of redemption.

But the tale is leavened with labor songs, and the normally mild Bob Cratchit is an angry man. "People always think this story is about you," he tells Scrooge. "Just you ... the one evil man! And if you change - everything is different, the world is transformed." Then Cratchit delivers Sullivan's message. It is an updated version of Dickens' too: "It ain't you ... it's the idea of you that's killin' us," Cratchit tells Scrooge. "It's steppin' over the hungry and homeless to buy (things) we don't need that's killin' us. It's lettin' them turn our government into a casino that's killin' us!..." "It ain't about you," Cratchit says. "It's about us."

"*A Christmas Carol*" has become "the closest thing to a modern myth that we have. It wasn't much of a stretch to place Charles Dickens' Victorian classic into today's COVID-19 world. And that, as Sullivan would be the first to tell you, is exactly the point. Dickens' novella was written in the heart of the "Hungry '40s," a time of labor unrest, unemployment and starvation across 19th-century Europe. The gap between rich and poor was wide - and getting ever wider.

The Cratchits as depicted by Dickens "are an example of where most people actually are today," said Sullivan. Naturally, the SFMT would want to adapt Dickens' radical political statement, albeit one that's tied up in Christmas ribbon. After all, everyone else has. The slender novella was first popularized in the USA as a radio play during the Great Depression. In Dickens' tale, the miserly Scrooge is visited on Christmas Eve by his diseased business partner and the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future. He sees visions of his lonely childhood, the wasted promise of his young manhood and his eventual death - wealthy but unmourned - and vows to be a better, more generous man if only given a second chance.

Since then there have been (to name a few): all-black Christmas Carols and a western version hosted by Ronald Reagan. In Rod Serling's iteration on *Twilight Zone*, Scrooge envisioned a nuclear Armageddon. *Yosemite Sam* played the miser in *Bugs Bunny's Christmas Carol*. *Oscar the Grouch* did a similar star turn on TV on *Sesame Street*. On popular American TV shows the tale has been squeezed into *The Six Million Dollar Man*; *The Odd Couple*; as well as Klingon adaptations; zombie versions; ballets; musicals; films and operas.

**A RED CAROL - TECH CREDITS:**

Sound Design & Engineer by **Taylor Gonzalez**, Stage Managed by **Karen Runk**,  
Tour Mgr/Booking. **Marissa Ellison**, Publicity: **Lawrence Helman**;  
Poster Design: **Michael Gene Sullivan**

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For more information, visit [www.sfmt.org](http://www.sfmt.org) or call 415-285-1717.

Additional info on SFMT and community organizations is available at [www.sfmt.org](http://www.sfmt.org)

In the spirit of its 6 decade tradition, the SF Mime Troupe will be passing the *virtual hat* for these free radio play podcast performances. Audience members may listen to All SFMT Audio Play Podcasts free of charge or make the suggested donation online to help cover the productions costs. All shows are free to listen to with donations to at [www.sfmt.org](http://www.sfmt.org) gratefully accepted.

*All actors appear in accordance of agreements with SAG-AFTRA.*

**To arrange an interview with writers, actors, or anyone from the SF Mime Troupe Collective, please call or e-mail publicist Lawrence Helman at 415-336-8220 [lhelman@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lhelman@sbcglobal.net)**

## **Q: Why do you call yourself a Mime Troupe if you talk and sing?**

We use the term "mime" in its classical and original definition, "The exaggeration of daily life in story and song." It is a form of popular theater that is as old as the marketplace itself. From the ancient Greek and Roman farces to the Renaissance commedia dell'Arte to modern Chinese Opera, using archetypes comically to illustrate people's issues is a time honored worldwide tradition. Our broadly drawn characters are instantly recognizable allowing the audience to immediately engage in the action. Our work is political satire and anything but silent.

**A Red Carol - Bios:** [www.sfmt.org/a-red-carol-press](http://www.sfmt.org/a-red-carol-press)

### **SF Mime Troupe History:**

Founded in 1959 by R.G. Davis, as an experimental project of the Actors' workshop, the San Francisco Mime Troupe's early works were...silent, (but not pantomime) avant-garde pieces that today would be called performance art. By the early sixties, the SF Mime Troupe began performing spoken plays with character archetypes drawn directly from the Commedia dell'Arte. Continuing in the broad styles of popular theater, the SFMT's productions became overtly political.

In 1965, the city's Recreation and Park Commission revoked the troupe's performance permit, on grounds of "obscenity". Refusing to allow his company to be censored, on August 7, 1965, R.G. Davis attempted to perform *Il Candelaio* in Lafayette Park, loudly announcing to his audience: "Today for your appreciation, we perform an arrest," as Davis was swept up by the police for performing without a permit. The ensuing court case, argued by Marvin Stender, established the right of artists to perform uncensored in the city's parks. The SFMT has opened a new show in the parks every summer since.

In 1965, future rock impresario Bill Graham, then the company's business manager, organized his first rock dance/light show at the Fillmore Auditorium as a bail benefit for the SFMT.

In 1965, Davis, Saul Landau, and a racially mixed group of actors created A MINSTREL SHOW, OR CIVIL RIGHTS IN A CRACKER BARREL, using a historically racist form to attack racism in both its redneck and liberal varieties. The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) sponsored performances around the country, the Troupe began its life as a touring company.

In 1970 Davis left the SFMT, and the company became collectively run: instead of a single Artistic Director the SFMT - a company dedicated to telling the stories of workers - committed itself to being run by its workers. They then began a series of experiments with industrial-era popular theater forms: melodrama and its descendants: science fiction and spy thriller.

Adding music, songs, and physical comedy the Mime Troupe's style solidified and its national and global popularity increased. In addition to performing, the Troupe has taught workshops on both the SFMT "style" and its unique method of collaborative playmaking. For 30 years, the SFMT's **Summer**

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**Workshop and Internship program** has attracted primarily college aged students but is open to everyone from mature high school age students on up to older adults. Its students come from across the country and around the world to train with us. The SFMT also has 2 longtime annual youth theater components. The **Youth Theater Project (YTP)** which brings students from underserved communities to the SFMT's studio to study playmaking with veteran troupers. And its **Young California Writer's Project** (at Balboa High School) sends a veteran SFMT writer into local schools to teach the art of activist playwrighting.

In 1987, the Troupe's Brechtian style of guerrilla theatre earned them a special Tony Award for *Excellence in Regional Theater*. The Troupe has since been nominated for and received multiple awards, including OBIE, Drama-Logue, Bay Area Drama Critic Circle, and Theatre Bay Area awards -most recently for its 2015 production of its critically-acclaimed tragic farce, FREEDOMLAND. In its 50 years the Troupe has performed at The Israel Festival (1990), The Festival of People's Theater (Canada, 1991), The Asian People's Theatre Festival (Hong Kong, 1996), The Kwachon International Open Air Theatre Festival (Korea, 1998), The International Festival of Theatre Action (Belgium, 1998), the Festival of Verbal Heroes (Germany, 2001), as well as performances in France, Nicaragua, Columbia, Cuba, Off-Broadway, The Kennedy Center for the Arts, and in tours across the USA. However, the Bay Area parks still remain the Troupe's home stage.

### Calendar Editors:

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