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'Christmas Carol' in hands of Trekkies is odd fun
But if a **Klingon** take on Dickens doesn't register, steer clear

Quinton Skinner, Special to the Pioneer Press

No matter your feelings about the prospect of yet another iteration of Dickens' story of an old miser's bottom-of-the-ninth redemption, you probably didn't anticipate watching it being performed in **Klingon**. If the notion leaves you puzzled and uncomprehending, you will not be won over by Commedia Beauregard's take on "A Christmas Carol."

But if the concept tickles, you might well be rewarded -- "A **Klingon** Christmas Carol" works on its own defiantly unconventional terms.

The Klingons, for those who lack the science fiction gene, are the belligerent warrior species from the galaxy of "Star Trek" movies and television shows. At some point between the 1960s and now, a number of presumably idle individuals developed an actual language spoken by these fictional characters. This "A Christmas Carol" lists four translators who labored over converting the script into the tongue, which sounds like Dutch spoken during a bout of steroid rage.

Not to worry, though: Supertitles are projected above the stage, and a Vulcan narrator (Kristin Foster) speaks English. So it's not overly difficult to glean the story of SQuja' (Michael Ooms), a moneylender and physical coward who has failed to meet his people's exacting standards in wanton violence and bellicose behavior. This Scrooge, in other words, hasn't measured up because he sabotaged the **Klingon** Pain Sticks during his youthful initiation and, worse still, plans to shirk the bloody festival of combat the next day designed to validate his family's honor.

Again, if this is incomprehensible to you, probably best not to bother. But, by this point, we have the spectacle of Ooms and a cast that numbers well over a dozen delivering line after impassioned line in this made-up dialect of angry growling and guttural declamation. And they appear in Bill Hendrick's prosthetics and Erin Hayne's costumes, which ably evoke the combination of silliness and menace of their source.

We have a farce within a spoof, in other words, with a distinct dash of homage thrown into the stew. SQuja' is visited in due course by three apparitions, who present him with visions past, present and future. Ooms manages to craft a legitimate character who rues his combat-shy ways and opts to repent (credit is due to director Sasha Walloch, not to mention discreetly placed teleprompters).

By the end, SQuja' undergoes his Scrooge-like transformation, even embracing poor ragamuffin tImHom (Tiny Tim, here a puppet operated by Neil Schneider).

A couple of realizations come to the fore, the first being the remarkable pointlessness of what we have seen. The second, though, is admiration for a lark done well, with its own twisted logic, and a smile barely hidden behind all the hair, prosthetics and exotic alien weaponry.

What: "A **Klingon** Christmas Carol"

When: Through Dec. 13

Where: Mixed Blood Theatre, 1501 S. Fourth St., Minneapolis

Tickets: \$14-\$18

Information: 612-338-6131 or cbtheatre.org

Capsule: Commedia Beauregard weds Dickens to Roddenberry, with oddly effective results.

Photo: SCOTT PAKUDAITIS

The Ghost of Kahless Past (Andrew Northrop) confronts SQuja' (Michael Ooms) in the 2008 production.

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