

GO!

TODAY

"Tiffany Silver Flatware, 1845-1905: When Dining was an Art" opens today, continues through Jan. 2, Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts. Free. 244-5700.

"A Christmas Carol" 2 and 8 p.m. today, Alabama Shakespeare Festival. \$20-\$30. 271-5353.

"Girls! Girls! Girls! Take a Bite Out of the Big Apple" 6:30 p.m. today, Silver Spoon A La Carte Cafe, 222 N. McDonough St. \$35. Reservations required. 264-1116. Enjoy a five-course meal with a musical show featuring an all-girl cast.

"Joe Turner's Come and Gone" 7:30 p.m. today, Leila Barlow Theatre, Alabama State University. \$7 adults, \$5 for groups of 10 or more, free for ASU students. 229-6929 or 229-6932.

"All in the Timing" 8 p.m. today, Theatre AUM. \$6 adults, \$4 seniors and non-AUM students, free for AUM students. 244-3642.

► GO! calendar. 5E



Saturday
Nov. 20, 1999

Today's TV 5E
Coffee Break 6E
Comics 7E

ASF delivers 'Christmas Carol' with modern twists

By Allan Swafford
Special to the Advertiser

REVIEW

WANT TO GO?

■ **What:** The Alabama Shakespeare Festival's production of "A Christmas Carol"

■ **When:** Runs through Dec. 24

■ **Where:** The Festival Stage of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Blount Cultural Park

■ **Admission:** Tickets are \$20 to \$30

■ **Information:** 271-5353 or (800) 841-4273

If the prospect of seeing yet another "A Christmas Carol" leaves you feeling bitten by the Ho-Hum Bug instead of the Bahl Humbug!, cheer up.

The Alabama Shakespeare Festival's new production, which originated at the Sacramento Theatre Company, is sufficiently different to keep you wide awake.

It is "A Christmas Carol: the Musical, with a streamlined handling of Charles Dickens' plot and interpolated songs and choruses. Of the latter, there are too many of the tankard-waving, cheery sort. As for the paring of the plot, lovers of the tale as written will find this disturbing,

but the target audience of children will not be bothered.

In terms of theater too much narration mars the production, but it is narration dynamically handled in groups. Nonetheless, the narration lessens dramatic impact, except where strong individual performers energize the text. Such a performance is Philip Pleasants' extraordinary Scrooge, which supplies otherwise missing dramatic continuity. Another such performance — and how welcome it is! — is John Milligan's return to the ASF stage, after an absence of several years, as the Ghost of Jacob Marley. Milligan finds vari-

ety. The play's most powerful scene is the confrontation between Scrooge and Marley.

Moments of considerable ingenuity mark this staging. For instance the party at Scrooge's nephew's house occurs simultaneously with the gathering of Bob Cratchit's family. Using a light fade back and forth between the scenes the staging takes on a tension and gives us the stark contrast between social levels and levels of income.

ety. In this role too often played at unrelieved level of Hollywood spookiness. His Marley is grotesque but shines with emotional vari-

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Philip Pleasants reprises his role as Scrooge in the ASF production of 'A Christmas Carol.'