



The 2022 Great Dickens Christmas Fair
Workshops @ The Cow Palace – South Hall

Workshop Descriptions

Orientation I: All You Need to Know about Dickens Fair ~ A Survival Guide: Bob & Sharon Collier

This is an introduction for first-timers to what really happens behind the scenes. We'll tell you what you need to do first, how you can communicate with us online, and who's who. We'll show you how to get around the Cow Palace, and we'll fill you in on the basics of your daily routine – backstage, parking, meals, passes, security, closing routine, and lots more. Learn what to expect on that huge stage we call "The Streets of London." How to stay healthy, have fun, and entertain patrons.

Orientation II: A Beginner's Guide to Life and Times in Our London ~ Shelley Monson

This workshop will provide a brief overview of mid-19th-century London life, pointing out some significant historical happenings and people. We'll also cover some historical who's whos, and what's where in our recreation of Dickens' London. This workshop is NOT intended for people who have been recent participants of the Fair. If you've taken orientation in the last five years, please skip this workshop and leave room for the new folks. Thanks.

(Both Victorian Speech classes below limit attendance to space availability ~ approximately 50)

Victorian Speech: Beginning ~ Kate Kravets

If you aren't speaking Cockney (or another regional English dialect), Scots, Irish or "foreign," this is the first language class you need to take. Includes English structure and basic pronunciation for middle and upper classes. We'll practice useful words and phrases and brief conversation. Handouts provided. Recording allowed with permission of class members.

Victorian Speech: Advanced ~ Kate Kravets

Adorn your vocabulary to provide our guests with a glorious feast for the ears! Please have taken the Beginning class or be comfortable and experienced with the basics of "RP" (Received Pronunciation) as spoken by the upper classes and the merchants and purveyors to those classes. Review of pronunciation and seasonal phrases. Develop the nuances of your own character's speech. Extended conversations, improvisation, and the Victorian art of using 12 words when 2 will do.

(Both Cockney classes below limited to space available ~ approximately 30)

Beginning Cockney (sounds) ~ Jeremy Wolfe

If your character was born within the sound of the Bow Bells (or fittin' in with those as was!), start with the basic sounds and move on to phrases and cheeky Cockney charm, cheer, or chanciness! Let's learn to balance an argot meant to be obscure to outsiders with our theatrical need to teach the Fair's customers what life was like. (Prerequisite: None ~ Actors are also encouraged to take Advanced Cockney – See below).

Advanced Cockney (conversation) ~ Jeremy Wolfe

Wotcher! Let's get your mouth around those sounds you learned in Beginning Cockney and learn a bit about your character and others in the process. [Prerequisite: Beginning Cockney (sounds)]

Voice Projection for The Actor ~ Joe Schmitz ~ (Limited to 25 participants)

Be heard ~ not hurt! Practice techniques for proper breathing, support, projection, and care of the voice. Understand the body's relationship to breathing, learn to breathe from the ground up, and use your "outside" voice correctly.

Introduction to the two Irish classes below:

By 1861, there were 100,000 Irish migrants in London and 805,000 Irish migrants in mainland Britain. The Irish made up a sizeable but often "invisible" percentage of the population of London ~ some of whom had been there for generations, and some of whom were recent arrivals. They represented a huge percentage of dock workers and day laborers as well as skilled and semiskilled trades. They were also, sadly, underrepresented and butts of mockery, humor, and discrimination. The Ag An Céilí performers therefore believe that there can be no true story of Victorian London that does not include the Irish, and hope their love of culture, stories, music, and dance as well as their spirit of resistance to oppression will inspire.

Easy Irish Songs for Christmas ~ Shirleigh Brannon & Deborah Doyle

Please join Ag An Céilí cast and friends to earn some simple Irish songs (mostly in English) but we might sneak a word or

phrase in Irish in there). All are welcome! No previous knowledge of Irish required. Then sing along with us at our third (and final show) of the day ~ this show includes an interactive céilí as part of the show.

Easy Irish Dance for Fun! ~ Shirleigh Brannon & Deborah Doyle

Please join Ag An Céilí cast and friends to learn some simple Irish céilí/folk dances and maybe even a sean-nós reel or simple step dance jig step. All are welcome! No previous knowledge of Irish dance required. Then get up and dance with us in our third (final) show ~ this show includes an interactive céilí as part of the show!

Physical Characterization, Dickens Style: Lecture ~ Therese Porter & Rydell Downward

In the tumult and noise of Fair, our audience picks up most of its cues about who we are from what we are projecting physically. What differentiates us, and makes us stand out as “part of the show,” is how we comport ourselves. We will guide you through the process of constructing the physical aspects of your character, using basic tools we all use in our everyday lives, showing you how to parse the language of the body and build marvelous Victorian characters from that language.

(Physical Characterization Lecture, within the past two years, is a prerequisite for all character, acting and improv labs below, if so indicated.)

Physical Characterization, Dickens Style: Lab ~ Therese Porter & Rydell Downward

We have revised the Lab to include a variety of exercises to help you put what you have learned from the lecture into action to keep your character strong, vivid, and grounded. You MUST have taken the lecture workshop in 2018 or 2019 to attend the Lab.

Beginning Improv ~ John Holmes

This class is for individuals who are new to improv or for those who would like a refresher on the basics. By the end of class, participants should know how to access their creativity, build trust with their partners, and start an interesting and engaging scene or conversation.

Acting With Respect: The Dickens Fair Meets the Method ~ Jim Letchworth

This workshop is designed specifically for Dickens Fair actors with and without formal acting training. Based on his observations and experience, Jim Letchworth has developed concise points and exercises to help you improve your skills and performance.

Sincerity and Sensibility: Presentational & Representational Acting Styles for Street and Stage ~ Michael Cawelti

Our performances have more impact when the audience perceives our characters are “Real.” The icing on the immersion cake that is Dicken’s London is our ability to show a believable fantasy of our world. Which acting style is best? Join us for hands-on exploration of Presentational, Representational, Technical, and Emotion-based forms of performance. Improve your verisimilitude!

Adapt to Your Audience ~ Joe Schmitz

Each patron and actor has their own experience at Fair. But many, especially children, the elderly, and people with special needs, can experience Fair differently. To help give everyone a positive experience in London, we’ll look at common Fair interactions and role-play how to make everyone’s experience positive. This class also practices social distancing strategies. This is an interactive workshop, but not physically demanding.

Improvisation in the Streets ~ Jeffrey Weissman

“All the Fair’s a Stage!” In the ‘Improvisation in the Streets’ workshop, we invite you to hone your skills. Understand basic improv rules and concepts such as: Yes And..., Making Endowments, Acceptance of Others’ Offers, Taking Leaps of Faith, and ‘If This Is True, Then This Must Be True...’. Practice Giving/Taking Focus, Creating Lazzi/Behaviors that Create Magic, Inclusiveness, and Stories from Nothing.

Meet & Greet: Techniques for Engaging the Patrons ~ Devin Gregory & Miranda Von Stockhausen

Examine the science and tools of the Meet & Greet. Identify and work with the non-verbal communication of the patrons. Practice techniques of engagement and disengagement. Establish and review the rules of customer interaction, and how to

deal with conflict if any should arise. We will examine how we see the patrons through our own lenses and prejudices, and how we can change that to create an inviting experience.

The Life & Times of Charles Dickens ~ Steve Johnson & Allan Schwartz

How did the events of Mr. Dickens' life, and the era in which he lived, affect his writings? You'll discover his life story in the novels he wrote, which made him famous.

Trade, Ships & the Navy in Dickens' London ~ Carl Thelen

The reign of Queen Victoria saw many changes, among them the change from wooden sailing ships to iron steamships. Being an island nation with a worldwide empire, Victorians were acutely aware of the importance of the merchant marine and the Royal Navy. Dickens' works reflect the direct, indirect, and tangential effects of the Nautical Revolution on the sailors, merchants, and child laborers of Victorian England. This class will be about the changes, attitudes, and effects these changes had on everyday people in London.

London Downstairs ~ Patrick Gaul

In 19th century London, domestic service was the single largest occupation. It is almost certain that your character at Dickens Fair either has a servant (or servants), has friends or family who are servants, or is (or used to be) a servant! This presentation will give you a better understanding of this essential occupation by exploring the master-servant relationship, the servant-servant hierarchy, and the unique London houses in which they lived and worked.

How to Play with Peelers and NOT get Nicked – or get Nicked! ~ Robert Zeroun

This workshop will give entertainers and tradesfolk of the Dickens Christmas Fair a background and understanding of the Peelers and the way they are portrayed at the Fair. By supplying background history, it attempts to show the life of a Peeler in context, so that cast members can react/interact appropriately with our cast as they move about the streets of London, and interpret the Peeler to our audience.

Why We Wear, What We Wear ~ Juliana Gaul

A Social History of Clothing for Dickens Fair and how it affects how YOU dress. Dressing then compared to Dressing now ~ dress to show your position in society. Know who you are and what you are worth (or what you want society's perception to be of what you are worth!). We'll look at all the reasons we wear clothes, and the structure of society in London in the 19th Century (lots of pictures).

Victorian Menswear, from the Docks to Dickens' Parlor ~ Alexandria Volk

Which Victorian Man wore what? Is a waistcoat the same as a vest, and what did that garment look like? What was a shopkeeper's wardrobe like? Was everything made at home? (Spoiler: no) What was up with all the plaids? Top hat versus bowler? What common tool changed all menswear forever? Your questions answered and wardrobe strategies revealed.

Tying Neckwear ~ Rydell Downward

Learn the proper techniques and methods of tying a variety of Victorian neckwear. (As men should be capable of lacing a corset well, ladies should be able to tie a gentleman's tie to perfection.) *(Offered 1st and 3rd weekends only.)*

Hair Styles for Women 1850s-60s ~ Bridget Bradley-Scaife

This class will demo how to style your hair for the 1850s-60s with the use of hairpieces. You will also learn the basics of hairpieces, such as how to match your hair color, where to buy, and even how to make your own.

Navigating Costume Approval and other costume questions answered! (For new and experienced participants – strongly recommended) ~ Liz Martin

In this class you will learn what costume approval might include and why you want to pass it. Liz will answer general questions about costumes for the Fair, give ideas for making and designing your costume, tips and tricks on using the bathroom, and other assorted bits of information. *(Not offered Nov. 12th – day 4)*

Victorian Millinery (a lab) ~ Alexandria Volk

A hands-on workshop for bonnets at any stage of progress. A full lab with instruction and support ~ bring your hat project!

Merry Christmas, or else! The Tradition of the Wassail ~ Dave Arendash

Learn about Wassailing, a Yuletide Trick or Treat tradition. We'll cover the history of wassailing, different types of the Wassail, the props used, some classic examples of wassailing songs, and the penalties imposed for dismissing wassailers. What would wassailing look like at the Dickens Christmas Fair? You might help define it!

Carols & Songs of the Times, Place, and Season ~ Bob & Terri Crabb

Sing the songs of the time and season ~ and get a quick refresher in how not to trash your voice. Learn and sing some important songs, and some just for fun. Emphasis is on songs of the season with a bit of history thrown in for good measure.

Hallelujah Chorus ~ Bob & Terri Crabb

Sing along with the Hallelujah Chorus on your appropriate part for your vocal range. Come, even if you don't read music. (*Offered 1st day only – Oct 30th.*)

Vocal Projection ~ Bob Crabb

Learn breathing and support techniques to survive both singing and speaking in our challenging performance space ~ The Cow Palace. Learn how to take care of your voice.

Dance (Beginning, Intermediate & Advanced) ~ Cathleen Myers, Rex Rabin & James (the DJ)

Victorian Dance 1: A class for newcomers as well as for experienced dancers who would like a brush-up on the Victorian rotary (turning) waltz and polka ~ our two essential Fezziwig's dances. The class will emphasize dance safety and partnering, and will also include the essential figures of the Grand March.

Victorian Dance 2: Prerequisite: Victorian Dance 1 or the ability to dance the turning waltz and polka. Dances to be taught include the dashing Military Schottische and the Bronco Schottische, the elegant polka mazurka and polka redowa, the Esmeralda Polka, and a review of the wildly popular "Congress of Vienna Waltz." The class, which will be geared to the students' level of expertise, will emphasize partnering and Victorian ballroom etiquette that everyone who visits Fezziwig's should know!

Victorian Dance 3: Prerequisite: Victorian Dance 2 or intermediate to advanced level social dance skills. The class will include variations on the Victorian waltz, polka, and mazurka waltz, and ~ depending on the students' level of expertise ~ the Bohemian National Polka, the Coppelia Mazurka, the redowa, and the Varsouvienne. The class will emphasize partnering and period style.

Tours of London: A Training Workshop ~ for tour leaders and characters the tours will meet ~ Jeffrey Weissman and Team

Learn how to bring our guests into the heart of Dickens with interactive interviews, entertainments, and demonstrations of Victorian Culture and Literature. We want you if you play a literary, or historical character who may interact with the Tours. Very welcome if you are considering being a Character Tour Guide.

Guardian Youth Workshop (Strongly Recommended for all Guardians) ~ Jan Damnavits

Taking on the role of guardian for a minor at the Dickens Fair is more than just signing a piece of paper. It means that you are responsible for that minor, often in their parent's stead. We will address guardianship rules and offer helpful information for those who chose to take on this role. Guardians must attend with their charges. (*Offered days 1 & 4*)

Cockney, History and Characterization for Beverage & Vendors ~ Rachel Clein-Cunningham

**** Mandatory for Beverage – all welcome**

This 3-hour session will cover: 1) Cockney, specifically for Beverage ~ Cockney accent and dialect for communicating across a counter. 2) History and Characterization for Beverage ~ How to know who you are and act accordingly. The class is designed specifically for Beverage Servers, but all are welcome. (*Offered every workshop day*)

Victorian Speech for Vendors ~ Kate Kravets & Rachel Clein-Cunningham

New and returning vendors are encouraged to take this class. As in Beginning Victorian Speech, we will cover basic pronunciation, and will practice useful phrases that can easily be memorized. Particular emphasis on remaining "in character" while conducting transactions in a shop, making change, extending greetings, and giving directions. We'll review some real-life "what to do when the customer does/says this" situations, and explore ways to show customer appreciation Victorian style. (*Offered Oct 30th and Nov 6th only – in a vendor area of the Exhibition Halls.*)