

**Handel's Messiah** Even if you can pronounce "omnipotent reigneth," be quiet and leave the singing to the pros. *Apollo Chorus at Symphony Center*

**Poetry Off the Shelf** Literati prove Yuletide verse is not limited to "The Night Before Christmas." *At Poetry Foundation*

**A Christmas Carol** The coolest special effects and, yes, the best Scrooge. *At Goodman*

**The Nutcracker** As Goodman is to *A Christmas Carol*, so Joffrey is to *The Nutcracker*. *Joffrey Ballet at Auditorium Theatre*

**Chicago Children's Choir with Nicole Cabell** Thank goodness the star soprano dropped out of high-school band. *At Harris*

**A Jazz Christmas** Willie Pickens and friends: a hot combo for a cold winter's night. *At Hyde Park Union Church*

**Candlelight Tours** Genteel Victorian homes sure put your neon Jesus in perspective. *At Clark and Glessner Houses*

**Do-It-Yourself Messiah** This time, you're allowed to sing along. *At Harris*

**Season's Greetings** Putting the fun in dysfunctional: a heart-warming family meltdown. *At Northlight*

**It's a Wonderful Life** ATC and ABT pretend they're broadcasting *IATL* during WWII. *At American Theater Company; American Blues Theater at Victory Gardens*

**The Nativity** The manger story in dance + a gospel concert = one of the only shows all about Christ. *Congo Square at Goodman*

**A Christmas Carol** The most efficient area *Carol* reforms Scrooge in 90 minutes. *At Drury Lane*

**Our Holiday Stories** Three playwrights get their ChrisKahKwanzEid on. *At 16th Street*

**THE HOLIDAY SCHLOCK-O-METER**  
We rank this year's smorgasbord of seasonal events (the bigger the circle, the more highly recommended).

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

NAUGHTY (think Bad Santa)

**Charles Dickens Begrudgingly Performs "A Christmas Carol" Again** The most meta: Dickens gone horribly wrong. *At Building Stage*

**A Christmas Story** A child obsessed with guns. A father obsessed with a leg. Musicalized. *At Chicago Theatre*

**Jingle Belles: The Naughty List** Better to be bad and scantily clad. *Belmont Burlesque at Playground*

**The Santaland Diaries** The actor Mitchell Fain does David Sedaris. So to speak. *At Theater Wit*

**TBOX: The 12 Bars of Xmas** Start drinking at 8 a.m.; stop 19 ho-ho-holy crud hours later. *Check in at Cubby Bear*

**A Klingon Christmas Carol** Scrooge is an alien. Seriously. *Commedia Beauregard at Greenhouse*

**Mannheim Steamroller** Don't judge. Steamroller has sold more albums than Springsteen. *At Horseshoe Casino*

**Irving Berlin's White Christmas** Not a sing-along. But you'll get stuck sitting by someone who thinks it is. *At Marriott*

**Donny and Marie: Christmas in Chicago** Enough said. *At Oriental Theatre*

**Redmoon Winter Pageant** Adults see a vaudeville act. Kids play dress-up. *At Redmoon Central*

**The Nutcracker** No ballet. But a great dance wherein the cast trashes the set. *The House Theatre of Chicago at Chopin*

**Dance-Along Nutcracker** It's free. But the audience—kids and showoffs—has to do the dancing. *At Chicago Cultural Center*

**Holiday Magic** The animals couldn't care less about the light show—but kids like it. *At Brookfield Zoo*

**Sing-Along White Christmas** When there are no live actors, it's OK to belt with gusto. *At Music Box*

**Annoyance Christmas Pageant** The (usually) R-rated deviants go kid friendly. *At Annoyance*

**The Nutcracker** As performed by horses. No, really. *At Noble Horse Theatre*

NICE (safe for little sugarplums)

CHEESY (break out the Cheddar balls)