

DIRECTOR'S NOTES:
Tale of Two Cities (2018)

In his novel *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens mentions hunger several times, particularly in chapter five. He refers to the physical hunger of the French peasants who were forced into poverty by the greed and sense of privilege of the ruling class, but he also speaks of a hunger for justice and for a reckoning of wrongs done. The choices the characters make regarding what to do with their hunger determines their final outcome – for better or for worse. Sidney Carton hungers for a sense of purpose in his life – someone to love, someone to live for (and eventually someone to die for). Charles Darnay hungers for freedom from a generational curse. The Marquis St. Evremonde hungers for power and importance. Dr. Manette hungers for release from the psychological bondage of the past. Lucy hungers for safety for her father, husband, and child. Mr. Lorry and Miss Pross both hunger for relationship and family and a sense of being needed. Lorry retreats from his hunger behind the protective title of being a man of business. Pross satiates her hunger through an overprotective attachment to Lucy. The Defarges hunger for revenge, justice, equality at any cost. Are our hungers and desires any different from these? Carton realizes that in satisfying the hunger of those he loves, his own hunger is satiated. Madame Defarge, on the other hand, becomes the victim of her own hunger by seeking to destroy those who might best have helped her.

As Dickens takes us into the lives of these characters, he suggests that the antidote to hunger, terror, and desire for revenge is redemption and resurrection. Dr. Manette is “recalled to life.” The novel has Charles Darnay released three times from a death sentence. Sidney Carton quotes John 11:25: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will never die.” In the midst of despair, Dickens suggests that there can be hope for a new future, a new history. He also suggests that when we allow the short-term satisfaction of revenge to supersede all other options, we invite insurrection rather than resurrection, and our desire for control will eventually implode, as it does for Mme Defarge.

We know that those who are bullied sometimes become bullies, and those who are abused sometimes become abusers. It was that way in the French Revolution. Where do we find the courage to choose differently? If there is a God who sacrificed the Son he loved in order that the guilty could be free, if that Son was raised to life, if he offers us a chance to have a new life now and an eternal life after we die, then our hunger can be filled. Our desires can be redeemed. And we can be recalled to life. This is the message I find in this powerful story and one that I hope you will find in our production.

—Tess McKinley, Director