



What the Dickens? By Amy Frontuto [RSS](#)

Few people have walked in Charles Dickens' footsteps. Natalie Zanin is one of them.

This December, the Historic Strolls founder revisits Dickens' haunts as part of her theatrical tour *A Dickens of a Tour: Charles Dickens in Washington*. Her goal: to recreate the author's Washington vacations, which took place in 1842 and 1868.

Tour participants will discover where the famed author roamed and as a Christmas bonus, enjoy scenes from his holiday classic, *A Christmas Carol*.

"We arrive at a location where Charles Dickens actually stood and suddenly characters appear before us and perform a scene. Then, off they go," says Zanin.

Tours are 90-minutes long and led by the friendly Mrs. Cratchit, who tells anecdotes from Dickens' travels in between scenes.

There's no required reading; the abridged story provides a clear understanding of who's who and is an entertaining and unique re-telling for Dickens' fans. You've seen *A Christmas Carol* on TV, but on the streets? Probably not.

For Zanin, merging the play with Dickens' real life wasn't easy. When she began preparing for the tour in 1998, she relied on Visine to get her through. "I read his letters, books, notes, and every single book on him I could find. I also spent eons sifting through micro filed newspaper accounts and diaries that mentioned his visits."

Zanin is planning another author-inspired project for 2007 – though she won't yet reveal what it is. She did say that as a new mom the research will be difficult to manage, but just as



rewarding. “It’s fantastic to uncover something, to read the estate sales of the 1850’s and go ‘Oh my God, what treasures passed through this city.’”

Tours depart from Cosi Coffee (10th & E Streets NW) at noon. No reservations are required.

Those wanting to arrange a private tour may do so by calling 301-588-9255. “I can do a private tour for just about any sized group – from 2 to 100!”