

REVIEW: 'Spirited' on Apple TV+ liberally uses Dickens fare to create a musical bonanza



CHENNAI: A lot of what Charles Dickens wrote in his 1843 novella “A Christmas Carol” holds true even today. The miserliness of the rich and the ill treatment of the poor is common in a world where greed is all too pervasive. An Apple TV+ original, “Spirited,” directed and co-written by Sean Anders, generously uses all the ingredients of Dickens’ masterly work. We see adaptations of Dickens’ morality fare every year, but “Spirited” displays some novelty.



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Will Ferrell (returning to Christmas movies nearly two decades after “Elf”) and Ryan Reynolds deliver a singing and dancing adventure whose energy may well light up many homes. Ferrell stars as Present, one of the three ghosts who visit a nasty person every Christmas hoping to reform him or her with invaluable life lessons. His partners are Sunita Mani, who plays Past, and Tracy Morgan, who essays Future. This time, Present decides to zero in on Clint Briggs (Ryan Reynolds), who manipulates the media to create scandals that help politicians and corporations.

All the catchy songs come from composers Pasek and Paul (with Grammy and Tony awards between them), who have excellent credits spanning from “Smash,” “La La Land,” “Dear Even Hansen” and “The Greatest Showman.” Choreographer Chloe Arnold’s adds a lot of zing, enabling her cast of dancers to move around with delightful freedom — from splashing in water to skating on ice. Reynolds and Ferrell may not be at their best here, but they manage to sell “Spirited” in a strikingly spirited manner. Their fans and all those who love musicals may be thrilled to discover this Christmas present.
