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Dramatic Publishing

THE SNOW QUEEN

**From the story by
Hans Christian Andersen**

**Book and Lyrics
by
Stuart Paterson**

**Music
by
Savourna Stevenson**



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(THE SNOW QUEEN)

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PRODUCTION NOTES

MUSIC: This is much more of a play with music than any kind of conventional musical. The music should operate throughout like a film-score, to underpin action, magic and character.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: It may seem a strange convention to ask the audience to “talk back” to onstage characters, but it can be a generous and highly theatrical device. Young children, in particular, enjoy it immensely. It is fatal, though, to take this on half-heartedly. It must be done with spark and conviction, or not at all.

VOCABULARY: Some of the Scottish words and terms may prove difficult:

“Clatter” (p. 14) means to box, or strike.

“Poultice” (pps. 51, 61, 62) and “Scunnerlugs” (p. 60)
both mean idiot or ridiculous buffoon.

“A fish supper” (p. 27) is a kind of take-away food.

“Here we go, here we go” (p. 59)
is a popular football chant.

If alternatives to these are sought I would rather they were chosen by the companies involved. It might be helpful to remember that “Clatter,” “Poultice” and “Scunnerlugs” were chosen for their sound as much as their meaning.

THE SNOW QUEEN

A Play in Two Acts
For 14 Men and 9 Women, less with doubling*

CHARACTERS

BHIMA	KING GRIN
COBWEB SPIDER	ROBBER WOMAN
THE SNOW QUEEN	TWITCH
KAY	NIKO
GERDA	MUSCLES
GRANDMA	REDHEAD
SCRUFF	REINDEER
PECK	TOUGH BEAR
PRINCESS LENA	SOFT BEAR
PRINCE	4 ICE-GHOSTS

*Possible doubling for a cast of nine:
(5 men and 4 women)

GERDA
THE SNOW QUEEN
COBWEB SPIDER
KAY/SCRUFF/TWITCH
GRANDMA/PECK/ROBBER WOMAN/ICE GHOST
PRINCE/NIKO/SOFT BEAR/ICE GHOST
BHIMA/TOUGH BEAR/ICE GHOST
PRINCESS LENA/REDHEAD/ICE GHOST
KING GRIN/MUSCLES/REINDEER

Obviously other doublings are possible.

THE SNOW QUEEN was first performed at The Citizens' Theatre, Glasgow, Scotland. Directed by Ian Woolridge, Music by Derek Watson, Design by Colin McNeil, Choreography/Movement by Sara Van Beers. With Andrea Miller, John McGlynn, Alexander West, Judith Sweeney, Jonathan Watson, Andy Gray, John Holbeck, Elaine Collins, Charles Nowosielski.

THE SNOW QUEEN was first performed, in its present form, at The Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh, Scotland. Directed by Hugh Hodgart, Music by Savourna Stevenson, Design by Gregory Smith, Assistant Director and Choreography/Movement by Jenny Ann Deeks. With Sidney Cole, Colin Gourlay, Victoria Hardcastle, Robert Carlyle, Susan Nisbet, Grace Glover, Simon Sharkey, Blythe Duff, John Stahl.

ACT ONE

SCENE: *An evil place. An open crack in the earth out of which come ominous rumblings, a volcanic light and a mist of smoke. Enter BHIMA, an African magician. His magnificent cloak is stained by the dust of a long journey, his air of majesty tainted by fear and exhaustion. He circles the crack tentatively. A loud rumble and he backs quickly away, turns and discovers the AUDIENCE.*

BHIMA. We must not be frightened!

(He raises his arms high.)

Terror be gone, coldness be done,

Our hearts beat with the heat of a blood red sun.

(The words fail to reassure him. He hugs himself against the fear and the cold.)

But Bhima is frightened. His blood turns to ice. Bhima is lonely. O, yes, I am a magician, a Lord of the Sun, but good magic counts for nothing here, for this is an evil place. But I had to come. I have heard the whispers in the wind and the voices in the sky. They all say the same. The Snow Queen will come here to search out The Devil's Mirror. The mirror must not be broken! I will find out her plan and stop her. For all our sakes, I must stop her. *(A wind sighs.)* That icy wind—it is the breath of the Snow Queen! She's coming! I will hide—and listen. But remember—we must not be frightened. *(He hides.)*

(Enter the SNOW QUEEN and her servant, COBWEB SPIDER.)

SNOW QUEEN. I smell the hot blood of an intruder!
Search, Cobweb—find!

COBWEB. At once, mistress. *(He searches.)* There's no one, mighty Snow Queen. No one at all. *(Discovers AUDIENCE, calmly.)* Except them. *(Starts.)* Children! O, no—I hate children!

SNOW QUEEN. Silence! We have no time for them. Tell me—have you found a child for me, a cruel child?

COBWEB. I found rascals by the dozen, monsters by the hundred, brats by the thousand, but the truly cruel child—I found not one.

SNOW QUEEN. Darkness and Ice! If I could find a child with a heart as cruel and cold as my own I could have my greatest wish.

COBWEB. And what is your greatest wish?

SNOW QUEEN. To make Winter last forever.

COBWEB. And all you need is a cruel child?

SNOW QUEEN. Give me a child with a heart of ice and you give me power over all the good magic in the world.

COBWEB. But there are none, Mistress.

SNOW QUEEN. Then I must use the evil mirror.

COBWEB. Of course—the mirror.

SNOW QUEEN. It is a wonderful thing—the most evil mirror in the world. Behold!

(The mirror emerges from the crack in the earth. COBWEB dances with joy and excitement.)

COBWEB. It has the power to make everything good and beautiful which it reflects look small and stupid. It can

make even the most beautiful countryside look like cooked cabbage.

SNOW QUEEN. I will smash the mirror, and send pieces of it flying around the world. If someone should get a speck of glass in his eye...

COBWEB. Then they will be blind to good and see only evil.

SNOW QUEEN. And if a child should get a splinter of glass in his heart...

COBWEB. Then his heart will become as cold as ice—and you can make Winter last forever!

SNOW QUEEN. I will have the child! Quickly—it must be smashed. I command it!

(BHIMA comes out of hiding.)

BHIMA. No! The mirror must not be broken. I forbid it.

COBWEB. The intruder!

SNOW QUEEN. So it is Bhima, Lord of the Sun, Africa's mighty magician—and he forbids it. Tell me, fool—how will you stop me?

BHIMA. The Sun gives me power. I will use its magic.

SNOW QUEEN. Let me see you try. *(She makes a simple, evil gesture. BHIMA is frozen by her power.)*

COBWEB. Let's have one of your sunny spells.

BHIMA. I can't move. Help me, magic.

SNOW QUEEN. You have no magic. Summer is ending. You grow weak, I grow strong. Winter is coming—forever.

BHIMA. I will be free!

SNOW QUEEN. Never! I will hide you where you will never be found. But first—the mirror—

BHIMA. It must not be broken!

SNOW QUEEN. Come winds and serve your Queen.

Sweep the World—make the heavens scream.

(A loud wind gets up.)

Come—smash the mirror! *(Her voice seems to grow, to take on the power of the wind.)* Smash it! Smash it! Smash it! *(The mirror is smashed. The SNOW QUEEN and BHIMA vanish. The wind continues to blow and swirl as it carries the specks and splinters of evil glass around the world.)*

COBWEB *(to AUDIENCE)*. It has begun. The pieces of glass are circling the world. Take care a splinter does not pierce your heart—or it will be turned to ice. And then I will search you out and lead the Snow Queen to you. O, yes, *(Points into AUDIENCE.)* it might be you, or you, or you, or with any luck it might be you! And Winter will last forever. Everything will change then. For a start I'll have you call me—sir. Fare thee well, or should I say, fare thee badly. *(Exits.)*

SCENE TWO

SCENE: GRANDMA's rose garden. The sound of CHILDREN'S VOICES raised in excitement and anger. Enter KAY. His clothes are dirty and torn, his nose may even be bleeding. Clearly he has been in a fight, but he doesn't seem defeated.

KAY *(shouting to unseen children)*. You can do what you like, but you won't ever scare me. I'm the boy the sea gave to the shore! I'm better than you all! *(The voices fade and die away. To AUDIENCE.)* I hate school. May-

be I'd like it better if I wasn't so clever. I always finish everything first and never make any mistakes. Then I get lonely waiting for everyone else to catch up, and when they do they hate me just because I've been cleverer than they. Sometimes I think I should make mistakes on purpose, just to be liked, but then I think, why should I—I'm the boy the sea gave to the shore!

(Enter GRANDMA, pushing a wheelbarrow. She seems busy, perplexed.)

KAY. Hullo, Grandma.

GRANDMA. Sssh, Kay.

KAY. They chased me home again, but I did what you told me to do. I stood up to them, I...

GRANDMA. I said—ssssh. I'm thinking.

KAY. Don't strain yourself.

GRANDMA. It's my garden. I'm busy. *(She exits.)*

KAY. Wait, Grandma...*(To AUDIENCE.)* That's not like her. She's really Gerda's Grandma, not mine, but she's looked after me for years and years, ever since she found me on the beach after the storm—so she may as well be my real Grandma.

(Enter GERDA unseen by KAY.)

KAY. Anyway, she likes me, and Gerda likes me.

GERDA *(angry)*. Who says?

KAY *(pleased to see her)*. Gerda.

GERDA. Every day it's the same. You get into a fight and I've got to help you.

KAY *(scornfully)*. Help? I'm the best fighter in the whole school.

GERDA. O, it looks like it.

KAY. What do you mean?

GERDA. If I hadn't stopped them you'd have been battered stupid.

KAY. No one asked you to take my side.

GERDA. No one else is daft enough.

KAY. I don't need help from anyone!

GERDA. Sometimes I wish you'd never come to live here!

KAY. You're like all the others. You hate me.

GERDA. Nobody hates you. It's just that...you ask for it. That's what it is—you ask for it!

KAY. No! It's their fault—they're stupid.

GERDA. We can't all be geniuses like you.

KAY. That's true.

GERDA (*to AUDIENCE*). He used to be big-headed but now he's perfect.

KAY. I can't help it if I'm clever.

GERDA. And I suppose I can't help being stupid.

KAY. You're not stupid.

GERDA. Thanks very much. (*She goes to exit.*)

KAY. Don't go. Please, Gerda. (*She stops. KAY continues, with difficulty.*) I'm...sorry. I think you're very brave to take my side when everyone else is against me.

GERDA. Grandma would murder me if I didn't look after you—that's all.

KAY. No, it's true. You are brave, and kind.

GERDA. It doesn't matter.

KAY. I never feel lonely or scared, not with you beside me. I'm not scared of anything! (*Immediately a loud rhythmic, clanking noise begins. KAY starts.*) What's that noise? (*The noise continues.*)

GERDA. How should I know?

KAY. Well, it doesn't scare me.

GERDA. Who said anything about being scared?

KAY (*tapping her shoulder*). Gerda.

GERDA (*starting*). Don't do that. What?

KAY. It's getting louder so it must be getting closer.

GERDA. I can work that out for myself.

KAY. It's almost here. I can't look. (*Hides his eyes against GERDA's shoulder. The noise gets louder.*)

(Enter GRANDMA pushing her barrow, lost in thought, her foot stuck in a metal bucket.)

GERDA. O, it's only...

KAY. Has it gone yet?

GERDA. No.

KAY. What is it? Don't tell me. What is it?

GERDA. I've never seen anything so frightening. O, Kay—look!

KAY. I can't. I can't!

GERDA. It's coming this way. (*GRANDMA begins to watch them and move towards them.*) It's coming this way! It is, Kay, it is! O, no! (*She laughs.*)

GRANDMA. Are you being cheeky?

KAY (*looking*). O, it's you.

GERDA. Grandma, you have a bucket on your foot.

GRANDMA. Don't be stupid. Never heard such nonsense.

(Looks down, jumps with fright.) Help—there's a bucket on my foot!

KAY. Don't worry, Grandma, help's here.

GRANDMA. I've been worrying so much I didn't even notice.

KAY. I'll get it. *(He takes hold of the bucket, lifts it along with GRANDMA's leg, and commences pulling.)*

GRANDMA is forced to follow him, hopping on one leg.)

GRANDMA. What are you doing? You'll break my neck.
Careful! Help!

KAY. Stay calm. I'll soon have it off.

GRANDMA. What—my leg? Help, Gerda, help!

GERDA *(stopping KAY)*. For someone who's supposed to be clever you can be totally stupid. You hold onto

Grandma, I'll take her leg. *(They get into position.)*

Right. One, two, three—heave! *(GRANDMA is stretched out. The bucket remains stuck.)* I wasn't ready.

KAY. I'll try the leg again. You hold the old bat.

GERDA. Right.

GRANDMA. Who's an old bat?

KAY. Don't panic. *(They take up their new positions and pull, but the bucket remains stuck.)*

GERDA *(to AUDIENCE)*. You can help if you want. I'll count to three and you shout—heave. One, two, three—

AUDIENCE. Heave. *(This time the bucket comes off and KAY falls backwards in a heap. When he stands, the bucket is over his head.)*

KAY. Where am I? Everything's gone dark.

GERDA. Look—Kay's gone all pale.

GRANDMA. He always did have a face like a bucket.

KAY. It's stuck. I can't see.

GERDA. Let me have a look.

KAY. I don't need help from anyone. *(He nears the edge of the stage. GERDA and GRANDMA rush, and just manage to stop him falling.)*

GERDA *(trying the bucket)*. He's right, it is stuck.

GRANDMA. There's only one thing for it. (*She takes a hammer from the wheelbarrow.*) Help's here. Brute force and ignorance—never fails.

KAY. What's going on?

GERDA. Grandma? (*GRANDMA hits the bucket with her hammer. Loud sound of a gong. KAY vibrates wildly. GRANDMA takes the bucket off KAY's head, and hands it to GERDA. KAY continues to vibrate.*)

GRANDMA. You look a bit shaky. I'll get you a seat.

GERDA. And I'll put this somewhere safe. (*GERDA puts the bucket "somewhere safe." GRANDMA wheels the barrow into the back of KAY's knees. KAY collapses into the barrow.*)

GRANDMA. (*dusting her hands*). There. That's that sorted.

KAY. I'm glad you think so.

GERDA. Grandma—what is it you're so worried about?

GRANDMA. My garden. There's something wrong with my beautiful garden.

GERDA. It looks all right to me.

GRANDMA. You should look harder. My flowers are dying. It's as if something has told them that Summer is ending and Winter must come.

GERDA. What could have done that?

GRANDMA (*shivers*). There's something in the air, can't you feel it? Those sudden blasts of icy wind, the way the animals are digging down deep into the earth. These all mean one thing— Winter is on the march.

KAY. I love Winter.

GERDA. But it's too early for Winter.

GRANDMA. I've never been wrong and I tell you all the signs are for snow, for the swarming of the white bees.

KAY (*to himself*). Wonderful, pure, white, deep snow. (*To GRANDMA.*) Do the white bees have a Queen like real bees have a Queen? Does the snow have a Queen?

GRANDMA. Some say it has. She always flies right in the centre of the swarm, where the snowflakes are the thickest. But she never lies down to rest. No, when the wind dies she returns to the great black clouds.

KAY. Is she very beautiful?

GRANDMA. O, yes. She is lovelier than words can say.

GERDA. Where does she live?

GRANDMA. She lives at the most northerly point of the Earth, at the very top of the world.

GERDA. That's all right then.

GRANDMA. But on Winter nights when we are asleep she flies silently through the streets and alleyways. Sometimes she stops to look through a window and when you get up in the morning the window is covered with flowers of frost for she has breathed on the glass.

GERDA. Just thinking of her gives me the shivers.

GRANDMA. That's because she's the Queen of snow and ice and all things cold and heartless.

KAY. That's a good story, but that's all it is—a story.

GERDA. Who says?

KAY. I say.

GERDA. And I suppose you're always right.

KAY. Correct.

GRANDMA. Watch it! Tell me, who are you?

KAY (*a happy, practised response*). The boy the sea gave to the shore!

GRANDMA (*amused, but with an edge*). That's right, and don't you ever forget it. That makes you very special. But who am I? Tell me that.

KAY (*less happy*). The woman who clatters my ears.