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Dramatic Publishing

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The Daughter of Saint Nicholas



Comedy by Linda Daugherty

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The Daughter of Saint Nicholas

Comedy. By Linda Daugherty. Cast: 3m., 3w., 1 m. or w., 3 girls, 1 girl or boy. In this play within a play set in early 20th-century Russia, a colorful troupe of actors in a small provincial theater is presenting a dramatization of the Russian classic fairy tale about Snegorka, the daughter of St. Nicholas, who braves adversity and saves Christmas by finding the lost reindeer and riding the lead reindeer herself on St. Nicholas' appointed rounds. Sergei, as warmhearted offstage as on, plays St. Nicholas, and Misha plays his sidekick. Irina plays the nervous usher who must "go on" as the front half of the reindeer, with the introvert, Igor, playing the rear. Add to the mix Old Popo, the ancient curtain puller who may or may not hear the cues, three little girls from the "audience" who appear as dancing snowflakes, and a half-starved street urchin with stage fright who fits the rabbit costume perfectly and discovers a home on the stage. Playing Snegorka is the star, Vayla, beautiful, temperamental and perhaps too old for the part. When Vayla, in an offstage fit of pique, trips over a chair and breaks her leg, she is replaced by the reluctant Ludi, the kind, shy, stage-struck dresser, who goes on as Snegorka and saves the show. Your audience will enjoy the drama, romance, holiday fun and a peek at the backstage world of theatre. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 65 minutes.*

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The Daughter of Saint Nicholas

Linda Daugherty

Dramatic Publishing



The Daughter of St. Nicholas

By

LINDA DAUGHERTY



Dramatic Publishing

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(THE DAUGHTER OF ST. NICHOLAS)

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This play is dedicated to
Evan, Linn and Paul for all the holidays together.

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The Daughter of St. Nicholas is a play within a play which portrays the on and offstage activities of a troupe of Russian actors as they present the classic holiday play, *The Daughter of St. Nicholas*.

The Daughter of St. Nicholas premiered at the Dallas Children's Theater on December 6, 1991, directed by Robyn Flatt (Executive Artistic Director).

Original Cast

Misha Joe Conti*
Sergei R. Alan Gorton
Ilya Jimmy Burdette
Igor David Armendariz
Ludi Stacey Arton
Vayla Charlotte Akin
Pushkin Carroll Watts
Boy Brian Megahan, Britt Brown
Snowflakes Lindsay Bock
Margie Cording
Jennifer Crane
Kaitlin Gushua
Isley Markman
Abby Peck

Original Production Staff

Scenery Design Mikhail Dimov
Costume Design Irina Dimov
Lighting Design Wayne Lambert
Sound Design Paul Callihan
Mask Design Chris Hoyt
Stage Manager Leann Parrent

*Denotes member of Actors' Equity Association, the union for professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

The Daughter of St. Nicholas

A Play in Two Acts

For 3m, 3w, 1m or w, 3 girls, 1 child (boy or girl)

CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

- IRINA the nervous usher who also plays the voice and front half of the REINDEER Little Antlers and the voice of BIRD
- MISHA kind, gentle, talented, comic actor who plays YULI, assistant to ST. NICHOLAS
- IGOR the introvert, never conversing in the green room, plays WOLF and rear of the REINDEER
- LUDI the shy, pretty, kind, stagestruck dresser
- OLD POPO the curtain puller, wrapped in this and that to keep warm, often asleep at the beginning but growing more alert as the show progresses (m or w)

- VAYLA the leading actress of the troupe who plays SNEGORKA, beautiful, temperamental and perhaps too old for the part
- SERGEI plays ST. NICHOLAS dramatically and with conviction—as warmhearted offstage as the character he plays
- SNOWFLAKES . . three little girls
- STREET URCHIN. child (boy or girl) who plays RABBIT

[SNEGORKA, played by the actress VAYLA, enters looking for
ST. NICHOLAS' reindeer and meets the white WOLF.
MTCUA a

SNEGORKA. I've lost the footprints of the reindeer. Surely this is the place they come for shelter. But where are they? Soon the clouds will cover the moon and there will be no light. I must hurry home.

(WOLF comes from behind rock, growling softly. SNEGORKA freezes, frightened.)

SNEGORKA *(cont'd)*. Wolf, Wolf, your growl is frightening.

(WOLF moves closer to SNEGORKA.)

SNEGORKA *(cont'd)*. I am far from home, looking for my father's reindeer.

(SNEGORKA steps back as the growling WOLF closes in.)

SNEGORKA (*cont'd*). Have you seen them, Wolf? The herd is large.

(*WOLF steps closer and bares his teeth.*)

SNEGORKA (*cont'd*). He sent me, Snegorka, to call them.

(*She blows the silver whistle that makes no sound to human ears. WOLF, whimpering and covering his ears, cowers at her feet. He speaks slowly and majestically in a low voice.*)

WOLF. Forgive me, Snegorka.

SNEGORKA. Wolf, you heard the silver whistle!

WOLF. All the forest knows you are friend to animals. It is the nature of the wolf to hunt and, when hungry as I, we even hunt humans.

SNEGORKA. I am sorry your hunger is great, Wolf.

WOLF. But *you* are the daughter of the gentle one, Grandfather Freeze—St. Nicholas. And with his cloak of winter, St. Nicholas protects the white wolf. I am your servant. How can I serve Snegorka?

SNEGORKA. White Wolf, the *reindeer*. Have you seen them?

WOLF. Seen them? If I had seen them I would have eaten them. No, they are not here.

SNEGORKA. Is this not where they come for shelter?

WOLF. This is the place. I came here for my supper. I, too, am disappointed.

SNEGORKA. Where have they gone?

WOLF. South, I think. Following their noses. In search of green through melting snow. This I imagine, but I am

not a reindeer. Go home, Snegorka, and search for them in the light.

SNEGORKA. My thanks, White Wolf. Good hunting. (*She goes but turns back.*) White Wolf. If you see them, please spare the reindeer.

WOLF. Forgive me, Snegorka. *That* I cannot promise.

(WOLF howls and leaps "offstage" right. IGOR is met "offstage" right by LUDI who takes his mask. Holding the mask, LUDI watches and silently mouths SNEGORKA's following lines. MISHA stands by her side, watching her. She turns, embarrassed at his attention. They smile at each other.)

SNEGORKA.

Reindeer, carriers of hopes and dreams,
Traveling south for grass and
streams,
The children wait in happy sleep.
Hearts will break if they
should weep.
Oh, hear my silver notes so clear
And hurry home, Christmas is near!

(LUDI and MISHA are interrupted as VAYLA exits right. She snaps her fingers for LUDI to bring her tea and crosses to the heater to warm herself. Lights down on "stage." Scrim curtain rolls down, replacing theatrical curtain. Lights up behind scrim to reveal set change. A painted flat of ST. NICHOLAS' house is rolled on by SERGEI and IRINA. It has a working door and a window with shutters that open. IRINA checks that door and

windows are working, leaving window open. The small snow mound remains on. IRINA brings on an undecorated Christmas tree and places it right of the door. VAYLA takes a sip of the tea and rudely hands it back to LUDI.)

VAYLA. This tea is cold!

LUDI. I'm sorry, Vayla, I just—

VAYLA. Can't you do anything right?

(VAYLA goes behind the house flat, preparing for her entrance as SNEGORKA. LUDI rushes to put the cup on the sideboard and goes to the sleigh where she picks up a bird puppet [BIRD] on a long wire. IGOR, reading his book, brings on two huge, beautiful velvet bundles. He tosses them to the left of the "door" as if they weigh nothing and returns to the sofa for his book. LUDI stands in the wings holding BIRD. MISHA signals to OLD POPO to raise the scrim.)

MISHA. That's it! Curtain, Popo!

(MISHA runs to stand behind the house flat at the window which he closes. The lights go down "offstage." The scrim curtain rolls up and bright lights rise on "stage." Lights "spill," revealing "offstage" right area close to "stage." IRINA rushes beside LUDI with whistle for BIRD. IGOR slowly moves from table to side of IRINA. IGOR is still reading book and awkwardly holds a mallet and hollow box. LUDI "flies" BIRD around the stage. It flies to a branch of the Christmas tree. BIRD chirps nosily three times with no answer. It flies to the

window and loudly pecks three times. IGOR strikes a box with mallet for pecking sound. BIRD flies back to Christmas tree. MISHA AS YULI opens shutter and calls through window.)

YULI. Come in. It's cold outside.

(YULI closes shutter. BIRD pecks again and flies back to tree.)

YULI (*cont'd.*, opening shutter). Come in, friend, the door is open to all.

(YULI closes shutter. BIRD pecks again and returns to tree. YULI comes out door.)

YULI (*cont'd.*). No one here? This is a busy day, friend who-ever-you-are, and I've no time for hide and seek. Who is here?

(BIRD flies around YULI, chirping frantically, and lands on his finger. YULI carefully listens to chirps.)

YULI (*cont'd.*). Snowbird, snowbird, yes, yes, yes. I will call Snegorka. She will understand your desperate cries. (*Calling and exiting into house.*) Snegorka! Snegorka! A snowbird waits to speak with you!

(BIRD flies to tree. VAYLA AS SNEGORKA enters through door of ST. NICHOLAS' house. She is dressed in a beautiful robe and sleeping cap.)

SNEGORKA. Good morning, little snowbird, tell me your story.

(BIRD chirps frantically.)

SNEGORKA *(cont'd)*. Ssh, ssh, slowly...calmly. Tell me why you have come to Snegorka.

(IRINA IS THE VOICE OF THE BIRD. She has never rehearsed this part and really does not have the voice for it but since she is not seen by audience she relaxes in the part and “plays” very dramatically. BIRD chirps and then IRINA’s voice replaces these chirps. IRINA’s voice is interrupted intermittently by chirps. BIRD flies around SNEGORKA, landing on her arms, her head and her shoulders.)

BIRD.

I met a wolf while flying south.

He shouted to the sky,

IGOR *(offstage AS WOLF)*. Have you seen the reindeer?

BIRD. You’d eat them if I told you.

IGOR. Oh, no!

BIRD. He swore.

IGOR. Not I!

(IGOR AS WOLF howls and goes to table to read his book.)

SNEGORKA. The reindeer, you’ve seen them?! Tell me where, dear bird.

BIRD.

By chance, I saw the reindeer
In a place I never go.
A gust of freezing, stabbing wind
Blew me *north*—

SNEGORKA. North?!

BIRD. ...to deeper snow.

SNEGORKA. North! Why would they travel north?

(SERGEI AS ST. NICHOLAS and MISHA PLAYING YULI enter through door, carrying bundles. BIRD chirps frantically, flying around stage.)

ST. NICHOLAS. Chirping, chirping...excuse me, noisy bird. Welcome to our home, but quietly, please. We have much to do today.

SNEGORKA. Father, this bird has seen the reindeer.

ST. NICHOLAS. Reindeer?! Chirp on, dear bird.

SNEGORKA. Traveling north!

ST. NICHOLAS. *North?! Chirp on, loudly, bird!*

BIRD.

Go north, my dear Snegorka.
It's a cold and dangerous way.
Fast find St. Nick's lost reindeer
And save the holiday.

SNEGORKA. Lost? How can that be?

YULI. Indeed. These snowy lands are home to reindeer.
Each year they follow the same path.

ST. NICHOLAS. They are not lost. Something is wrong!

SNEGORKA. There is no time to wonder. Into my warm-
est clothes and I begin my journey north.

ST. NICHOLAS (*taking her face in his hands*). My brave daughter, you alone can find them, speak their language and bring the reindeer home. Quickly, my dear.

SNEGORKA. Yes, Father. (*She exits into house.*)

ST. NICHOLAS. How hard it is to be a parent—when you must send your child out alone in the world. There are dangers in the north. The abyss—ice cracks a mile deep—avalanches that would swallow her forever. (*Fearfully.*) And the *snow sleep*...the snow sleep...the blowing snow, the gentle snow that weighs heavily on the eyes...the stillness, the silence. She may lie down to rest in that soft white bed and never wake.

YULI (*comforting ST. NICHOLAS*). The snow sleep cannot defeat Snegorka. She is a friend to winter, to cold, to ice and snow. She will find her way back to us by nightfall.

ST. NICHOLAS. What would I do without you, friend?

YULI. Let us bid Snegorka “speedy return” and fill these bundles to overflowing.

(*SNEGORKA comes on “stage” from house dressed in heavy winter wear. BIRD flies to her finger.*)

BIRD.

I flew straight to tell Snegorka
Through wind and ice and storms
And all I ask is a strong tree branch
And a humble sack of corn.

SNEGORKA.

Stay here, brave bird, in our green tree
And rest your aching wings.
Snegorka goes to find the deer
And save the children’s dreams.

(BIRD flies to tree.)

ST. NICHOLAS. Safe return, dear daughter.

SNEGORKA. I will not fail. I promise.

(SNEGORKA and ST. NICHOLAS share a serious moment, recognizing the gravity of SNEGORKA's quest. SNEGORKA bravely exits left.)

ST. NICHOLAS *(to himself)*. Safe return, dear daughter.

(ST. NICHOLAS and YULI lift the "heavy" bundles brought on earlier by IGOR. ST. NICHOLAS looks at the sky.)

ST. NICHOLAS *(cont'd)*. It will snow soon, Yuli.

YULI. As sure as Snegorka will return tonight with the reindeer.

ST. NICHOLAS *(reassuring himself)*. Yes, as sure as Snegorka will return tonight with the reindeer. Come, let us fill our bundles with joy.

YULI. And fill this brave bird with corn!

(BIRD hops up and down, chirping happily. ST. NICHOLAS exits right with bundle. YULI looks thoughtfully at the sky and crosses to tree. He takes BIRD in his hand and gently strokes it, looking "offstage" at LUDI. BIRD chirps and flies "offstage" right followed by YULI with bundle. LUDI avoids looking at MISHA and hurries to her next task. BLACKOUT on "stage." Scrim curtain falls. Dim light reveals set change on "stage" and action "offstage." Wind howls. House and tree are moved

off. Tall snow mound returns. A drop painted with mountains of threatening ice crystals is lowered upstage.)

(PRODUCTION NOTE: LUDI, MISHA, SERGEI, IGOR, IRINA and a stagehand, who are all dressed in black tunics with hoods, stretch two white cloths from “offstage” left to “offstage” right. These individuals will act as cloth operators in the following scene. The cloths will first represent billowing snow on the “stage” floor and then the “avalanche” and “abyss.” One cloth is wider than the other. The wider cloth, which later represents the “avalanche,” is upstage of the narrower cloth which later represents the “abyss.” The wider cloth is operated at each of its four corners by two operators “offstage” left and two operators “offstage” right while the narrower cloth is operated at its ends by two operators, one “offstage” left and the other “offstage” right.)

(Scrim curtain rises. Blue lights up to reveal snowy scene. Two white cloths are operated to represent billowing snow. Snow falls from the snow sack which is operated “offstage” left by OLD POPO. SNEGORKA enters left, fighting against the blowing wind, barely able to advance.)

SNEGORKA *(shouting over the howling wind).*

Reindeer! Hear me!

(Blows whistle.)

Come to me!

(The wind howls loudly.)

SNEGORKA (*cont'd., covering her ears to silence the howling wind*). How can they hear the whistle calling them? All I hear is the wind blowing in my ears. The wind calling, calling me... "Sleep, Snegorka," says the wind. "Sleep, sleep..." (*Suddenly realizing.*) No, no! It is not the wind. It is the *snow sleep*. Run, Snegorka. Be careful. There are many dangers in the north. (*SNEGORKA takes her hands from her ears. She runs downstage, struggling in slow motion, but is stopped by the narrower cloth which has been raised by the cloth operators so that it stretches under her arms. As she leans into the cloth, it appears as if she is leaning over the great abyss. SNEGORKA screams.*) The abyss of the north! The ice opens its hungry mouth and none return. Save me! I will fall forever! (*SNEGORKA is pulled "to safety" by the cloth. She circles and runs in slow motion upstage. The wider cloth is raised in the air over SNEGORKA's head like a sail catching the wind.*) The mountain of snow—an avalanche—help me! I will be lost forever! (*SNEGORKA runs downstage, avoiding the "avalanche." Struggling to move and speak, she blows the silver whistle.*) Reindeer! Reindeer! Come to me! (*Growing sleepy.*) The snow sleep...oh, save me. Snow blowing my eyes to sleep...so beautiful, so empty, so cold....

(*She lies down on the large cloth. Snow falls. The smaller cloth covers her like a blanket as she goes to sleep. WOLF leaps to the top of the large snow mound and howls to the sky. The scrim curtain falls. Recorded sound of the audience clapping. THIS ENDS ACT I OF THE "PLAY." Lights up behind curtain. VAYLA stands*

up and drops the white cloth. She unbuttons her coat as she walks "offstage" right. IGOR goes to sofa and reads. IRINA folds up the cloths, puts them "offstage" right and exits through dressing-room curtain. OLD POPO comes on "stage" and sweeps snow "offstage" left. VAYLA gives her hat and coat brusquely to LUDI who is pouring tea for MISHA, sitting at table.)

VAYLA. Only one more act to go. What a stupid play and the audience is no better.

MISHA. I thought they were very lively, didn't you, Miss Ludi? Filled with holiday spirit.

VAYLA. Christmas Eve! And no more applause for the act than that!

LUDI. I thought it was wonderful. The scene with the wolf was so exciting, Vayla.

VAYLA. You thought so? *Everyone* is a critic. A silly play for a provincial audience.

MISHA. They loved it, Vayla, as they do every year when we play here. But you would have them throw roses at your feet.

VAYLA. To think, I could be doing Shakespeare!

MISHA (*dramatically*). At half your salary.

VAYLA (*giving MISHA a look*). Tea, Ludi, NOW! (*She exits to dressing room.*)

LUDI. Yes, Vayla. (*LUDI goes to make VAYLA's tea at sideboard but forgets her task while talking to MISHA.*)

MISHA. Did it seem all right, Ludi?

LUDI. It was wonderful, believable. You are so funny, Misha.

MISHA. I made you laugh?

LUDI. Me. Everyone! How amazing to be on a stage and make people laugh.

MISHA (*skeptically*). You think so?

LUDI (*wide-eyed*). Yes.

MISHA. Then why don't you try it?

LUDI. Me? Never. I watch through the curtain. That's enough excitement for me.

MISHA. You really watch the plays? You don't sit back here and read like Igor?

LUDI. Oh, no! I watch every minute. And I watch the audience, too. Did you see the brother and sister on the second row?

MISHA. The twins in red sweaters?

LUDI. Yes.

MISHA. With the parents on both sides who give them candy to keep still?

LUDI (*laughing*). Yes. And is there a play more wonderful than this? The audience truly believes. At the end when Vayla enters on the reindeer, no one is watching a *play*! They all truly believe they are seeing Snegorka, the daughter of St. Nicholas.

MISHA. Yes, the children do believe. It's the magic of the holiday.

LUDI. Not just children. I see their faces. Everyone believes at Christmas.

MISHA (*moving to her*). Everyone wants a miracle at Christmas.

LUDI. Yes!

MISHA (*gently taking her hand*). And what do you want, Miss Ludi?

LUDI (*breathlessly*). Me? Why...

VAYLA (*offstage*). Ludi, what are you doing?! My tea!

LUDI. Com ing, yes, yes, now, Vayla.