

ACT I

A merry peal of church bells leads abruptly into "THE TROIKA" from Prokofiev's Lieutenant Kije.

The lights come up below the gauze revealing FELICITY dressed as a snowman, centre.

MRS REECE enters in bobble hat and long, woollen scarf, carrying an armful of snowballs.

MRS REECE Come, Betsy. As it is Christmas eve, let us have fun in the snow. Ha-ha-ha-ha! *(She throws snowballs)*

MERCEDES enters, similarly dressed, at snail's pace. She tries to throw a snowball at **MRS REECE**, but cannot lift her arm. She eventually lobes the ball about six inches.

MERCEDES That will teach you.

MRS REECE Oh, you rotter. That went right down my neck. But I know it was meant only in fun. Ha-ha-ha-ha!

GORDON is seen in the wings.

MERCEDES Ha-ha-ha-ha!

MRS REECE Hist, Betsy! Here comes our friend, Albert. Let us give him a surprise. **MERCEDES** Yes, let us.

GORDON enters also in winter clothes, carrying gift-wrapped parcels. **MRS REECE** throws snowballs at him.

MRS REECE Take that, Albert!

MERCEDES makes another pathetic attempt at throwing.

MERCEDES And that.

GORDON Well, you two certainly gave me a surprise. But now I have one for you.

MRS REECE Look out, Betsy. Albert has got a huge one.

GORDON realizes he has forgotten to bring on snowballs.

GORDON I've come on without my balls.

FELICITY, hitherto immobile, turns and looks at him. In desperation **GORDON** throws one of his parcels and knocks **FELICITY** over. **MRS REECE** tries to help her up. **MERCEDES** is no help at all.

MERCEDES Well, I have never seen one quite like that.

GORDON And now who is this coming along? Why, it is our old friend, Santa.

THELMA enters as Santa Claus, carrying a sack of parcels.

THELMA Ho-ho-ho-ho! Have you been a good little girl this year? Did you hear what I said?

MRS REECE Yes perfectly, Santa, but I'm trying to re-build the snowman so don't get uppity with me, thank you very much.

FELICITY My pipe, get my pipe!

THELMA And what about you children? Have you been causing any mischief?

MERCEDES No.

GORDON Yes.

MERCEDES nudges **GORDON**.

No.

THELMA Then here are some presents for you.

MRS REECE is prodding the pipe into **FELICITY**'s face.

FELICITY No, that's my nose, Mrs Reece!

THELMA Well, merry Christmas, everyone!

In swinging her sack on to her shoulder, she knocks FELICITY over again.