

## THE SNOW QUEEN by Jo Hardy

### CHARACTERS

THE SNOW QUEEN

CASPER - the Snow Queen's servant

KAY - a village boy

GERDA - Kay's best friend

MOTHER - Kay's mother

GRANDMOTHER - Gerda's grandmother

NARRATORS 1-5

VILLAGERS - 1-5 speaking parts and dancers/extras

1ST OLD MAN

2ND OLD MAN

CAMILLE - a witch

DOVE

ELF - the shoemaker

FAIRY

BEGGAR-WOMAN

REINDEER

RAT

CLARISTA - a gypsy girl

GYPSY GIRLS - dancers

STORYTELLERS - 3 for poems

ICE STATUES - possibly dancers

Depending on how many people you want to involve, this can have fewer characters with doubling the villagers and narrators and storytellers, for instance. However, it would make a good junior Christmas play. It can be as short as an hour, or longer if you want to put in plenty of dancing.

Suitable for years 5, 6 and 7

### EXTRACT ONE

#### THE PROLOGUE

***Grandmother sits in a chair and she and Gerda are looking at a large picture book. They are at the front of the stage which should, if possible, be on two levels, the lower level being the village and the upper level being the Ice Palace of the Snow Queen.***

**GERDA** *turning the pages* It's beautiful, Grandmother.

**GRANDMOTHER** I want you to have it.

**GERDA** The pictures are lovely. Look at that dragon, surrounded by treasure. It's like the story you used to tell me about the lost treasure chest. [**Turns a page.**] And this reindeer - he looks friendly. And a gypsy girl, barefoot and dancing. [**Turns a page.**] Beautiful fir trees covered with snow.

**GRANDMOTHER** There is always snow on the mountains.

**GERDA** *indicating the book* And all these people live there?

**GRANDMOTHER** All these and many more. The mountains sparkle with the sun on the snow, and yet they are full of mysteries and dark happenings.

**GERDA** I think I would like to go to the mountains one day, Grandmother.

**GRANDMOTHER** And so you shall. Your adventure lies somewhere in those hills, Gerda. When the time is right.

***There is darkness as the two characters leave the stage. The following***

*sequence is recorded, preferably with an echo. During it the Ice Statues get into position on both the upper and the lower levels. They should be dressed entirely in silver and white, which should look translucent in the lights. They are frozen in groups, some of them with imploring looks, others cowering away.*

*A recorded sequence, as follows.*

**SNOW QUEEN** Such a simple idea. Simple but very effective. My spell will turn you to ICE. You will see and hear and feel, but you will be ICE. I will place you in my courtyard, and perhaps the days will remain cold. Perhaps you will stand there for weeks. Or it could be that tomorrow the sun will shine and gradually ... very gradually ... you will melt ...

**VOICE** Oh please. Please have mercy ...

**SNOW QUEEN** I have no mercy.

**VOICE** I could pay you. Everything I have.

**SNOW QUEEN** You have nothing I could possibly want.

**VOICE** Please ...

**SNOW QUEEN** Be silent! [*The swishing sound of a spell.*] Be forever silent.

**CHILD'S VOICE** Mother, is it true that there is a wicked witch who lives in the mountains and turns innocent people into ICE and ...

**MOTHER'S VOICE** Hush now. It is safe here in the village.

**CHILD'S VOICE** But what if she comes here?

**MOTHER'S VOICE** She will not come to our village. She does not like happy places, where people laugh and the sun shines. Hush now. Go to sleep.

**SNOW QUEEN** Silent. Forever silent. And soon the sun begins to shine...

*The ice statues are revealed.*

*There is a slide show during the following narration, which is spoken by Narrators who directly address the audience. The slide show can be made using members of the cast, or relevant images can be down-loaded.*

**NARRATOR 1** Do you believe in magic? [*Pause.*] I expect there will be some people here who will say 'yes' straightaway, and I suppose there will be others who say 'No.' But how many of you are sitting there thinking, 'Well I'm not really sure'? [*Another pause.*] I can answer that question for you. Of course there is magic.

**NARRATOR 2** There's magic everywhere if you can only be bothered to look for it. And if you acknowledge that it actually is magic, and not just good fortune or coincidence.

**NARRATOR 3** There was once a sorcerer who practised magic and became the greatest and finest magician in the land.

**NARRATOR 4** His magic was so strong that he was hailed as the greatest of them all and everyone came to him for help when things had gone so wrong that nothing but magic could put them right.

**NARRATOR 5** At first the sorcerer didn't mind helping people and he enjoyed the praise and admiration which he received from them.

**NARRATOR 3** But soon he became bored with solving the problems of the people. There was no excitement in bringing a shower of rain to make the crops grow, or casting a spell to find a lost wedding ring. He wanted more than that.

**NARRATOR 1** And that is why he made the mirror.

**NARRATOR 2** It was a large and beautiful mirror, which reflected only beauty, whoever looked into it.

**NARRATOR 4** If a fat and ugly man stood before it, he saw in the glass a slim and proud youth.

**NARRATOR 3** A middle-aged lady would see a radiant, fresh-faced girl.

**NARRATOR 5** People flocked to look into it and what they saw pleased them very much.

**NARRATOR 1** But they did not see what else had happened to them.

**NARRATOR 2** The reflection in the mirror made them cold and cruel, as if splinters of its glass had settled in their hearts.

**NARRATOR 3** Within a minute of leaving they would pick a quarrel with someone, or they would find something to criticise. It was as if the mirror had stolen all goodness - as if they could not see beauty any more, only ugliness.

**NARRATOR 4** And they could not see goodness either - only evil.

**NARRATOR 5** So gradually, hatred and discontent spread across the land.

**NARRATOR 1** The Queen of a distant mountainous country heard of the mirror and travelled many miles on her silver sledge, just to get a glimpse of it.

**NARRATOR 2** Her beauty was great, so there were not many improvements the mirror could make to her looks. And she was already wicked, so the evil which came from the mirror had little effect on her.

**NARRATOR 1** But she had a use for the mirror.

**NARRATOR 3** And the sorcerer did not want her to have it, for he was regretting his decision to make it and wanted it destroyed.

**NARRATOR 4** Nevertheless, when he saw her he was enchanted by her beauty.

**NARRATOR 5** So she took out her wand and, whilst he was still dazzled by her, she turned him into a statue of solid ice and left him standing in the bright sunlight to melt away into nothing.

**NARRATOR 4** She felt no pity as he began to diminish and stream away into the ground. Why should she? His tears could not be seen amongst the melting ice and she had what she wanted...

**ALL NARRATORS** The magic mirror.

**NARRATOR 1** Which she put upon her sledge.

**NARRATOR 2** Then she drove her white horses like the wind, to return to her ice palace with her prize.

**NARRATOR 3** And as the sorcerer melted and wept, he summoned the last of his strength for one final spell.

**NARRATOR 4** There was hardly anything left of him, but his magic was still strong.

**NARRATOR 5** His final spell smashed the mirror to smithereens. It was broken into millions of tiny pieces ...

**NARRATOR 1** *in a soft awed whisper* ... which fell upon the world like snow.

## EXTRACT TWO

***In the mountains. The Snow Queen stands amongst the remnants of the smashed mirror.***

**SNOW QUEEN** The sorcerer thought he could deprive me of the mirror, but he was a fool. He did not know the deep magic that exists for those of us who have the courage to seek it. Few would dare to attempt to restore this mirror ...

**CASPER** And your Highness is planning to do this?

**SNOW QUEEN** Of course I am! You should know by now, Casper, that I always get what I want...

**CASPER** Of course, your Majes ...

**SNOW QUEEN** And right now I want some wine!

**CASPER** Straight away your ...

**SNOW QUEEN** Immediately!

**CASPER** Of course, your Highness!

***He exits.***

**SNOW QUEEN** The only way to restore the mirror is to do so through an innocent

child. The right child, chosen by me, will be able to piece together  
the remains I have here. The magic dust from the smaller  
particles of mirror is floating in the air and the fools think it's snow. All I  
need is for a particle of it to find the right target. And I know where that  
is ...

**The lights come up on the 'frozen' village as Casper enters and hands her a goblet of wine.**

**CASPER** But your Majesty has always hated that village. Too many good people,  
you always say.

**SNOW QUEEN** Indeed, Casper. Far too many good people. You know how much I  
hate good people.

**CASPER** So why...?

**SNOW QUEEN** Because I need a good person. Stand back!

**She casts a spell - with an appropriate sound effect - as the scene below becomes animated.**

### SCENE 3

**The village.**

**Enter Kay and Gerda.**

**KAY** I've got the penny. Ready for jelly bears?

**GERDA** Kay! It's snowing!

**KAY** It can't be! How can it be snowing in the middle of summer? [**He holds out his hands.**] You're right, though, it is snowing.

**GERDA** And look around. Nobody can believe it. I don't think it has ever snowed  
in summer before. Do you think it's magic?

**KAY** I think it must be. [**Smiles.**] What else could it be?

**Dance - the villagers with Kay and Gerda joining in. It ends as Kay doubles up in pain and the others crowd round to see what is wrong.**

**GERDA** What's wrong, Kay? Are you hurt?

**KAY** It's my eye. Something in my eye.

**GERDA** Let me see. [**She stares into his eye.**] I think I can see something. It  
looks like a splinter - a tiny splinter of ice. I think it must be the snow.

**KAY obviously recovering** Yes. It must be the snow. It's all right now. It doesn't hurt  
any more. I feel cold though.

**GERDA** Well, it is getting colder and [**Looks up.**] the snow has gone. That's a pity.  
I was enjoying it. But there are snow clouds in the sky still.

**KAY appears to have had a sudden change of mood, which shows in his body, face and voice** Well, I wasn't enjoying it. Snow in summer is  
ridiculous. In fact, I don't think it was snow. Just a storm or

something. There was no need for you to make such a fuss.

**GERDA confused** But I didn't make a fuss. I was only surprised because ...

**KAY** Because you just aren't very clever, are you, Gerda?

**GERDA** I ... Well, I ... I mean ...

**KAY** You see? You stand there jabbering nonsense! And stammering!  
What are we doing standing around here anyway? I'm cold. I'm going

home.

**GERDA** But the jelly bears. I thought we were ...

**KAY** Jelly bears are for babies. And I'm too old to stand around talking  
to somebody who is so childish. I'm going home.

**He leaves, followed after a moment by Gerda, who is clearly distressed. Two villagers stand and stare after them.**

**VILLAGER 1** Did you see that? I never saw Kay lose his temper before. What can have happened?

**VILLAGER 2** I don't know, but Gerda is really upset. I hope he apologises to her.

**VILLAGER 1** They've always been such good friends.

**VILLAGER 2** That didn't sound too friendly. Something must have happened to change things, but I can't think what it might be.

**VILLAGER 1** You know, it's a strange day all round. First we get snow and now this. [**She shivers.**] I don't like it. I'm cold.

**VILLAGER 2** I know what you mean. The sun is shining again but it's weak and it's so cold it might just as well be snowing.

**VILLAGER 1** It doesn't feel right.

**VILLAGER 2** No. It's as if a shadow has fallen over our happy village...

### EXTRACT THREE

**Kay appears on the upper level with the Snow Queen. Kay is shivering with cold, even though he has the Queen's fur coat wrapped around his shoulders.**

**SNOW QUEEN** Do you find my palace cold, child?

**KAY** Yes. Very cold. The coldest place I have ever been.

**SNOW QUEEN** The feeling will pass. You will soon become used to my palace and you will no longer feel the cold. Casper. Fetch the boy a drink. [**To Kay.**] You would like a drink, wouldn't you?

**KAY** I would very much like a hot drink. It would ...

**SNOW QUEEN** A hot drink? Now, why would you need a warm drink, Kay?

**KAY** Because I am so cold.

**SNOW QUEEN** Cold?

**KAY** Yes, cold. And I feel strange. I don't know how I got here. I remember Gerda - I was horrible to her. I remember the snow - it never snows in summer, but it was falling thickly. And then ... I want to go home. I need to see Gerda. [**He looks puzzled for a moment.**] Is this a dream?

**SNOW QUEEN** Not a dream at all, my dear boy.

**KAY** Please let me go home. I'm so ... frightened.

**SNOW QUEEN as Casper enters with a blue cold drink** Drink this and it will make all those nasty feelings go away. One sip of this and you will not need to see Gerda. You will not want to leave my palace and you will not feel the cold.

**KAY** But I don't want to drink this. It will make me colder than ever! And I don't want to forget Gerda. I was awful to her and I want to make it right.

**SNOW QUEEN** You will drink!

**Something in her voice makes him gulp the liquid. Magic sound effect as he does so.**

**SNOW QUEEN** That's better. [**Kay shudders and blinks.**] Warmer now?

**KAY shrugging off the fur as his attitude changes** Perfectly warm, thank you. In fact, I never knew such a comfortable temperature. In my house at home it was often too warm - except when it was winter, and then it was too cold.

**SNOW QUEEN** And what was your house like, Kay?

**KAY** Well, it's small. Small but cosy, with a nice log fire and blue curtains. And a rug, blue like the curtains, but darker. Mother made it from old clothes and scraps. Small rooms. Just big enough for Mother and ... That's strange.

**SNOW QUEEN** What is strange?

**KAY** Mother. I can't remember Mother. I can't remember her face - what she looks like.

**SNOW QUEEN** And the blue curtains?

**KAY** No. They weren't blue. They were ... I think they were green ... or yellow. I don't know. Not blue.

**SNOW QUEEN** And your mother?

**KAY** I don't remember. I can't think ...

**SNOW QUEEN** Don't distress yourself, my dear boy. And Gerda? Do you remember Gerda?

**KAY** Of course. She's my best friend. [*Hesitates.*] I knew her a long time ago. I've forgotten what she looks like now. I think she must have been a dream.

**SNOW QUEEN** Of course she was. Just a dream. Finish your drink.  
*Kay does so.*  
That's better. [*She signs to Casper to take the glass.*] Now, Kay, I have a little job for you. Here are fragments of my favourite mirror, which has accidentally been broken. I would like you to piece it together for me. When you have done that, the remaining fragments will spell out a word. The word is Eternity.

**KAY** There are so many pieces.

**SNOW QUEEN** Which is why you must start immediately. And when you have finished the word, wonderful things will happen. You will have everything you desire and our lives will be so happy. Now, take care there is not a single splinter out of place.

*Kay kneels on the floor and begins to piece the mirror together. He continues to do so as the lights change and the focus returns to Gerda and Kay's mother.*

**GERDA** He can't be far away. I know the places he likes to go. I'll find him. I'll just say goodbye to Grandmother and then I'll go and find him.

**MOTHER** Take care, Gerda. It's cold even though it's summer. Take this shawl; it will keep you warm.

**GERDA** But that's your Sunday shawl, and I know how much everyone admires it. I can't take it.

**MOTHER** It's the warmest I have. Take it. [*She puts it round Gerda's shoulders.*] There. Don't go too far into the hills.

**GERDA** Don't worry, I'll be careful. And I'll soon be back - with Kay. Thankyou so much for the shawl. And I will find Kay. [*Pause.*] I promise you that I'll find him.

#### EXTRACT FOUR

**CAMILLE** Now come inside and have some bread and honey and some fresh milk.

**GERDA** *suddenly urgent* No really, I must go. Kay will be far away and he needs me.

*Kay can be seen on the upper level, still putting together the mirror. He suddenly stands up and looks over the audience with a puzzled expression.*

**CAMILLE** He is captive somewhere. I must help him.  
If he is captive, it will take more than a young girl to free him. I'll fetch you something to eat, then perhaps I'll come with you.

*She goes inside.*

**POEM - OR SONG.** *This can be accompanied by a mime or a dance*

## FLOWER STORYTELLER

It's warm in the garden.  
Quiet and soothing.  
No-one is speaking, nothing is moving.  
What is it which makes this garden so scary?  
What is it which warns the child to be wary?  
Look close at the flowers as they bend in the breeze.  
Listen to one of their tales, if you please ...

## STAG STORYTELLER

My home was in the forest, the field and the glades  
I was regal and proud... but everything fades.  
I could run like the wind; I could jump to the stars,  
Sing songs to the moon, gaze on Venus and Mars.  
King of my world, my antlers tall  
Before I was grounded - trapped - small,  
My feet in the earth, a tear in my eye.  
I lived in the forest and there I should die -  
The natural order for creatures like me.  
I drown in my sorrow - I yearn to be free,  
Let me sink through the earth, let me shrivel and die,  
Let my body decay so my spirit can fly.

GERDA If only I didn't feel so tired ...

*A white dove has entered and is watching her unseen.*

DOVE It's the flowers.

*Gerda spins round, startled.*

GERDA It's the flowers. The scent makes you feel sleepy.  
DOVE Of course. I'm sorry, I don't ...  
DOVE You don't know me. Not many people do. But I've been watching you for weeks.  
GERDA Weeks! But I thought I had only been here a few days.  
DOVE She will keep you here for ever. Ot at least until ...  
GERDA Until when?  
DOVE Until you become ... But never mind that. I can help you escape.  
GERDA Escape? Thankyou, but the lady seems kind. I don't understand why she keeps me here.  
DOVE Oh, she seems kind, but she's a witch.

*Gerda is startled.*

GERDA She created this garden from a magic spell. Haven't you noticed that there are no birds?  
DOVE I hadn't noticed. But you're right, I have never seen any birds. Until ...  
DOVE Of course. Until you saw me. And I haven't got long, or I will fall asleep and become a rose-tree or something. And that wouldn't do.  
GERDA You would become a rose-tree? Do you mean that you too would come under her spell? [**Pause.**] No - you mean more than that. [**With growing understanding.**] Do you mean that all these bushes are ... were ... ?  
DOVE People and animals, yes. Young boys and girls and stray dogs and suchlike. They fall asleep here. They eat the magic food and they sleep and then they become part of the garden, part of the earth which feeds all these flowers...

EXTRACT FIVE

**CLARISTA** Who are you and what are you doing here? I ought to warn you that if you've got anything valuable in that bag of yours, my family will think nothing of slitting your throat so that they can take it.

**GERDA** Well, I haven't anything.

**CLARISTA** No family jewels or heirlooms? No wonderful golden gifts especially selected to give to the Snow Queen? I take it you are going to the Ice Palace. There's nowhere else at the end of this path.

**GERDA** No jewels - but yes, I am going to the Ice Palace. I have to.

**CLARISTA** Suit yourself then, but you'll never get out again. Most likely she'll just melt you, but if you insist ... I'll just take a look in that bag to check you're not hiding anything. [**She looks.**] A pair of shoes. Red shoes. [**Tries them next to her feet.**] Too small for me, worse luck. I could do with a pair of shoes. Still, I might get something for them. [**Puts them in her apron pocket.**] What's your name?

**GERDA** Gerda. And yours?

**CLARISTA** Well, that depends. My name is Clarista but FRIENDS call me Caz.

**All the gypsy girls say the name Caz with her.**

**GERDA** So can I call you ...?

**CLARISTA** Clarista? Of course.

**All the girls laugh at Gerda.**

**CLARISTA** Give me that shawl.

**GERDA** But it belongs to Kay's mother and I must return it to her when I go home ...

**CLARISTA** I said give it to me!

**She takes it and Gerda wraps her arms round herself to keep warm.**

**CLARISTA** Now I'm going to tie you up.

**GERDA** Tie me up! You can't do that! I must go on up the mountain.

**CLARISTA** Not now. You're a prisoner. My prisoner - captured in the mountains.

**GERDA** I'm not a prisoner. Why should I be a prisoner?

**CLARISTA** Because I've taken you prisoner. That's why. Come on!

**She ties her up, helped by all the girls, and they leave.**

**Above the stage, the Reindeer appears. Casper has fallen asleep with the keys and he makes several attempts to steal them as Casper keeps snoring and turning. Then he is in the room with Kay.**

**REINDEER** Psst!

**Kay looks in the wrong direction.**

Psst! Over here.

**KAY** Oh, hello. Who are you?

**REINDEER** Never mind. I'm here for your friend, Gerda.

**KAY** Gerda? I think I've heard that name before ...

**REINDEER** Of course you have! Gerda was your best friend!

**KAY** I ... I don't remember.

**REINDEER** Look, you have to concentrate. Though how you can do anything in here



escapes me. It's so cold. Of course, I am used to the cold. I see lots of snow when we're out delivering on Christmas Eve - but I've never been as cold as this. Anyway, Gerda is coming to rescue you.

***The Snow Queen and Casper are now listening unseen by either of them.***

**REINDEER** I need to know when she goes out.

**KAY** When she goes out.

**REINDEER** Yes, when the old witch goes out.

***Reaction from the Snow Queen. Casper stifles a giggle.***

**REINDEER** Because when she goes out we're going to come in and rescue you.

**KAY** Rescue?

**REINDEER** You know, it gets very tedious when you just keep repeating everything I say. Does she go out every day?

**KAY** Yes. She has business. She is a great ruler.

**REINDEER** A great criminal, you mean.

***The Snow Queen reacts to this.***

**REINDEER** Does she go out in the morning?

**KAY.** Yes. She goes out in the morning. She has business. She is ...

**REINDEER** A great ruler. Yes, so you say. Now listen. I'm going to come back tomorrow with Gerda and ... she's going to rescue you. [**Aside.**] Though why she wants to bother I don't know.

**KAY** Rescue me?

**REINDEER** Yes. Just be ready, that's all. [**Looking round.**] I don't like it here. I keep getting that feeling that you have when you think somebody's watching you.

***The Snow Queen sinks back into the shadows, dodging every time he looks around.***

**REINDEER** I'm going back to Gerda now, but I'll be back tomorrow.

***He exits.***

**SNOW QUEEN *approaching Kay*** My dear boy. You are working so hard. Have you found any of the letters yet?

**KAY** I have found an 'E'. Well, it's a shard of ice which looks like an 'E.' It takes so long ...

**SNOW QUEEN** And have you been here alone while I have been away?

**KAY *confused*** I think I have been alone. Though sometimes I feel someone has been with me. Then I discover it was a dream. Yes, it was a dream. Just a dream.

**SNOW QUEEN** Quite right. It was a dream. Who could get here to visit you? The mountain is so steep.

**KAY** Gerda might ...

**SNOW QUEEN** Gerda? Who is she? I know of no-one of that name. Another one of your dreams, dear boy.

**KAY** You must be right. [**But he looks puzzled.**]

**SNOW QUEEN *aside*** And after tomorrow morning she will not be of any trouble to anyone, because I will have dealt with her. As soon as she comes to rescue Kay she will be in my power. [**Smiling to herself.**] I shall enjoy watching her melt. Her and that stupid reindeer. [**Turning to Kay.**] And you shall watch with me. They are pretty, my ice statues. It takes them a very long time to melt, but we will watch together.

***Kay looks bewildered.***

**SNOW QUEEN** Tomorrow....

EXTRACT from Production Notes

## **PRODUCTION NOTES + TECHNICAL CUES, ETC.**

### **INTRODUCTION: THEMES. THE PLAY'S INTENTION'S**

The play is mainly a retelling of the Hans Christian Andersen tale, though it has been reduced and leaves out some episodes, for example the story of the Prince and the Princess, who Gerda in the original story goes to find, convinced by a talkative crow that the Prince is really Kay. This version is much clarified by the reduction. Many of the changes have made it more pantomimic in style but the main point of the story is never lost: Gerda's courage and self-sacrifice win through, so that she rescues Kay in the end from the evil of the Snow Queen, who needed to enslave a human boy to complete the ice puzzle which will turn the whole world to ice. Some characters who, in the original, are unclear in their motivation - such as the Woman who owns the garden of flowers who Anderson tells us is only wanting to keep Gerda as a pretty little companion - are given a much more evil slant in this version.

It is an excellent tale of good and evil and, even in this more pantomimic form, still delivers the same message. And of course it is a good tale for Winter and the end of the Christmas term.

### **CHARACTERS**

**THE SNOW QUEEN** - thoroughly evil. She wants nothing less than to bring eternal winter to the world and to turn all good into evil.

**CASPER** - is the Snow Queen's side-kick. He delights in his mistress's evil doings, but is much put upon by his mistress too.

**KAY** - is a loving, kind boy until a splinter of ice enters his body through his eye. This turns him cold, emotionless. To compound the change, the Snow Queen drugs him so that he forgets Gerda and the past and wants to do nothing but please the Queen.

**GERDA** - is loyal and brave, even though she is often led astray, usually because it is hard to tell who is good and who bad.

**THE GRANDMOTHER** - is Gerda's only relative, who brings her up. She appears somewhat magical, encouraging Gerda to go out and live the story she is destined for. Clearly she was someone more important in times gone past, hence the treasure that the Beggar-woman brings in at the end, which is rightfully hers.

**MOTHER** - is Kay's Mother, a normal human being, very loving and concerned for Kay.

**CAMILLE** - is the owner of the flower garden, who enchants living creatures and lures them to their death, when they turn into flowers. An evil character, though seemingly good at first sight. Needs a honey-dripping voice, which will arouse suspicion.

**ELF** - is a shoemaker who has been bribed by the Snow Queen to make some magic red shoes which will only take Gerda back home. He is ashamed of being led into evil.

**FAIRY** is furious with the Elf for betraying Gerda and listening to the Snow Queen. She acts as his conscience.

BEGGAR-WOMAN - a mysterious figure who tests Gerda's resolve and has Grandmother's treasure in her keeping. Like so many in this story, she is not what she seems.

CLARISTA - a gypsy-girl. She is the Robber Girl of the original story - rough, bad-mannered and prone to violence. However, she turns out all right in the end, helping Gerda and Kay to escape.

The animals are pantomimic, especially the REINDEER, who is a comical equivalent of the pantomime horse. However, he doesn't have to be done in this traditional way, but can just wear antlers on his head with a half-head mask, allowing the solo actor's head to be free. The RAT is a good character too, who helps Gerda. The DOVE is another mysterious good character who rescues Gerda from the flower-garden.

It will be up to you to give the VILLAGER's individual characters as appropriate. Only the 2 OLD MEN are made into comical figures, always undermining each other and wanting to slope off to the pub.

## SETTING

The setting is pretty simple. It requires a permanent upper level, which is the ice palace. I think it would be fun if this has large splinters of 'ice' in craggy shapes, which can be shifted along the back to spell out ETERNITY. This of course is never quite completed, but would add tension if we see how close it is getting at the end. Otherwise, it allows for entrances and exits and hiding places for the cast on that level.

Or you may prefer the idea of having some ice shapes [polystyrene? or painted light wood or strong cardboard shapes] just as decor, with smaller shapes of the letters, made from polystyrene, which Kay can build along the front of the stage. These would need to be about 12 inches high to be visible to an audience whilst not blocking the action on the upper level.

There are steps up to the upper level, which are used by Casper when he is guarding. These steps need to be to one side of the stage, not in the way.

The main part of the stage has to stand for everything else, so it is important that all settings on the way are kept simple enough just to bring on...