The Old Shoemaker's Christmas

Dramatized by Chris Danyluk
From the story by Leo Tolstoy

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DEDICATION

To my husband Bill and my sister Kathy, whose belief in me never ceases to make me wonder; and to Dwayne, Lynette, Lisa, Kaeli, Darrell and Steve, whose giftedness and enthusiasm made the first production possible; and to David Ramsey, the kindliest “old” Papa Panovich you can imagine.

The Playwright, Chris Danyluk

STORY OF THE PLAY

Christmas Eve has come, but the old Russian shoemaker, Papa Panovich, is sad and alone. When he begins to read the story of the very first Christmas, the treasured words take on new life as he imagines and interacts with the words of Scripture. Then Papa Panovich believes he hears Jesus speaking to him, telling him that He will visit him tomorrow. All the next day while looking longingly for Jesus, Papa Panovich stops to help so many – providing a warm drink for Ivan, the old street sweeper; encouraging a struggling widow; keeping a gang of young pickpockets out of trouble; and finally giving a precious pair of shoes to a young mother’s child. In the end Papa learns a timeless lesson. In this beautiful version designed to include children, care was taken to weave the Scriptural account of Christmas into the original story.
CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Large, flexible cast. Minimum with doubling:
8 m, 4 w, 1 flexible,
4 children, 1 toddler, extras.)

NARRATOR
PAPA PANOVICH: A kindly old shoemaker.

VILLAGERS
WIDOW: A friend and neighbor to Papa Panovich.
MARYA, LYDIA, OLGA and KATYA: Widow’s four daughters.
GROWN-UP VISITOR: Former town resident.
VILLAGE WOMAN #1 and CHILD #1
ELDERLY VILLAGE WOMAN and CHILD #2
POOR VILLAGE MAN: Customer who can’t pay Papa Panovich.
VILLAGE WOMAN #2 and family
VILLAGE WOMAN #3 and family

NATIVITY
GABRIEL
MARY
JOSEPH
SHEPHERDS #1, #2, #3, #4
MAGI #1, #2, #3
HEROD’S AIDE
KING HEROD
JEWISH PRIESTS #1, #2
VOICE (of Jesus)

THOSE HELPED BY PAPA PANOVICH
GANG OF FOUR URCHINS: Young rascals, unwanted orphans.
IVAN: A coarse old road sweeper, poor and rejected by his peers.
BUTCHER: Blustering, angry shopkeeper.
MRS. PACHINSKI: An elderly woman, chronic complainer.
BAKER: Angry shopkeeper.
SERGEI DEMOSKOFF: Self-important businessman.
YOUNG MOTHER: Poor, with a small toddler.
TODDLER: Non-speaking role for boy or girl.
OPTIONAL EXTRAS: Angels, villagers (adults and children),
additional shepherds, servants for Herod and for Magi.
SUGGESTIONS FOR DOUBLING

Male roles:
- Grown-up Visitor / Poor Customer / Herod’s aide
- Gabriel / Priest #1
- Joseph / Priest #2
- Shepherd #1 / Ivan
- Shepherd #2 / Butcher
- Shepherd #3 / Baker
- Shepherd #4 / Herod / Sergei Demoskoff

Female roles:
- Widow / Village Woman #2
- Village Woman #1 / Elderly Village Woman
- Village Woman #3 / Mrs. Pachinski
- Mary / Young Mother

Magi roles may be doubled by the Village Women or the Shepherds. If doubled by the latter, the Magi robes should be under the shepherd robes for an easier, faster costume change.

Children’s roles:
- Child #1 & #2 / Widow’s 4 children / 4 Street Urchins.
  (Four children can play all the children’s parts, except for the Toddler. The play is written for boys to play the Street Urchins and girls to play the Widow’s Daughters, but the roles are interchangeable.)

Note: “Panovich” is a Russian name derived from the Polish word “pan,” meaning “lord.” Panovich, like other Russian names derived from “pan,” means “belonging to the Lord.”
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SETTING
The play is set on Christmas Eve in Russia in 1900. The scene is an old Russian village, with a series of houses and shops. Papa Panovich's shop should be at the far right-hand end of the village, while a small barn that will serve as the stable for the nativity scene is at the opposite side (stage left). Papa Panovich's shop should be equipped with a bed, chair, shelves, table, cast-iron stove, and an assortment of tools and shoes. Throughout the script, the direction of the entrances and exits, as well as the exact positioning of the shepherds, the angels, Herod, the Magi, and the Russian villagers are at the discretion of the director. This is to accommodate various sizes and shapes of stages and auditoriums.

PROPS
Covered dish
Firewood and sticks (bundles)
Boots
Bible
Soup pot
Stool
Manger
Baby doll
Quilt
(2) Coffee cups
Coffee pot
Throne
Gifts (gold, incense, myrrh)
Shoebox (small, dusty)
Shoes (children's pair)
Spectacles
Wheelbarrow
Broom
Dust pan
 Buckets
String of sausages
Wallet
(2) Loaves of bread (baguettes)
Piece of bread
Bowl
Spoon
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Actor’s Rehearsal Notes
NARRATOR: Long, long ago, and far, far away there was a tiny Russian village, almost hidden in the cold gray fog of a late December day. Bundled villagers scurried along the cobbled streets, the frosty air nipping at their noses and quickening their steps.

(PAPA PANOVICH watches alone in his shop as VILLAGERS begin to cross back and forth along the street. A child chases another child, and another child peers into a neighbor’s window while adults are busy with errands or plans. At some time during this opening scene the GANG OF FOUR BOYS wanders through, obviously up to no good. Of particular note is a YOUNG WIDOW with FOUR CHILDREN of varying sizes, one of whom is not yet seen.)

WIDOW: (Calling to the SECOND DAUGHTER not yet seen.) Hurry, Lydia, or we will be late. (Then to the OLDEST DAUGHTER.) Did you remember the pudding, Marya?
MARYA: (Carrying a bundled dish.) Yes, Mama. And a heavy one it is!

(Meanwhile LYDIA hurries in to catch up.)

OLGA: Can we stop by Papa Panovich’s shop, Mama?
WIDOW: Oh no, my dears. We’ll have to give him our Christmas greetings tomorrow. (The CHILDREN give PAPA PANOVICH a friendly wave but don’t stop.) We’re getting a late enough start as it is. Come along now, children, we’ve a good hour’s walk.

(THEY hurry off together.)

NARRATOR: Everyone knew the old shoemaker in town. His name was Panovich.
End of Freeview

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