

THE WINGS OF CHRISTMAS

by
Glory Dunnam

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The Wings of Christmas

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*Dedicated to my parents,
Virgil and Kathryn Dunnam, who made each day seem a
little like Christmas.*

STORY OF THE PLAY

Critics called *The Wings of Christmas* "An American Christmas Carol," with its Christmas card vignettes, Victorian costumes, intriguing world of characters, a touch of Americana, and a surprise ending that will make one's spirit soar. It is the turn of the century and Madame Sheronovich, the once-great prima-ballerina, has just moved into the palatial Wedding Cake House with her dysfunctional family. As Madame auditions for a new dance mistress, a beautiful young lady appears. She is the one for whom Madame has been searching. Later that day, a mysterious sea captain arrives with a child he found abandoned on the steps of the Goat Island Lighthouse. When Detective Carter is called to investigate the orphan, he discovers bizarre occurrences taking place in the house. During the grand Christmas Day Pageant, the identities of the three strangers and the miracle of Wedding Cake House are revealed.

At the premier production in Poland, OH, Jane Tims of *The Vindicator* called Madame Sheronovich, "Ebenezer Scrooge's female counterpart ..."

"*The Wings of Christmas* is the perfect vehicle for the holidays ... an ideal costume piece, mystery and comedy combined, two captivating musical numbers, and the timeless theme of the redemptive powers of love." Sue Van Meter, *Town Crier*.

About 2 hours.

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ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

The Wings of Christmas (previously called *The Enchanted Christmas*) was originally produced by the Poland Players in Poland, Ohio on November 22, 1996. It was directed by Joan Schmitzer; the choreographer was Tony Romeo; set design was by Paul Spiese; and the stage manager was Rennie Greenfield. The cast was as follows:

Madame Zerbonia Sheronovich: Heather Krygowski; Ivanka Havisham: Rachel Guido; Winston Havisham: Chris Belyusar; Clarissa Havisham: Jeanine Rees; Qwilleran; Havisham: Matt Morrow; Katrina: Torrie Trella; Captain Weatherspoon: Justin Seidler; Sugarplum: Alexa Marino; Father Riley: B.J. Wilkes; Misha: Pete Evanovich; Anna: Alisha Kopcsos; Trena: Emily Walker; Detective Carter: John Tullio; Mr. Leary: Nathan Kozak; Harina: Kelly Kochamba; Ivan Horvatich: Justin Seidler; Auditioning Dancers: Jen Stuber, Alicia Day, Kim Kerr, Maggie Moran, Christina Kopcsos Laura Cetor; Voice of Wedding Cake House: Hugh Fagan; Priest: Jim Ingold; Groom: Tom Holtzman; Bride: Kathleen Virostek; Bridesmaids: Jen Stuber, Jaime Maskell; Officer: Pat Fallen; Storyteller: Regina Rees; Santa: John Kopcsos; Gypsy Band: Carrie Guzell, Brandon McWilliams, Maggie Moran; Gypsy Dancers: Kathleen Virostek Jayme Backus, Becky Cashier Kelly Ponigar; Ballet Dancers: Torrie Trella, Heather Sipler, Amanda Seyler, Tracy Hobbins, Lauren Munroe, Lauren Cochran Angela Mancino, Sara Hallas Megan Nyers

PRODUCTION NOTES

The Christmas pageant tableaux are optional. If the tableaux are eliminated: After Madame states, "...I proudly present Katrina and the Madame Zerbonia dancers." Katrina and the Ballerinas solely perform a dance routine to the waltz from "The Queen's Lacekerchief," by Johann Strauss. The waltz may be repeated twice for greater effect. "The Dancers end the pageant by displaying the waltz is the most beautiful expression of life."

PROJECTED SCENERY

Katrina - A woman and child.

Captain - A ship being tossed at sea during a storm.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7 m, 6 w, 1 b, 2 g, extras, doubling possible)

MADAME ZERBONIA SHERONOVICH: International diva
of the ballet.

IVANKA HAVISHAM: Madame's daughter.

WINSTON HAVISHAM: Ivanka's husband.

CLARISSA HAVISHAM: Their daughter.

QWILLERAN HAVISHAM: Their son.

KATRINA: New dance mistress.

CAPTAIN WEATHERSPOON: Sea captain.

SUGARPLUM: Abandoned child.

FATHER RILEY: Parish priest.

MISHA: Butler.

ANNA: Servant.

TRENA: Servant.

DETECTIVE CARTER: Investigator.

MR. LEARY: Keeper of the light.

HARINA: Gypsy.

IVAN HORVATICH: Madame's husband.

PHANTOM BRIDAL PARTY

VOICE OF WEDDING CAKE HOUSE

AUDITION DANCERS

PAGEANT DANCERS

PAGEANT PLAYERS

GYPSIES

STORYTELLER

OFFICER

GUESTS AT THE PAGEANT

VICTORIAN SANTA

CAROLERS

PLACE: The Grand Hall of the Wedding Cake House,
Kennebunk, Maine.

TIME: 1900

Scene 1

(The CURTAIN rises on the Grand Hall of the Wedding Cake House, the newly acquired palatial estate of the great Madame Zerbonia Sheronovich, international diva of the ballet. Approaching seventy, MADAME is still the epitome of glamour; however, her demise as an international demigoddess has scarred her emotionally. All that remains is a frustrated and bitter remnant of a glorious yesteryear. Her cane is used as an ornate accessory which SHE brandishes menacingly. Preparations are being made for the Christmas holidays. An enormous tree is partially decorated. Wedding Cake House recaptures the romanticism of the Middle Ages: the interior, somewhat faded, reflects an era once consumed with wealth and splendor. Madame Zerbonia - as SHE prefers to be called - is auditioning DANCERS to replace the dance mistress who fell and broke her ankle. She auditions them with a profound urgency.)

MADAME: *(Using her jeweled cane dramatically as SHE appraises the first DANCER.)* Look at me! Chin up! Where is your confidence? If you cannot project an air of superiority to me, you certainly cannot to the students. *(Dismissing DANCER number one.)* Away with you. Next! *(The second DANCER comes forth.)* Legs together. Together I said! What's this? Bowed legs! Just what I thought. One could ride a carriage through there! How do you expect to lead, instruct and mold innocents with legs like that? Oh, I shudder in trepidation. Move on! *(To the next DANCER.)* Turn around! How odd. Your derriere is pointed north! A deformity at least! What a protrusion! Your gluteus maximus is molded in flesh. It's like a person unto itself! Hurry on - both of you! Next! *(To the fourth DANCER.)* Ah, the neck of a swan. But what's this? *(Turning her around.)* The back of a camel! For Madame Zerbonia's dancers, the spine must be straight and supple. It is the foundation of your most sacred temple - the body. Without mortar and bricks, the building will collapse.

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MADAME: *(Continued.)* Hurry away before you crumple before my very eyes! *(Motions to the fifth GIRL.)* Come! Come! Walk for me. Smoothly! You should be able to balance a glass of milk on your head. Ohh! The manner in which you undulate would churn it into buttermilk! My patience is at its end. *(Dismisses her. Looks at the last GIRL'S chest.)* My vision must be impaired. Your pectoralis major is major indeed! Why, it would be impossible to get air borne with those anchors weighing you down! Merely breathing would be an arduous task. Leave in haste - if you can! *(The last DANCER exits.)* Where are the ladies of my day? They were swans upon a gossamer lake, gliding on air, so perfect, so fragile, so pristine. I was an international celebrity. Whenever the Divine Sarah Bernhardt shed a tear on stage, she was thinking of the beauty of my dance! Paris, London, Italy, and Russia were no strangers to the great Madame Zerbonia Sheronovich! There will be no one like me again. *(Sadly.)* No one.

(MISHA enters.)

MISHA: Madame, there is a young woman to see you. A Miss Katrina.

MADAME: Does she have an appointment?

MISHA: No, Madame. But she is most upset.

MADAME: Let her in. *(MISHA exits.)* Please come in.

(When KATRINA enters, she and MADAME assume a freeze position. Projected scenery: A hooded WOMAN and CHILD walking in a blizzard. Their faces obscured by the snow. SFX: Fierce howling wind accompanied by the incoherent cries of a woman and child. After ten seconds, the actors resume animation.)

KATRINA: I beg your pardon, Madame. *(Curtseys.)* I hope I am not late for the audition. The carriage broke down and I had to wait for another.

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MADAME: Audition! I cannot believe it. It is too good to be true. (*Inspecting her with her cane.*) You have a remarkable spine! That is where all movement begins. As you glided across the room, I knew your legs were finely tuned instruments. Perform several moves for me that reveal dance and the body are one.

(*KATRINA twirls, leaps, etc.*)

MADAME: (*Continued.*) Enough! You are a rare specimen. Earth has never seen the likes of you - except for me! Katrina, you are the teacher for whom I have been waiting. Marva, the dance mistress, fell and broke her ankle and with our Christmas Pageant only three weeks away! But, with your instruction, my dancers will be ready. You will also take Marva's place as the lead dancer. All eyes will be upon you. Now they will get a glimpse of what I was in my youth. You will live in my home while you rehearse the students night and day. Anything you want, you shall have, my dearest Katrina. Come, I'll take you to your room.

(*MADAME and KATRINA exit as IVANKA and WINSTON enter arguing.*)

IVANKA: Winston, I already made arrangements for us to host the Christmas pageant this year.

WINSTON: At the present I'm in dire financial straits and you wish to bury me deeper! Your mother (*Mockingly.*) the great Madame Zerbonia Sheronovich has given the pageant for years. Why change now?

IVANKA: She said it's our turn. New house, new host!

WINSTON: Your mother's one of the wealthiest women in America. (*Mockingly.*) The great Madame Zerbonia made a fortune prancing around the stage.

IVANKA: Don't you talk about my mother!

WINSTON: Your mother? She doesn't even regard you as her daughter. We're all treated like servants, including you.

IVANKA: Mother just doesn't reveal her true emotions -

End of Freeview

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