

PLAYS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

2400 THIRD AVENUE SOUTH
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55404
612-872-5108

FAX 612-874-8119

Mister Pickwick's Christmas

Story By

Charles Dickens

Adapted for the Stage by

Thomas Olson

Music by

Hiram Titus

Mister Pickwick's Christmas was first presented by the Children's Theatre Company in the 1982-83 season.

The license issued in connection with PYA perusal scripts is a limited license, and is issued for the sole purpose of reviewing the script for a potential future performance. All other rights regarding perusal scripts are expressly reserved by Plays for Young Audiences, including, but not limited to, the rights to distribute, perform, copy or alter scripts. This limited license does not convey any performance rights of any kind with this material. By accepting any perusal script(s), Licensee agrees to and is bound by these terms.

Cast of Characters

Samuel Pickwick

Augustus Snodgrass

Tracy Tupman

Nathaniel Winkle

Sam Weller

Mr. Wardle

Widow Wardle

Emily Wardle

Isabel Wardle

Mr. Trundle

Arabella Allen

Joe, The Fat Boy

Emma

Narrator/Bob Sawyer

Benjamin Allen

Vicar

Vicar's Wife

Coachman

Coach Guard

Gabriel Grub

Poor Relations:

Martha

Henry

Lizzie

Arthur

Sidney

Sally

Vera

Jenny

Ensemble includes: Eligible Young Ladies, Eligible Young Men, Older Boys, Servants

The setting is London and Dingley Dell, England. The time is December 21-25, 1827

Prologue

Preset: PICKWICK'S four-poster bed and dais is dimly lighted C framed by a large holiday wreath. The proscenium: snow-covered limbs lashed together with leather cord in a diamond pattern, with glowing candles within each diamond and the corners sporting two large wreaths also, with lanterns glowing. Houselights and preset fade to Blackout. Soft, morning light rises on PICKWICK in his bed; SAM, his servant, stands beside the bed, holding a number of parcels in his arms.

SAM: Mr. Pickwick? Mr. Pickwick! (*PICKWICK begins to stir.*) Mr. Pickwick, Sir, rise and shine!

PICKWICK: What? What! (*PICKWICK sits up and reaches for his spectacles.*) Sam? Is that you, Sam?

SAM: Me, Mr. Pickwick. Rise and shine, so the innkeeper used to say to me ven I made a livin' a-polishin' boots. Rise and shine! (*SAM chuckles at his own wit. PICKWICK smiles politely.*)

PICKWICK: (*Regarding the parcels SAM holds.*) What's all this now?

SAM: (*Dumping the parcels at the bottom of the bed.*) Christmas things, Sir. Been out already, I 'ave. Your 'ole list near done vile you sleeps in. Our wisit to the country, Sir - remember?

PICKWICK: Of course ! (*A sudden thought.*) Oh, but great goodness, Sam -we leave tomorrow morning and I've not yet written to my associates!

SAM: (*Handing him a writing desk and implements.*) Vell, 'ere be your pen and your paper, Sir. If you're quick about it, I can deliver the messages meself vile you Wes your breakfast.

PICKWICK: Capital idea, Sam! Thank you, Sam.

SAM: (*Touching his forehead as if tipping his hat.*) Vot I'm here for, Sir. (*SAM collects the parcels and exits as PICKWICK prepares to write. NARRATOR appears.*)

NARRATOR: And so - from his comfortable quarters at The George and Vulture Tavern and Hotel - a call to the Corresponding Society of The

Pickwick Club was issued forth, by none other than the General Chairman himself: the immortal . . .

PICKWICK: *(Addressing an envelope.)* Samuel Pickwick, Esquire !

NARRATOR: . . . whose collected letters, accounts, and observations are now presented for the advancement of knowledge, the diffusion of learning, and -we pray - the pleasure and amusement of all assembled.

PICKWICK: First - to Augustus Snodgrass, Esquire. *(Pool of light DSL reveals SNODGRASS posed within a springtime setting.)*

NARRATOR: The poet. –

PICKWICK: *(Writing.)* Christmas, Snodgrass! Christmas so soon upon us! Our jolly quartet meets at dawn tomorrow. Our destination? Dingley Dell! *(To himself, chuckling.)* Yes - I always like to think of Snodgrass there in the springtime!

SNODGRASS: *(Composing a poem , notebook in hand.)* Ah, Dingley Dell! Ah, happy place! Met April breeze upon my face! What poems and songs I 'd write freely If but I dwelt in the Dell . . . Dingley? *(SNODGRASS isn't - too certain if the rhyme is good and he shrugs as lights quickly fade out on him.)*

PICKWICK: How . . .nice, Snodgrass. My the winter scene be every bit as inspirational.*(A new sheet of paper.)* Second: to Tracy Tupman, Esquire. *(Lights reveal TUPMAN posed amorously beside a Maiden of advanced years within a country garden.DSR.)*

NARRATOR: The lover.

PICKWICK: *(Writing)* Christmas has at last come round, Tupman! Now dear Mr. Wardle bids us all join him again at Manor Farm to celebrate the holiday - and a wedding, too! His daughter Isabel. Recollect her? She was there- on our summer visit...

TUPMAN: *(Inhaling deeply.)* Ah, yes! Summer in the country! The innocent blush of a maiden under the blossom bower! The soft, rhythmic murmur of two hearts beating as one . . .

PICKWICK: *(Writing.)* We'll be taking the morning coach. Tupman? Tupman . . . I *(Lights fade as TUPMAN buries his face in the Maiden's neck. PICKWICK sighs and seals the envelope. A new sheet of paper.)* And last - to Nathaniel Winkle, Esquire. *(Lights reveal WINKLE in an autumn setting, posed most awkwardly with a Rifle DSL.)*

NARRATOR: The sportsman.

PICKWICK: *(Writing.)* A full four days in the country, Winkle! *(A chuckle. WINKLE is turning the rifle every which way, trying to figure it out.)* I know how fond you are of Dingley Dell, but then -any sportsman the likes of you would have to be. I often picture you as you were: gun in hand, out on a partridge hunt . . . *(WINKLE has casually tossed the rifle over his shoulder as TUPMAN innocently enters the pool of light and the rifle fires, shooting TUPMAN in the arm. TUPMAN grasps his arm in pain and exits into the wing howling.)* Pity old Tupman had to get in the way and spoil it all.

WINKLE: *(A sheepish grin.)* Yes . . . a pity! *(He drops the rifle down from his shoulder and it shoots off again, nearly hitting his foot. Blackout. Shift. Music rises.)*

Scene One

Lights rise to reveal coach yard and coach DSR. Townspeople, Servants, Stable boys are loading barrels, portmanteaus, etc.

NARRATOR: As brisk as bees, if not altogether as light as fairies, did the four Pickwickians prepare to assemble on the twenty-second day of December. Christmas was close at hand in all his bluff and hearty honesty; it was the season of hospitality, merriment, and open-heartedness! The old year . . . *(PICKWICK appears and trots DSC to supervise stowage of oyster barrels.)* . . . like dear Mr. Pickwick - was preparing to call his friends around him, so that amidst the sound

NARRATOR of feasting and revelry he might pass gently and calmly away. Gay and merry was the time; and right gay and merry were at least one . . . (SNODGRASS, TUPMAN, and WINKLE join PICKWICK and pose.) . . . two, three, four of the numerous hearts that were gladdened by its coming. And numerous indeed -are the hearts to which Christmas brings a brief season of happiness and enjoyment! (*In their turn, individuals step out of the tableau and assemble around the NARRATOR.*)

WOMAN(MARTHA): How many families whose members have been dispersed and scattered far and wide, in the restless struggles of life, are then reunited . . .

YOUNG MAN(COACH GUARD): . . . and meet once again in that happy state of companionship and good-will . . .

MAN(TRUNDLE): . . . a source of such pure and unalloyed delight . . .

YOUNG WOMAN(LIZZIE): . . . and one so incompatible with the cares and sorrows of the world . . .

OLDER MAN(VICAR):. . . that the religious belief of the most civilized nations...

YOUNG MAN(BEN ALLEN): ...and the rude traditions of the roughest savages alike...

MAN(TRUNDLE): . . . number Christmas among the first joys of a future state of existence provided for the blest and happy!

NARRATOR: Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! How many old recollections and how many dormant sympathies does Christmastime awaken! (*Suddenly noticing the coach tableau again.*) Oh, but we are so taken up with the good qualities of Christmas, that we are keeping Mr. Pickwick and his friends waiting in the cold, outside the Muggleton coach. (*NARRATOR and Townspeople exit, leaving only Pickwickians, Stable boys, Servants, and COACH GUARD, who resume their activity of stowing luggage.*)

PICKWICK: (*As oyster barrels are hoisted up.*) Easy, there - easy! Good. (*To TUPMAN, SNODGRASS, WINKLE.*) Six barrels: real native oysters. Can't be Christmas without oysters, eh?

TUPMAN, SNODGRASS,

WINKLE: *(In unison.)* Nooo, Mr. Pickwick!

GUARD: *(Hopping down from above, a bit fatigued.)* That's it, then, Sir?

PICKWICK: Oh, no. No, no. One last thing. Codfish.

GUARD: Sir?

PICKWICK: *(Calling.)* Sam! Sam Weller!

SAM: *(Appearing with an enormous brown basket.)* 'Ere, Mr. Pickvick!

PICKWICK: *(With great pride.)* Codfish! *(SAM displays a huge codfish snuggled in straw within the basket.)*

TUPMAN, SNODGRASS,

WINKLE: *(With great admiration.)* Ooooh, Mr. Pickwick! *(GUARD just stares at it, speechless.)*

SAM: *(To GUARD.)* Shall ve get on vith it ?

GUARD: *(Taking the basket, grumbling to himself.)* But . . . ain't near 'nough room . . . all them oysters In' n 'ere's a codfish what thinks it's a whale . . . ought to pay a fare In' take a seat, it ought . . .

A pantomime follows wherein SAM and GUARD attempt to squeeze the enormous fish in the rear of the coach, to the great curiosity and amusement of the onlookers. They try every which way until the GUARD, losing his patience, gives a great push and the basket disappears, followed by the GUARD, headfirst, with only his feet sticking out of the coach. Crowd laughs and cheers as SAM pulls the GUARD out.

GUARD: *(Red in the face.)* Now, then, gen'l'men - coach is ready, if you please! *(TUPMAN, WINKLE, SNODGRASS disappear into place as PICKWICK, smiling with great good humor, offers the GUARD a shilling.)*

PICKWICK: Here, my good man. A shilling for your trouble.

Guard: *(A broad smile replacing his previous scowl.)* Thank you, sir!

COACHMAN passes by as PICKWICK exits into place.

COACHMAN (To GUARD.) All right?

GUARD Yes , sir!

SAM (Offering GUARD a pull from his flask.) A drop o' cheer for the road?

GUARD (Accepts gratefully.) Thank you, sir, and Merry Christmas!

SAM Christmas in the country; it ought to be. Never been, but lookin' for 'ard to it, I am.

COACHMAN (Call off stage.) Guard! All ready, outside and in?

GUARD (Handing back SAM'S flask and calling.) All ready, sir!

SAM All right!

A crack of the whip and the coach lurches. GUARD and an almost-left-behind SAM hop up behind and the coach departs with the sound of the GUARD'S bugle, calls from the CROWD and PASSENGERS. Lights fade out.

Music rises and NARRATOR steps into isolated pool at proscenium.

NARRATOR The Muggleton Telegraph, bound for Kent, rumbled through the London streets and jolted over stones, till at length it reached the wide and open country. The wheels skimmed over the hard, frosty ground; and the horses burst into a gallop with another smart crack of the coachman's whip, as if the load behind them were but a feather at their heels!

Music continues as pool of light C reveals cut-away interior view of coach with top. SNODGRASS and five PASSENGERS are inside; TUPMAN, WINKLE, PICKWICK, SAM, COACH GUARD, and COACHMAN are above. The coach rocks and bounces-to the accompaniment of music and sound of hooves, whip cracks, wheels spinning, GUARD'S bugle. After a little while of pantomime ride, music and sound starts to fade and we hear dialogue.

PICKWICK (Waving to an unseen pedestrian on the road.) Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!

COACHMAN *(Announcing.)* Comin' up on Bromley!

TUPMAN *(Peering out above his coat collar.)* What did he say?

PICKWICK A town, Tupman!

WINKLE *(Leaning over to PICKWICK.)* Dingley Dell?

PICKWICK No, Winkle - Bromley!

WINKLE &
TUPMAN *(Somewhat disappointed.)* Ohhh!

PICKWICK *(Loudly, to COACHMAN.)* Not much traffic - for a town.

COACHMAN Should ha' seen it yesterday. Market-day yesterday.

PICKWICK *(Leaning over and hollering to SNODGRASS.)* Snodgrass! Snodgrass!

SNODGRASS *(Pulling down the window looking up.)* Yes, Mr. Pickwick?

PICKWICK Market day was yesterday!

SNODGRASS Fascinating!

PICKWICK Yes, isn't it!

COACHMAN Sharp turn, comin ' up!

WINKLE *(Leaning forward to COACHMAN.)* What's that?

WINKLE is nearly tossed out as PASSENGERS lean as if coach turning.

PICKWICK Good God, Winkle! Sit down or you'll be killed.

WINKLE *(Regaining his composure quickly.)* Me? No! Bit of sport, that's all.
"Coach acrobatics." Used to compete in tournaments.

PICKWICK Coach acrobatics? Never heard of such a thing! Must tell Mr. Wardle about it. He doesn't think we have any sport in the city.

Music rises and lights fade to blackout. NARRATOR appears DSL.

NARRATOR Merrily they dash along the open road, with the fresh, clean air blowing in their faces and gladdening the very hearts within them. Such was the progress of Mr. Pickwick and his friends by the Muggleton Telegraph on their way to Dingley Dell, until later that afternoon they all stood, high and dry, safe and sound, hale and hearty, outside the country Inn of The Blue Lion . . .

Scene Two

Late afternoon. The rear of coach SL with the exterior of the Blue Lion Inn DSL. A large two-wheeled horse cart SR. Various PASSENGERS are met and exit SR as PICKWICK and SAM engage in unloading baggage with COACH GUARD. TUPMAN , WINKLE, and SNODSRASS stand DSC .

TUPMAN *(Shivering with the cold.)* A drop to keep away the cold, Winkle? *(TUPMAN offers a flask to WINKLE, who declines.)*

WINKLE *(A bit tipsy.)* Thank you, but I've had quite enough for the time being. Is it cold? Don't seem to feel a thing.

SNODSRASS *(Inhaling deeply, then sighing with satisfaction)* Ah, yes - winter in the country! Grey -no, slate-colored sky. And the bitter frost which binds the slumb'ring earth in iron fetters, weaving its intricate shroud - "lace-like" - upon the naked trees and forlorn hedges.

WINKLE and TUPMAN stare in astonishment for a moment SNODSRASS, then WINKLE takes TUPMAN's flask after all.

TUPMAN Mr. Pickwick?

MR. PICKWICK Just a moment, Tupman. *(Finishing his inventory.)* Four, five, and that, Sam, makes six! *(PICKWICK shakes hands with SAM then turns*

and steps toward PICKWICKIANS.) Now then, my friends , what shall we do now?

TUPMAN Our question, exactly, Mr. Pickwick. What shall we do?

PICKWICK Well, now, I ' m certain old Wardle has made some arrangements for us to be met. (*An idea.*) I have it! Pickwickians -we will investigate this "Blue Lion Inn." (*PICKWICKIANS nod in agreement and head SL to inn; JOE appears from DSR and waddles up to PICKWICK and pulls his coat-tail.*) What? (*PICKWICK turns and is happily surprised to see the fat young man.*) Aha!

JOE Aha!

PICKWICK (*To PICKWICKIANS.*) Look, gentlemen – here's Joe ! Mr. Wardle hasn't forgotten us after all!

JOE Master sent me over with the hay-cart to carry your luggage up to the house.

PICKWICK And us?

JOE Ain't enough room, Sir. Master Wardle would ha' sent some saddle horses, but he thought you'd rather walk, being a cold day.

PICKWICK Yes - fine country air; good for the soul, eh, gentlemen? (*Calling to SAM who leans against coach, resting.*) Here! Sam!

SAM (*Stepping DS to PICKWICK.*) Sir!

PICKWICK Please help Joe here with the packages, and then ride on with him. The four of us will walk forward at once.

SAM (*Staring with astonishment at JOE.*) Very good, Sir.

PICKWICK Come then, Pickwickians - to Manor Farm!

TUPMAN, SNODSRASS
& WINKLE To Manor Farm!

The four PICKWICKIANS turn on their heels and trot as a group US and then off SL. JOE sits on a trunk as SAM picks up a barrel or two and begins to load up the cart. He gestures to the pile of luggage with his head.

SAM Vell. There they are.

JOE Yes. There they are.

SAM *(Returning for another load.)* Vell, now -you're a nice specimen of a prize boy, you are.

JOE Thank 'ee.

SAM You ain't got nothin' on your mind, as makes you fret yourself, have you?

JOE Not as I knows on.

SAM I should rayther ha' thought, to look at you, that you might be laborin' under unrequited attachment to some young 'ooman.

JOE *(A blush.)* No.

SAM Vell, I ' m glad to hear it. *(Pauses and takes out his flask for a drink.)* Do you ever drink anythin'?

JOE I likes eating better.

SAM Ah, I should ha' s'posed that; but what I mean is, would you like a drop o' somthin' as'd warm you? But I s'pose you never get cold, with all that blubber about you, eh?

JOE Sometimes I do. And I likes a drop of something, when it's good.

SAM *(Handing JOE the flask and grabbing another load.)* Vell, I'll vager this'll be good enough.

JOE takes the flask and swallows its contents without a wink. When SAM returns he hands him the empty flask. SAM reaches down to the trunk, taking one end, hoping JOE might take the other. JOE doesn't, and follows SAM to the cart, since the loading is now complete.

JOE Can you drive?

SAM Drive? I should rather think so.

JOE *(Climbing into rear of cart and pointing.) There, then. The farm's as straight as you can go; you can't miss it. (JOE immediately drops unconscious on the pile of luggage and snores.)*

SAM Vell, of all the cool boys ever I set me eyes on, this 'ere young gen'lm'n is about the coolest! *(Giving JOE a slap on the rump.)* Come! Wake up, young drosy!

JOE simply shifts h the cart and snores again. SAM shakes his head, pulls out his flask, tips his head back for another drink, then tips it upside down with amazement - it's dry.

SAM Too cool!

SAM sighs and hops up to the front of the cart as lights quickly fade to Blackout. Music and horse hooves in the shift.

Scene Three

Pool of light rises on NARRATOR sitting on a stile DSR.

NABRATOR Up the lane, Mr. Pickwick and friends proceeded cheerfully toward Manor Farm. *(Lights reveal a desolate field, only a bare branch hanging USL as the four PICKWICKIANS appear from USL conversing silently among themselves and appreciating the country scenery.)* It was just the sort of winter's afternoon that might induce a gentleman to play at leapfrog in pure lightness of heart and gaiety. *(Chattering of voices from DSR and NARRATOR quickly rises and moves SL as a group of YOUNG LADIES, EMILY, ARABELLA, TRUNDLE, ISABEL, and WARDLE appear from DSL and stop at stile and freeze, waving. PICKWICKIANS wave and freeze also.)* But before any of them had a chance to offer a back in such a game , the still air resounded with the cry of merry voices!

Both groups burst into life again as NARRATOR exits. WARDLE, clammers over the stile to greet the PICKWICKS.

WARDLE Pickwick! You've arrived!

PICKWICK (*Warmly embracing their host.*) Wardle! Dear Wardle, hello! Hello!

WARDLE Pickwick - my dear friend - welcome! (*To TUPMAN, SNODGRASS and WINKLE.*) Welcome, gentlemen! Welcome all!

TUPMAN (*Stepping forward and shaking WARDLE's hand.*) How do you do, Mr. Wardle?

WARDLE Well, Tupman - right well! (*Shaking SNODGRASS's hand.*) Good you could make it, Snodgrass; you look uncommon well, to be sure. (*Calling back to EMILY.*) Emily !

EMILY Yes, Father?

WARDLE Doesn't Mr. Snodgrass look well!

EMILY (*Looking at SNODGRASS boldly.*) Yes, he does, Father.

YOUNG LADIES giggle and SNODGRASS blushes. ARABELLA whispers something in EMILY's ear ; EMILY scolds her. WINKLE has sauntered up to WARDLE.

WARDLE Ah, and Mr. Winkle! Back again for a bit of the country life, eh? (*WARDLE claps WINKLE a bit too hard on the back.*)

WINKLE (*A gasp/laugh .*) That's right, Mr. Wardle.

WARDLE (*A hearty chuckle.*) A man after me own heart!

PICKWICK (*Indicating the YOUNG LADIES.*) Wardle, what a lovely reception this is, I must say! (*YOUNG LADIES giggle.*)

WARDLE Ah, yes! Been out gathering this and that for the house. (*YOUNG LADIES display the baskets they carry: evergreens, holly, ivy, currants, gooseberries, etc.*) Also let the girls have a peek at the little wedding cottage, fixed up all pretty for our happy couple. . . after tomorrow.

(*YOUNG LADIES giggle and/or sigh.*) Well? Come along, Trundle, my boy, help your pretty bride-to-be over the stile so you can greet Mr. Pickwick proper!

TRUNDLE Yes, sir! (*TRUNDLE athletically vaults the stile to yet another sigh from YOUNG LADIES.*) Your hand, Miss Wardle?

ISABEL Yours forever, Mr. Trundle.

WARDLE (*As TRUNDLE and ISABEL step over to PICKWICK.*) Couldn't ask for a finer son-in-law. And so attentive to my little girl Isabel.

PICKWICK (*Nodding in agreement.*) Handsome couple; very handsome indeed!

TRUNDLE and ISABEL exchange ad-lib greetings to PICKWICK as WARDLE steps toward the stile.

WARDLE Now, then come, girls, up and over, the lot of you; the gentlemen here have had a long journey; back to the house, now.

EMILY (*Stepping forward to the steps of the stile.*) Yes, Father. Mr. Snodgrass, would you be so kind? (*EMILY holds out her hand; YOUNG LADIES gasp. SNODGRASS steps forward.*)

SNODGRASS Why, yes. Yes, I would, Miss Wardle. (*Assisting EMILY up and over.*)

EMILY Thank you so much, Mr. Snodgrass.

SNODGRASS and EMILY join ISABEL and TRUNDLE. PICKWICK, TUPMAN, and WINKLE quickly huddle, then turn to the YOUNG LADIES.

PICKWICK, TUPMAN
& WINKLE (*Rushing toward the stile.*) Ladies? (*YOUNG LADIES pull back and giggle.*)

WARDLE (*Impatient.*) Oh, dash it - you girls have been running mad the day long. Come on, now!

YOUNG LADY Not if they're looking.

WARDLE Well, of all the silly...

PICKWICK No, they're quite right, Wardle. Modesty is a virtue to be admired in a woman. Pickwickians- we shall oblige the young ladies and avert our eyes.

PICKWICK, TUPMAN, and WINKLE all hold out one arm as they hide their eyes with the other. The first lady climbs over, encouraged by the other females, and PICKWICK leads her to safety. TUPMAN takes the second. WINKLE the third. WARDLE, feeling foolish about covering his eyes, takes the fourth. PICKWICK has returned in line to assist the fifth. Only ARABELLA remains and, although it is TUPMAN's turn, WINKLE quickly "butts in" to take ARABELLA.

EMILY (To ARABELLA.) Do hurry, Arabella, and give Mr. Winkle your hand.

ARABELLA Mr. "Who?"

WINKLE (Looking at her.) Me! (Quickly remembering to avert his eyes.) Me - Winkle.

ARABELLA (An arch smile and slight giggle.) Very well, Mr. Winkle - my hand. (ARABELLA slowly ascends the stile, but when she reaches the top she pauses, then decides to lose her balance.) Oh! Oh, dear! I ' m going to fall! Oh!

ARABELLA does exactly that, accompanied by screams from the YOUNG LADIES. But instead of falling, she tosses herself into WINKLE'S outstretched arms and they crumple to the ground. All freeze except WINKLE and ARABELLA who remain in a heap, WINKLE 'S hand landing in a "cow pie. "

ARABELLA Oh, I am so sorry, Mr. Winkle.

WINKLE (Struck by Cupid's dart.) Sorry? Whatever for, Miss . . .

ARABELLA Allen.

WINKLE Miss Allen?

ARABELLA Yes, Mr. Winkle?

WINKLE What . . . what lovely . . .

ARABELLA Mr. Winkle?

WINKLE What lovely... (*Turning away, breathless.*) boots you have, Miss Allen.

ARABELLA Yes. I know. Fur.

Others burst into movement and help the two back up to their feet.

EMILY (*To ARABELLA, brushing her off.*) Oh, Arabella! Are you quite all right?

ARABELLA (*As if nothing happened.*) Why, yes, Emily. Quite.

WINKLE (*Brushing away PICKWICKIANS, eyes on ARABELLA.*) I'm fine. Just fine.

EMILY How lucky neither of you were injured - such a fall!

ARABELLA Yes, it was rather good, wasn't it?

EMILY (*It suddenly dawns on her. Eyes wide.*) Arabella!

WARDLE steps down to ARABELLA.

WARDLE My poor dear; you're not hurt?

ARABELLA Not in the slightest, Mr. Wardle. Please let's proceed.

WARDLE Happily? Shall we, Mr. Pickwick?

PICKWICK By all means!

SNODGRASS (*To EMILY who still looks at ARABELLA with suspicion.*) Your arm, Miss Wardle?

EMILY Why, yes. Thank you, Mr. Snodgrass.

ARABELLA *(moving boldly to PICWICK as WINKLE watches.)* Would you, Mr. Pickwick?

PICKWICK But of course, you poor thing.

TRUNDLE *(To ISABEL)* Your arm. Miss Wardle?

ISABEL Yours forever, Mr. Trundle. *(YOUNG LADIES sigh.)*

WARDLE
& TUPMAN *(In unison.)* Ladies?

Giggling, four YOUNG LADIES take each of WARDLE and TUPMAN's arms, leaving one last YOUNG LADY who waits for WINKLE.

WINKLE *(Finally noticing the remaining YOUNG LADY.)* Oh. Allow Me. Please.

WARDLE Will you help us to the house, Trundle, by leading in a song?

TRUNDLE I will!

They all cheer. Music. The group sings as they skip/dance merrily US and off into the distance.

ALL JOIN IN SONG AND STEP AS LIGHT
AS EVERY HEART SHOULD BE TONIGHT
JOIN IN SONG, AND BANISH CARE
FOR ALL ARE YOUNG AND GAY AND FAIR!

JOIN IN SONG, BRIGHT FACES BEAM
LET SWEET LIPS SMILE AND DARK EYES GLEAM
LET MUSIC SHAKE THE LOFTY DOME
WITH FRIENDS WELL MET - WELL MET AND HOME!

Lights fade.

Scene Four

An isolated pool of light rises to reveal WIDOW, seated and knitting in her easy-chair, ascending up in a cloud of dust through the floor. Lights gradually spread out to reveal front parlor of the Manor House. SERVANTS bustle about, preparing the room and chattering. EMMA – the chief household servant - runs US to the large window, wipes the frost from the glass, and sees WARDLES, PICKWICKIANS, etc. approaching DS.

EMMA (A command to the other SERVANTS.) They're here! Look sharp, now!

WIDOW (Aware of the commotion, lifting her ear trumpet to her ear.) What's the matter, Emma? The kitchen chimney ain't on fire, is it?

EMMA (Rushing to WIDOW's side, plumping a pillow.) No, ma'am! Master and the young ladies come back with that dear Mr. Pickwick!

WIDOW What's that? A picnic, you say? Don't be daft, girl - too cold for a picnic!

Merrily laughing and chattering the party enters. SERVANTS, led by EMMA, curtsy and bow in welcome, then quickly take coats, shawls, LADIES' bonnets and baskets, etc. SAM greets PICKWICK and takes his hat and scarf.

WARDLE (To PICKWICKIANS .) Now we'll have you put to rights! Emma?! (EMMA curtsies, beaming at the four PICKWICKIANS. TUPMAN gives her a little wave. EMMA averts her eyes.)

WARDLE (To EMMA.) Bring out the cherry brandy, Emma. (EMMA curtsies and departs. WARDLE calls another SERVANT GIRL.) Mary? Mr. Winkle has need of a towel and water. Bustle, now! (SERVANT GIRL curtsies and departs. WARDLE looks about.) Now where's Mother? (Taking PICKWICK's arm and leading him over to WIDOW.) Mother?! Mother, look -it's Mr. Pickwick! You recollect him, don't you?

WIDOW Ah! I can't hear you!

EMILY & ISABEL (Who have gone to her side to kiss her.) Mr. Pickwick, Grandma!

WIDOW (Waving them away; speaking with great dignity.) Well, never mind. Don't trouble Mr. Pickwick about an old creature like me. Nobody cares about me now, and it's very natural they shouldn't. (WIDOW tosses her head and smoothes down her dress with trembling hands.)

PICKWICK Come, come, ma'am. I can't let you cut an old friend in this way. I have come down from London expressly to have a long talk, and another rubber of playing cards with you. And at the wedding ball, why -we'll show these boys and girls how to dance a minuet before they're eight-and-forty hours older, eh?

WIDOW looks fondly up at PICKWICK, then remembers herself and tries to be gruff.

WIDOW Ah! I can't hear him! (She gives another look at PICKWICK, though, and seems to wear a bit of a smile. EMMA appears with a tray of cordials.)

WARDLE Ah, splendid, EMMA! A drop of cherry brandy, Pickwick?

PICKWICK (Taking a glass.) With pleasure, Wardle!

WARDLE (Shouting to WIDOW.) Mother? Will you have a cordial before supper? It's from the Vicar's wife – she made it herself.

WIDOW (Accepting a glass.) Yes, I know all about that 'ooman and her cordials, and I'll tell you that Vicar's wife swallows every bit as-much as she puts in a bottle and you my tell her I said so!

WARDLE (Stepping away from WIDOW.) Yes, mother. (To EMMA, who is serving YOUNG LADIES.) Emma? Where's Joe? I'll want card-tables in the sitting room after supper.

SAM (Stepping forward.) He's asleep, sir. In the kitchen.

WARDLE Yes, of course. (Stepping over to EMMA as SAM pulls PICKWICK aside.) Emma -once you've finished here would you get Joe up? Pinch him in the leg - that ought to wake him.

SAM *(To PICKWICK while WARDLE instructs EMMA.)* Mr. Pickvick? Vot about that fat boy, Sir? Ain't seen nothin' like it - sleepin' all the time. Somethin' wery odd about that fat boy, Sir.

WARDIE *(Stepping toward them, having overheard.)* Odd? Yes, he is, indeed! Goes on errands fast asleep and snores as he waits at the table. But, damn it, I'm proud of that boy! Wouldn't part with him on any account. Why, he's a natural curiosity!

PICKWICK nods and chuckles in agreement as WARDLE leads him off SR, followed by SAM. EMMA has reached TUPMAN with the tray of cordials.

TUPMAN *(Frisky, familiar.)* Well, hello, Emma! Hello!

EMMA *(Tolerant.)* Will you have a cordial, Mr. Tupman?

TUPMAN I will. And, since your hands are full... *(Quickly glancing around to see if anyone's looking.)* ...I believe I'll have a kiss as well.

EMMA Mr. Tupman! No!

TUPMAN Emma! Yes!

TUPMAN quickly kisses her. EMMA gasps at his boldness, then gives him a little kick in the shin and turns away and exits. TUPMAN hops backward in pain, bumping the WIDOW's chair.

WIDOW *(Surprised and stern.)* Young man!

TUPMAN Oh, do forgive me, madam! *(Looking around nervously, smiling at the others who stare at him, then turning back to WIDOW and bellowing into her ear trumpet.)* My, you're looking well!

WIDOW Do I know you, Sir?

TUPMAN Why, yes, of course. I was down once before. The name's Tupman. Tracy Tupman.

WIDOW I don't know any Mr. Tuppence. Now, what's the matter with you?

TU PMAN Nothing. Just admiring . . . your granddaughters, madam.

WIDOW Hem! So you think they're pretty, do you?

TUPMAN *(Trying desperately to ingratiate himself.)* I should think so - if their grandmother wasn't here.

WIDOW *(Bored with him.)* Acch! I'm too old a creature for your flattery!

She waves TUPMAN away as EMILY and SNODGRASS walk DS, conversing intimately. EMILY giggles.

EMI LY Oh, Mr. Snodgrass - you are a quiz!

WIDOW *(Spying EMILY.)* Emily? Is that you, Emily? What are you doing with that strange man? Mind yourself!

EMILY *(Taking SNODGRASS over to WIDOW.)* Lord, Grandma! It's only Mr. Snodgrass; surely you recollect -him!

SNODGRASS *(Bowing.)* Widow Wardle.

EMILY *(Gazing admiringly into SNODGRASS's eyes.)* He's a most particular friend of Mr. Pickwick's.

PICKWICK *(Entering DSR, followed by WARDLE. To WIDOW.)* Is something the matter, dear lady?

WIDOW Oh, Mr. Pickwick, the girls don't listen to me anymore, and I suppose it's nat'rul too. Too bold is Emily - far too bold. And little Isabel, now -found herself a husband; shan't be long afore she forgets her old grandma all together.

WARDLE Oh, come, come, mother -don't be cross, now- there's a good soul. Isabel? *(He beckons ISABEL to WIDOW's armchair.)* You must keep your grandmother's spirits up, poor girl.

WIDOW has listened intently to WARDLE and her lip quivers as she whirls back around in her chair-and attempts to maintain a strict demeanor.

WIDOW *(Smoothing down her dress.)* Ah, Mr. Pickwick, young people were very different, when I was a girl.

PICKWICK *(As he gently takes ISABEL's arm.)* No doubt of that, ma'am. And that's the reason why I would make much of the few that have any traces of the old stock. *(PICKWICK gently bestows a kiss upon ISABEL's forehead.)* There, Isabel, sit with your dear Grandmother.

ISABEL *(Looking up into the WIDOW's eyes.)* Grandma? I'm to be married tomorrow, Grandma. Oh, please do try and be happy! I am.

The WIDOW looks up at PICKWICK who nods and smiles down at her, then she looks back at ISABEL's sweet face resting on her knees. She takes ISABEL's face in her hands, then melts -- throwing herself around ISABEL's neck in a gush of silent tears.

WIDOW Ah! I can't hear her!

Lights fade to Blackout as music rises.

Scene Five

In the blackout: laughter from offstage. Lights rise on the party entering the parlor: PICKWICKIANS , WARDLES , ARABELLA, YOUNG LADIES, TRUNDLE , SAM, EMMA. An offstage clock tolls twelve.

PICKWICK *(To WIDOW beside him.)* Mrs. Wardle, ma'am - my compliments on a brilliant game . I can't imagine whist being played any better.

WIDOW I still say my son here ought to have trumped that diamond, oughtn't he have, Mr. Pickwick?

WARDLE Yes, yes, mother -I ought to've. Emma? What does the clock say?

EMMA Twelve o' clock midnight, sir.

ISABEL *(Clutching TRUNDLE'S arm with a thrill.)* Oh, Mr. Trundle -our wedding day! It's arrived at long last! *(The party responds with a spontaneous "Hurrah!")*

WIDOW *(Startled.)* Ah! What is it? What's the matter?

WARDLE There's nothing the matter, mother. It's the for bed. Emma? See my mother to her room, would you?

EMMA Come along now, ma'am.

PICKWICK *(Stepping forward and kissing WIDOW'S hand.)* Good night, Mrs. Wardle.

WIDOW blushes and waves him shyly away; as she is led from the room she turns several times and smiles at PICKWICK.

WARDLE *(Stepping DSL to YOUNG GIRLS with ISABEL.)* Now, girls - to sleep. You want to look your best for the ceremony in the morning.

YOUNG LADIES Yes, Mr. Wardle. Good night, Mr. Pickwick. Good night, gentlemen. *(PICKWICKIANS bow. YOUNG LADIES sigh and exit giggling.)*

ISABEL Father?

WARDLE Yes, Isabel?

ISABEL Would you think me terribly silly if I asked you . . .

WARDLE Asked me what, my dear?

ISABEL If I asked . . . for one last time. . . that you tuck me up in bed?

WARDLE *(Beaming.)* Not at all! *(Taking her arm and walking US.)* If my guests will please excuse me . . .

PICKWICK By all means, old man.

JOE enters with a tray of hot elder wine as EMILY and ARABELLA, step away from SNODSRASS and WINKLE, giggling.

WARDLE *(As he exits with ISABEL.)* Emily? Miss Allen? I daresay the gentlemen will still be with us come morning.

EMILY (*Calling after him.*) yes, Father. Coming straight 'way.

EMILY &
ARABELLA (*Stepping up to PICKWICK, curtsying.*) Good night , Mr. Pickwick.

PICKWICK (*A bow.*) Good night, my dears.

EMILY &
ARABELLA (*To the remaining four, but EMILY gazing at SNODGRASS;
ARABELLA at WINKLE.)* Good night, gentlemen.

TUPMAN (*Bowing.*) Until tomorrow , ladies.

TRUNDLE (*Bowing.*) Miss Wardle . . . Miss Allen

*SNODGRASS and WINKLE are just staring back; PICKWICK nudges WINKLE: and
TUPMAN nudges SNODGRASS.*

SNODGRASS What? Ah, yes. (*A bow.*) Bonne nuit, mademoiselles.

WINKLE (*Bowing.*) Yes. . . uh . . . good night. (*EMILY and ARABELLA curtsy
and turn to exit.*)

ARABELLA (*Whispering to EMILY.*) "Bonne nuit?!"

EMILY French. Poets have the privilege to speak however they choose.

ARABELLA But what's the good if you can't understand them?

EMILY Don't be dim, Arabella; that's what makes them poets.

*ARABELLA and EMILY are off. JOE is pouring wine into the men's glasses. PICKWICK
yawns.*

PICKWICK And now, my friends, if you will excuse me.

TUPMAN You're not going to bed, Pickwick . . . ?

PICKWICK I am. You youngsters may tip another glass in my name, if you like, but I've had more than my share of good cheer today. Sam?

SAM Sir?

PICKWICK Would you show me to my room, please, Sam?

SAM Right this way Mr. Pickwick.

PICKWICK *(To TRUNDLE.)* Good night, lad. *(To PICKWICKIANS.)* Good night, Pickwickians !

PICKWICKIANS
& TRUNDLE Good night, Mr. Pickwick!

PICKWICK and SAM exit USR. JOE exits SL with tray. TUPMAN, SNODGRASS, WINKLE move to WIDOW's chair in which TRUNDLE sits.

TRUNDLE Now, then, gentlemen - about this Pickwick Club of yours . . .

TUPMAN What would you care to know?

TRUNDLE I take it that it is exclusively for bachelor gentlemen?

TUPMAN Exclusively?

WINKLE Why, heavens no !

SNODGRASS Not in the slightest.

TRUNDLE But you, and Mr. Pickwick, are . . .

TUPMAN We are but four of many in an illustrious fraternity. It is but a coincidence that we happen to be bachelors.

TRUNDLE Oh. I thought perhaps you didn't much care for women.

TUPMAN On the contrary, Mr. Trundle! That is precisely why I, for one, am a bachelor! Simply adore the creatures!

TRUNDLE Is that so?

TUPMAN The more the merrier!

WINKLE
& SNODGRASS Yes, yes!

TRUNDLE Why, that's just capital! Capital! (Raising his glass.) Gentlemen - to your Pickwick Club!

PICKWICKIANS To the Pickwick Club!

TUPMAN To ladies fair!

PICKWICKIANS
& TRUNDLE To ladies fair!

WINKLE To love and marriage !

PICKWICKIANS
& TRUNDLE To love and marriage!

All turn to SNODGRASS in anticipation.

SNODGRASS To . . . to . . . to pleasant dreams!

PICKWICKIANS
& TRUNDLE To pleasant dreams!

All freeze and lights isolate them in pools of light, glasses raised. Voice of VICAR with great reverberation.

VICAR Will you, Mr. Trundle, have this woman, Isabel Wardle . . .

TRUNDLE I will!

TRUNDLE steps out of his light and joins ISABEL, who has appeared in a pool. They swirl, dancing, into the darkness.

VICAR Will you, Augustus Snodgrass, have this woman , Emily Wardle . . .

SNODSRASS (SNODGRASS *sees EMILY in a pool.*) With the greatest pleasure!
(SNODSRASS *and EMILY join and dance off.*)

VICAR Will you, Nathaniel Winkle, have this woman, Arabella Allen . . .

WINKLE Well, I should . . . I should think so! (WINKLE *joins ARABELLA and dance off.*)

VICAR Will you, Joe . . . Joe?! Fat Boy?!

JOE (Entering from SL.) Uh . . . yes?

VICAR Will you, Joe, have this crowned rib roast . . .

JOE (Leering and chuckling with glee.) Yes, sir! Oh, yes, yes, yes! (JOE *waddles up to ROAST and they dance off.*)

VICAR And will you, Tracy Tupman, have . . .

TUPMAN . . . Emma? Why, yes, I daresay I would! And Mary, and Hazel,
and Constance, and Jane; Henrietta and Sarah and Betsy. . . .

At the call of TUPMAN, the YOUNG LADIES crowd around TUPMAN, squealing and giggling with excitement and delight. Amidst the coronation, PICKWICK's bed appears amidst the throng and the group disperses and freezes at the edges of the stage. PICKWICK awakens with a start.

YOUNG LADY Oh, please - do come and tie me; there's a dear!

ANOTHER
YOUNG LADY Me, too! Oh, please, please hurry!

PICKWICK That's quite enough! Tupman! Stop this at once!

SAM appears in the bedroom and sets down the basin of water.

SAM (Concerned.) Mr. Pickvick? Mr. Pickvick!

PICKWICK Oh – it's you, Sam.

SAM Somethin' the matter, Mr. Pickvick?

PICKWICK No, Sam. Nothing. Only a dream. Too- much wine last night.
Thought I heard women, Sam. Dreadful din.

SAM And vell you ought, Mr. Pickvick. Ain't no dream, Sir - it's mornin'.
Young Miss Vardle's veddin' mornin'. Sir. Never have I seen such
runnin' about: young ladies a-callin' for vater, needles and thread,
ribbons and such-like. You best be up now, y'self, Mr. Pickvick. 'Ere
be your vater; I'll be back in a flash with your boots.

PICKWICK Yes, Sam. Thank you, Sam.

SAM exits as lights fade on bed unit and pool of light rises on NARRATOR.

NARRATOR And so - the occasion of a wedding being a most important one
indeed -Mr. Pickwick dressed himself with the most peculiar care.