

Dot Monologue

Chirp the First

Allegro

Christmas Eve's Eve

John and Dot's house

John and Dot's living room. Exit stage right (into the wings) out of the house, with a (possibly, implied) window in the SR wall, and a candle in that window. Two more exits upstage: a doorless archway SR toward the rest of the house (mostly limited to the bedroom) and a door SL to the guest room (which is an actual, physical, practical door, with an actual, practical, working handle, because in this story there are essential characters who are not alive, and there will be a scene in which this door will play a starring part). The fireplace is center-stage between them. The clock is on the fourth wall – invisible to the audience, but visible to the characters. There is an armchair by the fireplace, with a little table next to it. There's also a small sideboard and a basic crib SL.

DOT

Direct address to the audience:

The kettle began it! I ought to know, I hope. Full five minutes by the Dutch clock in the corner, before the Cricket uttered a chirp. Contradict me, and I'll say ten.

Let me tell you exactly how it happened. If I am to tell a story I must begin at the beginning; and how is it possible to begin at the beginning, without beginning at the kettle?

Mrs. Peerybingle –

A quick curtsey; she's been talking about herself.

– going out into the raw twilight, and clicking over the wet stones in a pair of wooden clogs, filled the kettle at the water pump. The weather was uncomfortably cold and in that slippy, slushy, sleety sort of state when it seems to seep through every kind of substance, wooden clogs and stockings included. By the time she got back, leaving the clogs on the steps outside, she had lost her temper – or mislaid it for an instant.

Besides, the kettle was aggravating and obstinate. It would not allow itself to be evenly placed on the fireplace grating; it would lean forward with a drunken air and dribble on the hearth. It was quarrelsome, and hissed at the fire, as if it said, 'I won't boil. Nothing shall induce me!'

But Mrs. Peerybingle, with restored good humor, sat by the fireplace, warming her hands. And then the kettle began it, with gurglings in its throat and short vocal snorts, as if it hadn't quite agreed to be good company. But then it threw off all reserve and burst into a stream of song.

A quick, simple melody on the flute.

You might have understood it like a book – better than some books you and I could name, perhaps. And for five minutes there was nothing but the song of the kettle and the blaze of fire.

And then the cricket did chime in –

A two-note motif on the violin.

– and it took the first fiddle and kept it, and – good heaven! – how it chirped. Its shrill, sharp, piercing voice resounded through the house. There was a trill and a tremble in its voice, so disproportionate to its size that it seemed to leap.