

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre

Counting Icebergs (one act)

by Frances Rouse

EXTRACT

© 2001 Frances Rouse



This script is distributed by The Australian Script Centre
77 Salamanca Place Hobart 7004 Tasmania Australia
email admin@ozscript.org
www.ozscript.org
ph +61 3 6223 4675
fax +61 3 6223 4678

COUNTING ICEBERGS

NOTES 2CAST

ELIZABETH 1 20's to 38 (when James dies)
 ELIZABETH 2 40's to 52 (when young James dies)
 ELIZABETH 3 70's

(They are designated E1, E2, E3 in the script)

LOCATION

London, 1760's -- 1810's

Interior (living room) and Exterior (general outdoors, garden)

MUSIC

CPE Bach -- Concerto No. 165 in E Flat Major

(Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra. Erato 2292--45430--2)

Vivaldi -- Cum Dederit from Nisi Dominus

(Graham Pushee and Aurora Musicale. ABC Classics 456
 626--2)

Mozart -- Piano Concerto No. 8. 1st movement

Kathleen Ferrier singing "Blow the wind southerly"

PROPS

3 chairs, a bin containing rolled up charts, a table, some standard trees in pots; assorted small items -- a small medal case, some leatherbound books, some invitations, assorted papers, a folding fan, sewing things including scissors, some Pacific Island/Aboriginal artefacts, coral and shells (these latter may be on a separate table or in a glass case).

The wooden chest contains: 3 black shawls, 3 straw hats, heavy coat, baby clothes, walking cane, white handkerchief.

COUNTING ICEBERGS

While the audience assembles, CPE Bach's Concerto No.165 is heard; it is bright and cheerful, expressive of the 1760's.

There are 3 chairs, a table with some props, a bin full of rolled charts to one side. Standard trees in pots represent a garden (or a real garden may be suitable).A wooden chest contains some props and there is a ship's bell off stage.

INTERIOR. DAY

The 3 E's move back and forward as if mimicking breaking waves over following.

	E3
Terra firma	
	E2
Mainland	
	E1
Coast	
	A11 3
Ocean!	
	E2
Sailor	
	E1
Captain	
	E3
Weigh anchor!	
	E1
Spread canvas	

E2

A few minutes before eleven in the pm
we had 17 fathom -

E3

Set course

E1

And before the man at the lead could
heave another cast -

E2

Circumnavigate

All 3 run full tilt to the front edge of the stage and stop

All 3

The ship struck -- and stuck fast

E3

Immediately upon this, we took in all
our sails, hoisted out the boats and
sounded -

E2

And found that we had go upon the edge
of a reef of coral rocks -

E1

We threw overboard, water -

E2

Guns -

E1

Iron and stone ballast -

E3

Staves -

E1

Decayed stores -

E3

As the tide fell, the ship began to
make as much water as two pumps could
free -

E1

By 5 o'clock the tide began to rise -

E2

The leak increased upon us which
obliged us to set the third pump to work -

E3

At 9 o'clock the ship righted -

E1

The leak gained upon the pumps -

E3

An alarming and terrible circumstance
which threatened immediate destruction -

E2

We turned hands to the capstain and
windless -

E1

About 20 past 10 o'clock, the ship floated -

E3

We hove her off into deep water, having
3 feet 9 inches of water in the hold

E2

Sight land

E3

Make port

E1

Drop anchor

A11 3

Moor -- disembark

E3

Terra firma

A11 3

Aaaaaaaaaah

The 3 E's rearrange the furniture/plants as necessary over following

E3

(to audience)

Terra firma -- the immovable land, where we, my younger selves and I, have lived flat-footed, beyond the liquid environment

E2

The liquid you cannot drink

E3

Cannot rely on

E1

Never the sea you feared, James

E2

You are too idealistic

E1

If you wish to abandon hope --

E2

Wrap it in a shroud and heave it overboard

E3

Leave her alone -- she is entitled to her
optimism

E2

While you bury yourself in the present

E1

The achievements of my husband --

E2

Oh, and the little dead moon sailing
forever around his planet?

E1 deliberately pushes into her with a chair

E1

Do not belittle me -- the six years before
James sailed on the Endeavour have been
happy

E2

The long summer months apart while he
surveyed Canada and Newfoundland?

E1

Please get out of my way!

E3

I have become used to the separations

E2

Except --

E3

Three years this time

E1

On the other side of the world!

All 3

Mare pacifica

E2

And my life?

NIGHT

MUSIC -- some cheerful CPE Bach (as before) plays in the background as the 3 E's stroll in the garden

E1

Ah that night in the Ranalagh Gardens,
with James and Mr Banks

E3

Such a charming young man

E1

So at ease in the world

E2

(ironically to audience)
Money does have that effect

E1

I hope he and James are getting on --
he might be inclined to arrogance --

E2

Mr Banks?

E3

But that night -- all the people so
elegantly dressed --

E2

The orchestra!

E3

The ballroom filled with dancers

E2/

The laughter and the clink of glasses in
in the arbours and pavilions

E2

The ham cut so thin people complained you
could read the newspaper through it!

E1

The cheesecake and syllabub!

All 3

Mmmmm

They laugh

E1

Oh, and the fireworks!

E3

So many famous gentlemen greeting Mr
Banks, wishing he and my husband good
luck

E1

Overwhelming

PAUSE