

**OVERTURE**  
TO THE  
Romantic Drama by Mr. Wilkie Collins.  
**THE FROZEN DEEP**  
as performed before  
Her Majesty the Queen  
JULY 4<sup>th</sup> 1857.  
Composed and Arranged  
FOR THE  
**Pianoforte**  
BY  
**FRANCESCO BERGER.**

*Lat. Stn. Hall.* ————— *Price 2/6*

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in remembrance of the late Mr. Douglas Everett.*  
BY  
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Vyvian Bronk - Piano

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*The Frozen Deep* was written by Collins during 1856, although conceived, cast and revised by Dickens. The play was based on the ill-fated 1845 Franklin expedition to discover the Northwest Passage. Dickens had published several articles in *Household Words* rebutting the charge of cannibalism (later proved to be true) made by John Rae in 1854. The role of Richard Wardour was acknowledged by Dickens as an influence on the self-sacrificing Sydney Carton of *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859).

The play was first performed at Tavistock House on 6 January 1857 with subsequent performances on 8, 12 and 14 January. Collins played the part of Frank Aldersley and Dickens that of Richard Wardour. The music was composed by Francesco Berger while the scenery was designed and painted by Clarkson Stanfield and William Telbin. There were further performances at the Gallery of Illustration, Regent Street, in July, including a Royal Command performance on the 4th. The play was performed at the Manchester Free Trade Hall on 21, 22 and 24 August 1857 as part of the fund-raising for Douglas Jerrold's widow. The amateur actresses were replaced by professionals and the cast included Ellen Ternan, her mother and sister. In 1866, Collins made revisions for a professional production at the Royal Olympic Theatre with Henry Neville as Richard Wardour. The play opened on 27 October and, although receiving fairly good reviews, did not prove a financial success.



*The Frozen Deep: a Drama in Three Acts* was 'printed but not published' in 1866 to preserve Collins's dramatic copyright. In 1874, it was adapted for Collins's reading tour of America and adapted again that year to be published as a novel.

# THE FROZEN DEEP.

3 Drama.  
IN THREE ACTS

BY  
WILKIE COLLINS.

[NOT PUBLISHED.]

1866.

## THE FROZEN DEEP.

### ACT I.

SCENE.—*A handsomely furnished room in a country-house, with a bay-window at the back of the stage, looking out, over corn-fields, on a village church. Flowers are disposed about the room on stands. On one side, a tea-table, with tea-things on it. On the other, a round table, with work on it. Time, shortly before sunset. The entrance to the room is on the left-hand side of the actor.*

MRS. STEVENTON and ROSE are discovered at the tea-table. The maid-servant enters to them at the rise of the curtain, with the newspaper which has arrived by the post. MRS. S. takes it.

Rose. Any news, Caroline?

Mrs. S. (*reading*). "Arrived, the Fortune, from Valparaiso; the Ariel, from Jamaica. Spoken, the Sisters, from Liverpool to California, eight days out. Reported drifting among ice at sea, waterlogged and abandoned, the Hope." (*Repressing a shudder.*) No, Rose—no news to interest us.

Rose. Shall I give you some more tea? (*Mrs. S. declines.*) Has the doctor gone yet?

Mrs. S. Lucy is still talking to him about Clara; and Clara has retired to her own room. (*The maid enters with gardening-scissors and a basket, which she hands to Mrs. S., and goes out again. Mrs. S. rises, and attends to the flowers as the dialogue proceeds.*) Rose, I have been doubting lately whether it was wise for us four women to shut ourselves up in this solitary house, while our natural protectors are away from us in the expedition to the Arctic Seas.

Rose (*taking her work*). What could we do better than

*From Reminiscences, Impressions & Anecdotes, Francesco Berger, 1913.*

Everybody knows that Dickens was a fine Actor, and that, at one time, he very nearly "took to the stage" as a vocation. He had "private theatricals" each Christmas-time, in which he himself, his family, and intimate friends acted. In this circle he was spoken of as "the Manager," and his eldest son was known as "young Charles." In 1855 Wilkie Collins wrote a Play for one of these occasions, called "The Lighthouse," and Dickens asked me to compose for it an original Overture and arrange the Incidental Music, which I gladly undertook to do.

For these performances Dickens had a theatre specially constructed, in the rear of his house, with proper footlights, proper scenery, proper curtain—in fact no expense or trouble was spared to make the whole thing complete. "The Lighthouse," after being played at Tavistock House, was reproduced at Campden House, Kensington, then occupied by Colonel Waugh. I had a small but efficient Orchestra to conduct, and presided at a Piano. The scenery was painted by Clarkson Stanfield, R.A.; the dresses were by Taylor of the Adelphi Theatre, and Nathan of Titchbourne Street; Wilson of the Strand was perruquier; and the properties were by Ireland of the Adelphi. The actors were Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Mark Lemon, Augustus Egg, Edward Hogarth, Miss Hogarth, and Mamie Dickens (Dickens' elder daughter).

In 1856 the Dickens family spent the Summer in Boulogne at M. Beaucourt's "Villa des Moulineaux," and Miss Hogarth most kindly obtained for me a bedroom in Beaucourt's own house, "Villa Napolienne," which stood in the same ground as the other. Here I saw a good deal of the Dickens family, and recall a particular dinner at which the only guests were Wilkie Collins and myself. When the pleasant meal was over, we all went into the town, to a fair. There is always a fair, or a fête, or something of the kind going on in Boulogne; and Dickens carried his youngest boy on his shoulders all the time for him to see the shows. Wilkie Collins was then preparing his Play "The Frozen Deep" for the next Christmas theatricals, and I was to write the music. He consulted, "the Manager" about his Part, and Dickens advised him to write the Play irrespective of making it a "one-part" Play, and to leave it to him to introduce a scene, or to amplify, if necessary. And this was done. When the Play was put into rehearsal, for many weeks one particular scene was omitted, and when at last Dickens introduced it (it was a scene in which he had the stage all to himself) it was a most wonderful piece of Acting. Anything more powerful, more pathetic, more enthralling, I have never seen.



The Piece was duly produced at "Tavistock House" and was an enormous success. It was the talk of London. Illustrated Papers produced scenes from it. We played it three or four times, my parents being among the invited guests, and my brother James being a "super" in a crowd of sailors. Surely there never was such a "select" audience. Authors, poets, painters, actors, journalists, judges (including the Lord Chief Justice of England), barristers, ambassadors, members of Parliament, ladies of fashion, equerries to the Queen, publishers, critics, sat side by side in spellbound admiration, or jostled one another in the crowded refreshment-room after the performance.

Queen Victoria having expressed her wish to see it, Mr. and Mrs. T. German Reed, who were at the time running an Entertainment of their own at the "Gallery of Illustration" in Regent Street, placed that at Dickens' disposal, and a "strictly private performance" was given on July 4, 1857, which the Queen attended, accompanied by Prince Albert, the King of the Belgians, and a number of ladies and gentlemen of the Court. Copies of my Overture (which had been published by Ewer & Co.), elegantly bound in satin, were handed to the Royal Couple, who graciously accepted them and carried them away on leaving. They were delighted with the performance, and, at its conclusion, waited till "the Manager" could change his ragged stage-dress for ordinary evening attire in order personally to congratulate and thank him. There is one comic bit in it, which falls to the lot of a sea-cook (Augustus Egg played it), a bit about sea-sickness. I wondered how the august visitors would receive it—but the Queen and Prince laughed heartily at it, and indeed it was one of the "hits" in the Piece.

In August of the same year the whole of the "Dickens Amateur Theatrical Company," including myself, went to Manchester to give several performances of "The Frozen Deep" in the Free Trade Hall there, for the same object. The ladies of the original cast were replaced by "professionals," and I had a larger Orchestra to conduct; in other respects the cast was precisely the same. The performances had the same success in Manchester as they had had in London, and the results must have been very gratifying to Dickens.

Extracts from *The Leader* of 10 January 1857

*The Frozen Deep* is the title of the Drama brought out for the first time on Tuesday evening, repeated on Thursday, and destined to be played at TAVISTOCK HOUSE twice more. It is by Mr. WILKIE COLLINS—a fact which is in itself a guarantee of an exciting and admirably constructed story, and powerful writing. The plot centres round the heroes of an Arctic Expedition, and brings on the scene a great variety of characters and considerable breadth of passion and pathos. The first Act introduces us to four young ladies who live in a quiet nook of Devon, and who have each a relation or lover in the Polar Expedition, which forms the main subject of the Drama. All, of course, are sad and depressed; *Clara Burnham* (Miss MARY) is peculiarly so; for not merely has her betrothed gone to the terrible icy regions, but in the same expedition is a young Kentish gentleman whose passion for her she has rejected out of a misapprehension, and who has sworn to kill the man who has robbed him of her, whenever they shall meet.

He does not know the name of her favoured suitor, but *Clara* feels persuaded that the two rivals will be led together by some mysterious influence; and, in the deepening twilight and crimson sunset flush of the early Autumn evening, she tells her story to her friend *Lucy Crayford* (Miss HOGARTH). Her sad misgivings, sufficiently painful in themselves, are intensified by the mystical forebodings of an old Scotch attendant, *Nurse Esther* (Mrs. WILLS), who is gifted with 'second sight,' and who goes about the house like an ominous enchantress, muttering of awful visions which come to her from 'the land o' ice and snaw.' On the particular evening on which the story opens, she stands in the gathering gloom, darkly relieved against the misty blue of the window, and, in a voice half frightened, half denunciatory (for the young Southern ladies have been sceptical of her supernatural powers), tells them of a vision of blood which passes before her eyes from the Northern seas. *Lucy Crayford*, shuddering with dread, calls for lights; *Clara Burnham* falls senseless; and the first Act is concluded.

The second Act brings us to the Arctic regions. Here we find the lost heroes in an Arctic hut; and it is resolved to send out a party of explorers to see whether a way cannot be cut through the barrier that hems them in. They cast lots; and *Frank Aldersley* (Mr. WILKIE COLLINS), *Clara Burnham's* favoured suitor, is to be one of the expedition. *Richard Wardour*, the rejected lover—a moody, passionate man, of a rugged but noble nature, played by Mr. DICKENS—throws a number which has the effect of keeping him in the hut; and just before the starting of the explorers, he discovers that *Frank Aldersley* is his rival. An accident decides his going with them, in company with Frank; and, in spite of the opposition of *Lieutenant Crayford* (played to perfection by Mr. MARK LEMON), who fears what may ensue, the rivals depart together.

In the third Act, we find several of the Arctic party in a cavern on the coast of Newfoundland, rescued and returning home. But *Frank Aldersley* and *Richard Wardour* remain behind. The ladies from Devon, who have come out with their Scotch nurse in search of the lost ones, are also congregated in the same cave, into which suddenly rushes a wild, ragged, maniac creature, crying for food. It is *Richard Wardour*, who has escaped from the icy floe, half-starved, and with madness in his brain. Food and drink are given him, and, after hastily and fiercely swallowing some, he stows away the rest in a wallet, and is preparing to rush off, when he is recognized, and himself recognizes *Clara Burnham*. He is charged with the murder of his comrade; but he replies hysterically, and fights his way out of the cave, returning almost instantly with *Frank Aldersley* in his arms, faint, famished, frost-bitten, *but alive*. Often in the wastes of snow has *Richard* been tempted to slay him, or to leave him behind when sleeping, that he may perish slowly. But his noble nature at length prevails; and, when his rival sinks beneath his sore trials, *Richard's* stronger arm brings him safely through the icebergs and the snow-drifts, and lays him at the feet of *Clara*. Having thus accomplished a *noble revenge*, his own strength fails, and he dies, blessing and blessed.

Mr. DICKENS' performance of this most touching and beautiful Part might open a new era for the stage, if the stage had the wisdom to profit by it. It is *fearfully fine* throughout.....Mr. DICKENS shows that he is not only a great Novelist, but a great Actor also.

All the other Parts are played with careful intelligence and hearty zest. Mr. WILKIE COLLINS is very truthful and touching in the last Scene; and Mr. AUGUSTUS EGG 'realizes' a grumbling seacook with infinite humour. The ladies, who vie lovingly in all the charms and all the graces that delight the eye and touch the heart, are members of Mr. DICKENS' family; and Mr. YOUNG CHARLES, who performs *Lieutenant Steventon* with great ease and tact, is no other than Mr. CHARLES DICKENS, the Younger

The musical arrangements, which are of marked importance in the conduct of the Drama, are under the skilful and accomplished direction of Mr. FRANCESCO BERGER, a young Composer of rich promise, who appears to unite in his Art, as in his name, the melody of Italy with the science of Germany. A small but very select Orchestra is employed, Mr. BERGER presiding at the Piano. The introductory Overture, compact in form and brilliant in character, is marked throughout by skill, taste, and feeling; we may note particularly a duet for Violoncello and Flute, felicitously intimating the tender and pathetic elements of the story, and written with unmistakable affection and the true sympathy of a sister Art. The Incidental Music, announcing and accompanying the chief episodes in the action, deserves a word of emphatic recognition for the perfect fidelity of expression, the exquisite refinement, and the consistent grace, which almost approach Tennyson's ideal of wedded bliss.

FRANCESCO BERGER (1834-1933)



Francesco Berger was a popular composer and pianist and a member of Dickens's amateur theatrical company. He had written the music for *The Lighthouse* in 1855 and his overture to *The Frozen Deep*, dedicated to Dickens, was published as part of the fund raising for Douglas Jerrold's widow. Berger wrote his *Reminiscences, Impressions & Anecdotes* in 1913 and included details of Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens and his own part in the production of the play.

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OVERTURE  
TO  
"THE FROZEN DEEP!"  
FRANCESCO BERGER.

ALLEGRO  
GIUSTO

A page of musical notation for the Overture to "The Frozen Deep" by Francesco Berger. The score is written for piano and includes a first system with a treble clef and a bass clef. The tempo is marked "ALLEGRO GIUSTO". The first system includes dynamic markings such as "sf", "mf", and "pp". The second system continues the notation with similar dynamic markings and includes a "Ped" (pedal) instruction. The score is set in a key with two sharps (D major or F# minor).