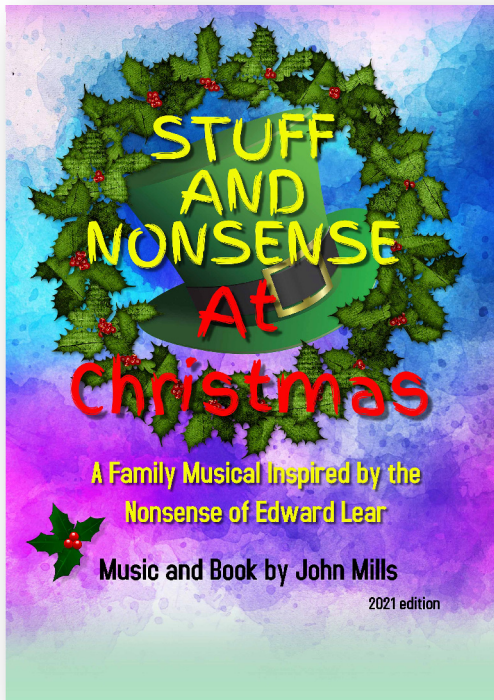


# STUFF AND NONSENSE AT CHRISTMAS

INSPIRED BY THE NONSENSE OF EDWARD LEAR

Words and Music by JOHN MILLS



## 1) What is 'Stuff And Nonsense At Christmas' All About?

‘T’was the week before Christmas and all through the house, the Jumblies were stirring ... ‘

A celebration of the nonsense writings of Edward Lear combined with the excitement and joys of Christmas. A festive feast of musical entertainment for all the family. A bit of a Pantomime!

Meet Edward Lear – a writer, poet, illustrator, musician and traveller. Author of favourite stories and nonsense-poems for young people, including *The Owl and the Pussycat*, *The Jumblies* and *The Quangle Wangle’s Hat*.

Meet the Jumblies – dancing, tumbling characters from Lear’s furtive imagination. Cheerful, smiley, usually-happy, they ferment in Lear’s head, ready for ‘*another nonsensing*’ so they can burst into life. A world of fun and ditzyness!

Set in the week leading up to Christmas Day, ‘*Stuff And Nonsense At Christmas*’ explores Lear’s sometimes-troublesome events with his tumbly Jumblies who sing their nonsense stories to illustrate key moments in the narrative.

In Lear’s ‘squirly-whirly’ world we meet his housekeeper – Old Foss (a talking cat), and his physician, Dr Calico who is Hootie Owl in disguise - the plot thickens. Not forgetting Mr C (aka Santa) who is watching events and making guest appearances. In Lear’s imagination we have King and Queen Pelican with their shy daughter Dell and her beau - King Crane who, sssh!, has no webs between his toes. Come and meet Jolly Pobble (who has no toes!), ‘hard-of-hearing’ Aunt Jobiska and the ‘groovy’ Quangle Wangle Quee. All of whom perform with a Jumbly Chorus whose ‘*heads are green and hands are blue*’ with the help of a multitude of birds and beasts.

‘*Stuff And Nonsense The Musical*’ is an entertaining experience for the whole family, with its engaging characters, tuneful songs, Christmas setting and happy ending.

## 2) Author’s Note

In enabling Lear’s writing to be brought to the stage I made many decisions with both text and characters. His characters are now brought to life under the collective term of ‘Jumblies’. Verses of the poems have been combined or removed where they didn’t move the narrative forward quickly enough. I have frequently changed Lear’s words from third to first person. I have also updated behaviours that were acceptable to previous generations but less so to modern audiences. In short, I have taken liberties with Lear’s original writing, but I hope that in so doing I have breathed new life into these wonderful characters.

3) **Lear’s much-loved poems** which have been set to music are:

The Jumblies  
Calico Pie  
The Pelican Chorus  
The Pobble Who Has No Toes  
The Owl And The Pussycat  
The Quangle Wangle’s Hat  
How Pleasant To Know Mr Lear

4) **Note To The Director**

Have fun! It should be very upbeat and fast-paced, with plenty of opportunities for engaging with the audience. It could almost be a pantomime – Old Foss as a ‘put-upon’ princess, Hootie Owl as the handsome prince, Dr Calico as the pantomime villain and Mr C as the dame. The audience can hiss and boo. Almost! Every song lends itself to fantastic staging and dance. Let your imagination go wild to set your audience up for a fabulous, uplifting Christmas!

You can have as many Jumblies as you like ... there are several individual spoken lines and opportunities for groups of Jumblies. I suggest no more than three groups. When not on stage with a named part, everyone has the opportunity to become a Jumbly. Thus you could have a very large cast.

5) **Characters**

‘*Stuff And Nonsense At Christmas*’ has 11 named characters for 10 performers but there are opportunities for more doubling up. (See below) The roles of Dr Calico and Hootie Owl should be taken by the same actor. It is also possible for Mr C to also take on the role as Queen Pelican which would add to the fun. The majority of roles can easily become non-gender specific with minor script changes.

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|----------------|---|
| 1) MR LEAR     | Nonsense Poet, a touch eccentric. Main character  |
| 2) OLD FOSS    | ‘Put-upon’ talking cat. Mr Lear’s housekeeper cat   |
| 3) *HOOTIE OWL | Falls in love with Old Foss. Disguises himself as scheming Dr Calico. Plays ‘easy’ guitar |

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|--------------------|--|
| 3) *DR CALICO      | Same performer as Hootie Owl. Quack Doctor with vaguely Eastern European accent                        |
| 4) MR C.           | aka Santa. Needs plenty of costume changes and no embarrassment! Plays ‘easy’ guitar (?)               |
| 5) PELICAN DELL    | Shy pelican  |
| 6) KING CRANE      | Haughty Crane with a dreadful secret   |
| 7) QUEEN PELICAN   | Long-suffering wife of King.   |
| 8) KING PELICAN    | Boisterous, guffawing, yokelly Pelican   |
| 9) JOLLY POBBLE    | Jolly, bouncy Jumbly who has lost his toes   |
| 10) AUNT JOBISKA   | Older, hard-of-hearing Jumbly with an ear-trumpet  |
| 11) QUANGLE WANGLE | Hippie-ish, ‘love-bucket’ Jumbly. Becomes Mr Lear’s love-interest. Will there be a ‘happy-ever-after?’ |

\*HOOTIE OWL and DR CALICO are the same actor

An assortment of tumbly Jumblies as Elves, dancers and ‘Greek Chorus’. All have green hair and blue hands.

### 6) Using Reduced Cast of 5

A reduced cast of 5 performers could take the following roles:

Performer 1: Mr Lear

Performer 2: Old Foss, Pelican Dell, Jolly Pobble

Performer 3: Hootie Owl, Dr Calico, King Crane

Performer 4: Mr C, \*Queen Pelican

Performer 5: \*King Pelican, Aunt Jobiska, Quangle Wangle

\*Queen and King Pelican roles could be reversed for a more traditional gender performance, but you’d lose the opportunity of Mr C camping up the Queen’s role.

When not playing a specific role, the performers should be Jumblies. Use of puppets, dolls and special effects to create myriad of tumbly Jumblies especially during the big numbers.

### 7) Synopsis

T’was the week before Christmas and all through the house, the Jumblies were stirring ... It’s been raining. There’s a cold, gusty wind. The busking Hootie Owl serenades Old Foss, housekeeper cat to Mr Lear. Hootie Owl has fallen in love with Old Foss and sets about scheming a way to turn her head from Mr Lear.

Mr Lear returns from his exhilarating holiday and we meet the tumbly Jumblies from inside his head. Mr Lear’s annoying sneezes return. Dr Calico calls and prescribes ‘bluez’ and ‘greenz’ jellybeans for Mr Lear’s sneezes. Dr Calico calls again, with flowers for Old Foss who becomes increasingly irritated with Mr Lear.

Dr Calico declares Mr Lear to have the dreaded Jumblies Disease! The Jumblies go into hiding. Old Foss, angry with the way she is being treated, decides to leave Mr Lear! He is all alone. What’s to become of him?

Dr Calico returns and is horrified to find that Old Foss is no longer at Mr Lear’s. Dr Calico is determined to find her.

Mr Lear has slept well for the first time in ages. And his sneezing has stopped. Hooray! Mr Lear writes a letter of love to Old Foss but is interrupted by Old Foss who has returned. She declares she has met Hootie Owl and they are to be married! Mr Lear is dumbfounded later, when they ask if he can host their wedding party at his home, on Christmas Day. What will he do?

On Christmas morning Mr C. (aka Santa) wakes Quangle Wangle, an expert party-planner to help create the Christmas party. Half-way through the party it is revealed that Hootie Owl and Dr Calico are one and the same, and that enticing Old Foss away from Mr Lear was all part of Hootie Owl’s elaborate plan. An angry exchange between Mr Lear and Dr Calico is calmed by the Quangle Wangle. Mr Lear happily celebrates Christmas by singing and tap-dancing his way through his own song. ‘It’s Just Stuff And Nonsense At Christmas!’

## 8) Scenes and Songs

### ACT 1

Act 1, Scene 1	Mr C’s Grotto	<i>‘Hello Mr C!’</i>
	<b>#01 Main Theme (Underscore)</b>	
Act 1, Scene 2	Outside Mr Lear’s House	<i>‘Meet Hootie, Fossie and Mr Lear’</i>
Act 1, Scene 3	Mr Lear’s Study	<i>‘Meet The Tumbly Jumblies’</i>
	<b>#02 It’s Just Stuff And Nonsense 2’03”</b>	
Act 1, Scene 4	Mr Lear’s Study	<i>‘Mr Lear’s Sneezes Return’</i>
Act 1, Scene 5	Mr Lear’s Study	<i>‘Going To Sea In A Sieve’</i>
	<b>#03 The Jumblies 5’02”</b>	
Act 1, Scene 6	Mr C’s Grotto	<i>‘Servicing The Sleigh’</i>
Act 1, Scene 7	Mr Lear’s Study	<i>‘Hello Dr Calico’</i>
Act 1, Scene 8	Mr Lear’s Study	<i>‘Dr Calico’s True Colours!’</i>
	<b>#04 Calico Pie 1’48”</b>	
Act 1, Scene 9	Mr Lear’s Study	<i>‘Shifting Loyalties’</i>
Act 1, Scene 10	Mr C’s Grotto	<i>‘Mr C Has A Sduffed-Up Doze!’</i>
Act 1, Scene 11	Three Beds	<i>‘Sweet Dreams’</i>
	<b># 05 Music Box ‘Far And Few’ (Underscore)</b>	
Act 1, Scene 12	Mr Lear’s Study	<i>‘Evicted Using Force!’</i>
	<b>#06 Vanish And Leave Us For Good 2’10”</b>	
Act 1, Scene 13	Outside Mr Lear’s House	<i>‘Ribbons Of Love!’</i>
	<b>#07 Ribbons Of Love 2’10”</b>	
Act 1, Scene 14	Mr Lear’s Study	<i>‘Jumblies Disease!’</i>
Act 1, Scene 15	Mr Lear’s Study	<i>‘My Whole Life Is A Mess!’</i>
	<b>#08 The Pelican Chorus 3’30”</b>	
	<b>#09 What’s To Become Of Me? 0’51”</b>	

## ACT 2

Act 2, Scene 1	Mr C’s Grotto	‘Mr C’s Day Job’
	<b>#01 Main Theme (Underscore)</b>	
Act 2, Scene 2	Mr Lear’s Study	‘Leave Me Alone!’
Act 2, Scene 3	Mr Lear’s Study	‘A Visit From Jolly Pobble’
	<b>#10 The Pobble Who Has No Toes 3’48”</b>	
Act 2, Scene 4	Mr Lear’s Parlour	‘A Visit From Aunt Jobiska’
Act 2, Scene 5	Mr Lear’s Parlour	‘Where Eez My Darlinks Fossiez?’
Act 2, Scene 6	Mr C’s Grotto	‘Where’s The Satnav?’
Act 2, Scene 7	Mr Lear’s Study	‘An Unexpected Engagement’
Act 2, Scene 8	Mr Lear’s Study	‘At Sea In A Pea-Green Boat’
	<b>#11 The Owl And The Pussycat 4’25”</b>	
Act 2, Scene 9	Mr Lear’s Study	‘An Impossible Ask’
Act 2, Scene 10	Mr C’s Grotto	‘Time For A Hot Bath!’
Act 2, Scene 11	One Bed	‘Bath Cap And Beaver Hat’
Act 2, Scene 12	Outside Mr Lear’s House	‘Hiya, Eddie! Groovy!’
Act 2, Scene 13	Mr Lear’s Parlour	‘Jumblies To The Rescue!’
	<b>#12 The Quangle Wangle’s Hat 2’16”</b>	
Act 2, Scene 14	Mr Lear’s Front Door	‘Christmas Checklist’
Act 2, Scene 15	Mr Lear’s Christmas Parlour	‘Will You Ma ...?’
	<b>#13 How Pleasant To Know Mr Lear (Plus Tap Dance) 4’11”</b>	
	<b>#14 It’s Just Stuff And Nonsense At Christmas 0’10”</b>	

### 9) Music

A compilation of songs from ‘Stuff And Nonsense’ can be heard through the website <https://stuffandnonsensethemusical.com> MP3 backing tracks are available for all music. A vocal score, piano-conductor score and instrumental scores are available.

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