

Stuff And Nonsense The Jumblies

Songs and Dances Inspired by the Nonsense of Edward Lear
Music and Book by John Mills

1) What is '*Stuff And Nonsense The Jumblies*' All About?

Meet Edward Lear – an enthusiastic, extroverted writer, poet, illustrator, musician, traveller ... but sometimes ... ? An introverted and curmudgeonly grumpbucket, worrier, depressive.

Meet the Jumblies – dancing, tumbling characters from Lear's furtive imagination ... cheerful, smiley, happy, tuneful ... but sometimes ...? Sadful, emotional, distraught, anguished. They ferment in Lear's head, waiting for '*another nonsensing*' so they can burst into Jumblyland. An exciting world of fun and sadness, reality and madness, love and loss. Aaah.

'*Stuff And Nonsense On Tour*' explores Lear's journey into sadness and back to happiness with his tumbly Jumblies who sing their own stories serving as lessons for life. There are songs of love, songs of joy and songs of loss, woven through Lear's own personal narrative.

The intentionally light-hearted styling of the musical lays over this deeper meaning, and within the story are hints at possible causes and solutions for those who may have concerns with their own mental health – expressing emotions, doing things differently, allowing friends to help find new ways forward.

In Lear's 'real world' are his housekeeper – Old Foss (a talking cat), and his physician - Dr Calico. In his imaginary world of 'Jumblyland' we have the Dong with a luminous nose and the fickle Jewelly Jumbly. Come and meet Jolly Pobble (who has no toes!) and Aunt Jobiska, King and Queen Pelican with their shy daughter Dell and her beau - King Crane who, sssh!, has no webs between his toes. Say 'hello' to the Yonghy Bonghy Bo and Lady Jingly, the Akond of Swat and the enigmatic Scroobious Pip, Hootie Owl and the 'groovy' Quangle Wangle Quee. And all performing alongside a Jumbly Chorus whose '*heads are green and hands are blue*' with a multitude of birds and beasts. We've a host of dancers, Fimble's 'Jivers', Bisky's Batters and the Topsy Tappers. Full of '*Stuff And Nonsense*'.

'*Stuff And Nonsense The Jumblies*' is an entertaining, colourful and emotional theatre experience for the whole family, with its raft of engaging characters, tuneful songs and a triumphant and happy ending. Think CATS without the fur, and you won't be far off the concept.

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 'Jumbles'. As long as they've got some semblance of green hair and blue hands, they're in the family. Many verses of the poems have been combined or removed where they didn't move the narrative forward quickly enough. New limericks have been written for each of the characters to allow further development. I have frequently changed Lear's words from third to first person. In short, I have taken liberties with Lear's original writing, but I hope that in so doing I have enabled these characters to dance off the page.

3) Characters

'*Stuff And Nonsense The Jumbles*' has 17* main characters and a chorus of colourful, singing and dancing Jumbles, with opportunities for doubling up if required. Each character has a memorable musical motif, a unique expression/saying or accent, and associated props to create a strong identity. The roles of Dr Calico and Hootie Owl could be taken by the same actor. The majority of roles are non-gender specific.

Mr Lear	An eccentric, but not mad. Author, letter-writer and traveller. Suffers from sneezes and bouts of uncertainty. Has his tumbly Jumbles for companions. He is the central character who often has 'nonsensings'.
Old Foss	Mr Lear's housekeeper is a fastidious talking cat with the patience of a saint until ... stars opposite Hootie Owl in their fabulous duet. A character that is central to the unfolding storyline.
Pelican Dell	Shy, 'ugly duckling' with arm bands and a rubber ring around her waist and an 'L'-plate.
Hootie Owl	Exceptional guitarist, singer and romantic woo-er of Old Foss. Very manipulative in matters of love. Disguises himself as Dr Calico in order to get close to Old Foss with whom he is utterly besotted.
Dr Calico	Mr Lear's 'doctor'. He is the main antagonist and works hard to get Old Foss to leave Mr Lear's employ. Turns out he's Hootie Owl's alter ego.
King Pelican	A larger-than-life fellow with snorkel and flippers who finds everything absolutely hilarious.

The Dong	Sad and forlorn creature, forever seeking his lost love – Jewelly Jumbly. Creates a unique luminous nose.
Fimble Fowl	A fantastic jive dancer with slick chicken moves
King Crane	Haughty character with an unspeakable secret. Perhaps his crown is a large fish tart with fishtails sticking out of the top.
Jolly Pobble	A wobbly character who sees the world through rose-coloured glasses and tries to make the best out of every situation.
Yonghy Bonghy Bo	A character with few precious possessions to his name. So sad that he has loved ... and lost. Perhaps there is some hope with the Turtle?
Akond of Swat	Who? Or Why? Or Which? Or What? Is the Akond of Swat? Mr Lear in disguise?
Scroobious Pip	Bird or Fish or Beast? Doesn't fit in to any stereotype box.
Bisky Bat	Batty party-animal with dubious friends of the night
Jewelly Jumbly	A brilliant dancer who's flighty, fickle and flirty. Uses her hands to express herself far too much!
Queen Pelican	All-knowing queen who often gets exasperated with her husband, the King. A flouncy umbrella might keep off the sun and rain.
Aunt Jobiska	Jolly Pobble and everyone else's favourite, caring Auntie. Hard of hearing, she may have a large ear trumpet which doesn't seem to be of much help.
Lady Jingly	Quick to become emotional and prone to crying. Loves lace handkerchiefs and restorative perfumes. Plenty of 'cooling down' hand movements.
Quangle Wangle Quee	A 'woody-hippie-type' character with 'cool' mannerisms. Wears a fantastic beaver hat with ' <i>ribbons and bibbons on every side</i> '. Groovy. Gets Mr Lear in the end.
Jumbly Family	Everyone is part of the Jumbly family and chorus. Performers are also required to take on other roles as birds, fish, mice, insects and beasts.

4) Stage Set

This song and dance musical set in a dazzling Jumblyland can be performed without any scene changes. A large ‘Crumpetty Tree’ with a wide canopy would provide an additional raised performance/band space.

5) Music and Band

MP3 backing tracks are available for the music which has been fully scored. For more intimate performances a piano/string-bass/drum ensemble arrangement is available. A score for a larger ensemble of 3 keyboards, acoustic and electric bass with drums is also available.

A 15 minute compilation of songs from ‘*Stuff And Nonsense The Musical*’ can be heard at soundcloud.com/johnmills or search for **StuffAndNonsenseExtracts**

6) Synopsis

Mr Lear has returned from his travels and is really happy to be home with Old Foss, his housekeeper cat and his imaginary tumbly Jumblies. The **Overture** establishes the musical style of the musical. Mr Lear is a bit bothered about Old Foss meeting with Hootie Owl who is busking outside her window. and is a little concerned. They are interrupted by pipes bursting into the wild torrent of ‘nonsense’ that are **The Jumblies**. The whole company sing **It’s Just Stuff And Nonsense** to help distinguish between Mr Lear’s real and imaginary ‘nonsense’ worlds.

Mr Lear has sneezes so Old Foss, his housekeeper gets Dr Calico to call who prescribes some ‘bluez’ pills to Mr Lear who doesn’t trust him. Dr Calico gives Old Foss a flower before singing **Calico Pie**. Dr Calico is increasingly concerned about Mr Lear’s propensity for ‘nonsensings’ with his imaginary friends, the Jumblies and prescribes plenty of rest.

As night approaches, Mr Lear has another of his nonsensings – **The Dong With A Luminous Nose**. After a sleepless night Dr Calico visits again and upon further examination of Mr Lear declares he has the dreaded Jumblies Disease’! A frantic, manic, panic turns into **Fimble’s Jive**, which in turn leads into **The Pobble Who Has No Toes**.

Despite being told to rest Mr Lear has another ‘nonsensing’ **Beatbox Alphabet** which causes real problems for Old Foss who has an argument with Mr Lear and she leaves him! Mr Lear sets about tidying up for himself and rediscovers his poem **The Pelican Chorus** to try and cheer himself up but to no avail. Now all alone, the first Act ends with **Farewell to Dell** and a sad Mr Lear asking, ‘What’s to become of me?’

An **Entracte** opens Act 2. Mr Lear’s sneezing has stopped but he’s still feeling sorry for himself and rather confused, so he considers how he might get Old Foss to return. He is interrupted by **The Courtship Of The Yonghy Bonghy Bo**. Mr Lear is sinking more deeply into unhappiness and has a real crisis of confidence with **The Akond of Swat**. Further into darkness he questions why are there so many expectations of having to be ‘normal’. **The Scroobious Pip** defies description and provides some solace to Mr Lear, though he remains very alone and unhappy.

Another disturbed night for Mr Lear who is kept awake from **Bisky’s Charleston**. Grumpy and in despair he starts to write a letter declaring his love to Old Foss who coincidentally rushes and announces that she is to marry Hootie Owl! **The Owl And The Pussycat** tells the story of their wedding, to which Mr Lear is invited. He’s missed his chance of happiness with Old Foss!

The wedding turned out to be better than expected for Mr Lear who met the Quangle Wangle Quee. Everyone was invited to come together in the Crumpetty Tree and sing **The Quangle Wangle’s Hat**. Mr Lear is greatly cheered and realises that he has fallen in love with the Quangle Wangle. Just as well that he’s feeling so happy as Hootie Owl reveals himself to be none other than Dr Calico! Hootie takes the credit for Mr Lear recovery from sneezing by luring Old Foss away. He had an allergy to cat’s hairs! After some tetchy moments Mr Lear and Hootie Owl shake hands.

Mr Lear has recovered his mojo and entreats everyone to listen to his own song, **How Pleasant To Know Mr Lear** which he delivers with great panache and confidence with the **Tipsy Tappers**. All ends well with his prescription for everyone – a daily dose of Stuff And Nonsense, before an exuberant flourish leads to the **Bows** with cries of, ‘It’s Just Stuff And Nonsense To Us!’

A 15 minute compilation of songs from ‘*Stuff And Nonsense The Jumblies*’ can be heard on our website <https://stuffandnonsensethemusical.com>

7) Audience Comment

‘Highly enjoyable and entertaining’

‘A brilliant production - congratulations to musical director and cast’

‘Some really lovely melodies’

‘It made me look again at Mr Lear’

‘Insane, totally bonkers but hugely entertaining’

For further information please email stuffandnonsensemusicals@gmail.com

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