

The Story of The Jumblies – Libretto of the Jumblies Suite

(words by Edward Lear and John Kilpatrick)

1. The Book

Tenor

What is this book? Why have I got this book? Perhaps it was a present? Let's see, Ah yes! Ah yes!
Let's see what it's about. Ah! Pictures; poems; it's all nonsense! nonsense! Listen to this:

There was an Old Man of Whitehaven
Who danced a quadrille with a Raven
But they said "It's absurd to encourage this bird!"
So they smashed that Old Man of Whitehaven.

Well, I don't know: let's find another one.

There was an Old Man with a gong,
Who bumped at it all the day long;
But they call'd out "O lore! you're a horrid old bore;"
So they smashed that Old Man with a gong.

Well, I don't know, I don't know, they certainly like smashing people. (I wonder who "they" are!)
Let's see, let's see now: there must be something nicer. Ah yes! Ah yes! Here's a rhyme I know: The
Owl & the Pussy Cat -

version 1 – Hely-Hutchinson

- I'll sing it to you.

version 2 – Igor Stravinsky

- can anybody sing it?

Soprano

Ah yes! Ah yes! but I can sing the Stravinsky.

Choir (spoken)

The Stravinsky??

Soprano

Ah yes! Ah yes! What's wrong with Stravinsky?

2. The Owl and the Pussy-Cat (*Tenor or Soprano solo*)

The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat,
They took some honey, and plenty of money,
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar,
'O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love,
What a beautiful Pussy you are,
You are,
You are,
What a beautiful Pussy you are!'

Pussy said to the Owl 'You elegant fowl!
How charmingly sweet you sing!
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:
But what shall we do for a ring?'
They sailed away, for a year and a day,
To the land where the Bong-tree grows,
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood
With a ring at the end of his nose,
His nose,
His nose,
. With a ring at the end of his nose.

'Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?' Said the Piggy, 'I will.'
So they took it away, and were married next day
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
They danced by the light of the moon,
The moon,
The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.

3. The Author

Tenor

But I forgot – my apologies – I forgot to tell you the author.

Choir

The author's name is Edward Lear.

4. How Pleasant to Know Mr Lear (*Choir*)

1. Tutti

How pleasant to know Mister Lear,
Who has written such volumes of stuff.
Some think him ill-tempered and queer,
But a few think him pleasant enough.

2. Soprano

His mind is concrete and fastidious,
His nose is remarkably big;
His visage is more or less hideous,
His beard it resembles a wig.

4. Alto

He sits in a beautiful parlour,
With hundreds of books on the wall;
He drinks a great deal of Marsala,
But never gets tipsy at all.

5. Tenor

He has many friends, laymen and clerical,
Old Foss is the name of his cat;
His body is perfectly spherical,
He weareth a runcible hat.

7. Bass

He weeps by the side of the ocean,
He weeps on the top of the hill;
He purchases pancakes and lotion,
And chocolate shrimps from the mill.

*These four
verses
overlap*

8. Tutti

He reads, but he cannot speak, Spanish,
He cannot abide ginger beer;
Ere the days of his pilgrimage vanish,
How pleasant to know Mister Lear!

5. Preamble to The Jumblies (*Tenor*)

Ladies and Gentlemen, we'd like to tell you a story: of courage, and endeavour, and success. The Jumblies undertook a hazardous journey, against all the advice of their friends. Their equipment was substandard, but they improvised making use of what they had, and they kept up their spirits with music. And this is their story.

6. The Jumblies (*Choir*)

1. They went to sea in a Sieve, they did,

In a Sieve they went to sea:

In spite of all their friends could say,
On a winter's morn, on a stormy day,

In a Sieve they went to sea!

And when the Sieve turned round and round,
And every one cried, 'You'll all be drowned!'

They called aloud, 'Our Sieve ain't big,
But we don't care a button! we don't care a fig!

In a Sieve we'll go to sea!'

Far and few, far and few,

Are the lands where the Jumblies live;

Their heads are green, and their hands are blue,

And they went to sea in a Sieve.

2. They sailed away in a Sieve, they did,

In a Sieve they sailed so fast,

With only a beautiful pea-green veil
Tied with a riband by way of a sail,

To a small tobacco-pipe mast;

And every one said, who saw them go,
'O won't they be soon upset, you know!

For the sky is dark, and the voyage is long,
And happen what may, it's extremely wrong

In a Sieve to sail so fast!'

Far and few, etc.

3. The water it soon came in, it did,
 The water it soon came in;
 So to keep them dry, they wrapped their feet
 In a pinky paper all folded neat,
 And they fastened it down with a pin.
 And they spent all night in a crockery-jar,
 And each of them said, 'How wise we are!
 Though the sky be dark, and the voyage be long,
 Yet we never can think we were rash or wrong,
 While round in our Sieve we spin!'

Far and few, etc.

5. They sailed to the Western Sea, they did,
 To a land all covered with trees,
 And they bought an Owl, and a useful Cart,
 And a pound of Rice, and a Cranberry Tart,
 And a hive of silvery Bees.
 And they bought a Pig, and some green Jackdaws,
 And a lovely Monkey with lollipop paws,
 And forty bottles of Ring-Bo-Ree,
 And no end of Stilton Cheese.

Far and few, etc.

7. Preamble to The Dong (*Tenor*)

Ladies and Gentlemen, you have heard the Jumblies' story: a happy tale, a saga of success, a silver lined sojourn. But behind every silver lining lies a cloud! Ah! the Dong, falling in love with a Jumbly girl, with her sky-blue hands, and her sea-green hair. Loss, Despair, and Madness. I'll say no more. Here is our tale.

8. The Dong (*Choir*)

1.
 When awful darkness and silence reign
 Over the great Gromboolian plain,
 Through the long, long wintry nights;—
 When the angry breakers roar
 As they beat on the rocky shore;—
 When Storm-clouds brood on the towering heights
 Of the Hills of the Chankly Bore:—

3.
 Slowly it wanders,—pauses,—creeps,—
 Anon it sparkles,—flashes and leaps;
 And ever as onward it gleaming goes
 A light on the Bong-tree stems it throws.
 And those who watch at that midnight hour
 From Hall or Terrace, or lofty Tower,
 Cry, as the wild light passes along,—
 'The Dong!--the Dong!
 'The wandering Dong through the forest goes!
 'The Dong! the Dong!
 'The Dong with a luminous Nose!,

4. And all night long they sailed away;
 And when the sun went down,
 They whistled and warbled a moony song
 To the echoing sound of a coppery gong,
 In the shade of the mountains brown.
 'O Timballo! How happy we are,
 When we live in a sieve and a crockery-jar,
 And all night long in the moonlight pale,
 We sail away with a pea-green sail,
 In the shade of the mountains brown!'

Far and few, etc.

6. And in twenty years they all came back,
 In twenty years or more,
 And every one said, 'How tall they've grown!
 For they've been to the Lakes, and the
Terrible Zone,
 And the hills of the Chankly Bore;'

And they drank their health, and gave them a feast
 Of dumplings made of beautiful yeast;
 And every one said, 'If we only live,
 We too will go to sea in a Sieve,—
 To the hills of the Chankly Bore!'

Far and few, etc.

2.
 Then, through the vast and gloomy dark,
 There moves what seems a fiery spark,
 A lonely spark with silvery rays
 Piercing the coal-black night,—
 A Meteor strange and bright:—
 Hither and thither the vision strays,
 A single lurid light.

4.
 Long years ago
 The Dong was happy and gay,
 Till he fell in love with a Jumbly Girl
 Who came to those shores one day,
 For the Jumblies came in a sieve, they did,—
 Landing at eve near the Zemmery Fidd
 Where the Oblong Oysters grow,
 And the rocks are smooth and gray.
 And all the woods and the valleys rang
 With the Chorus they daily and nightly sang,—
 'Far and few, etc.

5.

Happily, happily passed those days!
While the cheerful Jumblies staid;
They danced in circlets all night long,
To the plaintive pipe of the lively Dong,
In moonlight, shine, or shade.
For day and night he was always there
By the side of the Jumbly Girl so fair,
With her sky-blue hands, and her sea-green hair.
Till the morning came of that hateful day
When the Jumblies sailed in their sieve away,
And the Dong was left on the cruel shore
Gazing—gazing for evermore,—
Ever keeping his weary eyes on
That pea-green sail on the far horizon,—
Singing the Jumbly Chorus still
As he sate all day on the grassy hill,—
'Far and few, etc.

7.

Playing a pipe with silvery squeaks,
Since then his Jumbly Girl he seeks,
And because by night he could not see,
He gathered the bark of the Twangum Tree
On the flowery plain that grows.
And he wove him a wondrous Nose,—
A Nose as strange as a Nose could be!
Of vast proportions and painted red,
And tied with cords to the back of his head.
—In a hollow rounded space it ended
With a luminous Lamp within suspended,
All fenced about
With a bandage stout
To prevent the wind from blowing it out;—
And with holes all round to send the light,
In gleaming rays on the dismal night.

6.

But when the sun was low in the West,
The Dong arose and said;—
—'What little sense I once possessed
Has quite gone out of my head!'—
And since that day he wanders still
By lake or forest, marsh and hill,
Singing—'O somewhere, in valley or plain
'Might I meet my Jumbly Girl again!
'For ever may I seek by lake and shore
'Till I find my Jumbly Girl once more!'

8.

And now each night, and all night long,
Over those plains still roams the Dong;
And above the wail of the Chimp and Snipe
You may hear the squeak of his plaintive pipe
While ever he seeks, but seeks in vain
To meet with his Jumbly Girl again;
Lonely and wild—all night he goes,—
The Dong with a luminous Nose!
And all who watch at the midnight hour,
From Hall or Terrace, or lofty Tower,
Cry, as they trace the Meteor bright,
Moving along through the dreary night,—
'This is the hour when forth he goes,
'The Dong with a luminous Nose!
'Yonder—over the plain he goes,
'He goes!
'He goes;
'The Dong with a luminous Nose!'