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Mother Goose's Golden Christmas

A family musical

Book, music and lyrics by
David Wood

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



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MOTHER GOOSE'S GOLDEN CHRISTMAS

First presented at the Queen's Theatre, Hornchurch, on the 19th December 1977, with the following cast of characters:

Mother Goose	Brian Hewlett
Little Jack Horner	David Brenchley
Little Bo Peep	Deirdre Dee
Little Miss Muffet	Nicolette Marvin
Little Tommy Tucker	Lennox Greaves
Little Polly Flinders	Patience Tomlinson
Big Bad Wolf	Jack Chissick
Bigger Badder Wolf	Mike Maynard
Fairy Lethargia	Penny Jones
The Goose	Isobal Nisbet
The Giant	Tim Pearce
The Spider	Caroline Swift
The Monster Of The Moat	
Humpty Dumpty	

The play directed by Paul Tomlinson

Settings by David Knapman

- Act I**
- Scene 1 The Book—home of the Nursery Rhyme characters
 - Scene 2 The Forest/Spider's Lair
 - Scene 3 The Book
 - Scene 4 The Forest, without the Spider's Lair
- Act II**
- Scene 1 The Forest (optional scene)
 - Scene 2 Entrance to the Giant's Castle
 - Scene 3 In the Moat—under water
 - Scene 4 Entrance to the Giant's Castle
 - Scene 5 The Giant's Workshop
 - Scene 6 In the Sky
 - Scene 7 The Book

As the play is based upon the well-known collection of Nursery Rhymes called "Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes", the ideal period in which to set it is Victorian, with all the settings and costumes resembling a beautiful Victorian children's book.

CHARACTERS

Mother Goose		The purveyor of nursery rhymes, probably the "dame" part, lovable old lady, looking after her nursery rhyme "family".
Little Bo Peep		Weepy girl (because she is always losing her sheep!). Dressed in red (for reason which will become apparent).
Little Tommy Tucker		Fat, usually hungry, boy—sings for his supper.
Little Miss Muffet		The most imaginative of the "family"—her stories of meeting fearsome spiders are taken with a pinch of salt by the others.
Little Jack Horner		The nearest we get to a "Simple Simon" or "Idle Jack" part. Limited intelligence because his sole purpose in life is sitting in corners putting his thumb in and pulling plums out.
Little Polly Flinders		Grubby, skinny girl dressed in rags—the skivvy who cooks and cleans; but not looked down on or even discontented with her lot—this is her role in life and she enjoys it. Very shy—whispers a lot.
The Goose		Lovable, mute bird, must be capable of pathos, but humour as well; mimes to convey her thoughts, often interpreted by the audience.
The Big Bad Wolf		A small, rather nervous villain.
The Bigger Badder Wolf		A larger, rather confident villain.
Giant	} (could be played by the same actor)	The Wolves' employer. Ruthless, unsuccessful alchemist whose only aim is to make gold.
Bossyboots		
The Spider		
Fairy Lethargia		Frightening frightener.
		A lumpy, sleepy, reluctant fairy, who only emerges at Christmas time to sit on the Christmas tree. She <i>can</i> do magic spells, but only under pressure.
The Monster Of The Moat		A non-speaking monster, the guardian of the Giant's Castle. Probably similar to the Loch Ness Monster and in segments, which divide. The Monster could be played by Giant, Big Bad Wolf, Bigger Badder Wolf, The Goose, and/or others.
Humpty Dumpty		A last minute appearance—preferably played by a child.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT I

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. We Wish You A Merry Christmas | Little Miss Muffet, Little Jack Horner, Little Bo Peep, Little Tommy Tucker, Little Polly Flinders. |
| 2. Once Upon A Time | Mother Goose, Little Miss Muffet, Little Jack Horner, Little Bo Peep, Little Tommy Tucker, Little Polly Flinders. |
| 3. The Song Of The Goose | Little Tommy Tucker, Mother Goose, Little Miss Muffet, Little Jack Horner, Little Bo Peep, Little Polly Flinders (and the Goose). |
| 4. With A Huff And A Puff | Big Bad Wolf, Bigger Badder Wolf. |
| 5. My Big Moment | Little Miss Muffet. |
| 6. Getting Ready For Christmas | Mother Goose, Little Jack Horner, Little Bo Peep, Little Tommy Tucker, Little Polly Flinders. |
| 7. Sheep, Sheep | Little Bo Peep, Little Jack Horner, Little Tommy Tucker, Little Polly Flinders. |
| 7A. My Big Moment (reprise) | Little Bo Peep. |
| 8. Fairy Lethargia's Magic Spell | Fairy Lethargia. |
| 9. Off To The Rescue | Mother Goose, Little Miss Muffet, Little Jack Horner, Little Bo Peep, Little Tommy Tucker, Little Polly Flinders, Fairy Lethargia. |

ACT II

- 9A. **Off To The Rescue** (reprise) Mother Goose, Little Miss Muffet, Little Jack Horner, Little Bo Peep, Little Tommy Tucker, Little Polly Flinders.
- 9B. **Fairy Lethargia's Magic Spell** (reprise) Fairy Lethargia.
- 9C. **My Big Moment** (reprise) Little Polly Flinders.
10. **Music: Underwater Sequence** (including **My Big Moment**)
- 10A. **Fairy Lethargia's Magic Spell** (reprise) Fairy Lethargia.
11. **When You're Feeling Worried** Mother Goose, Little Miss Muffet, Little Tommy Tucker, Little Bo Peep, Little Polly Flinders, Fairy Lethargia.
12. **Fee Fi Fo Fum** Giant, Big Bad Wolf, Bigger Badder Wolf.
- 12A. **My Big Moment** (reprise) Little Jack Horner.
- 12B. **Fairy Lethargia's Magic Spell** (reprise) Fairy Lethargia.
13. **Music: Flying Home Sequence and Her Big Moment**
- 13A. **Getting Ready For Christmas** (reprise) Mother Goose, Little Jack Horner, Fairy Lethargia. Little Miss Muffet, Little Bo Peep, Little Tommy Tucker, Little Polly Flinders, joined by Mother Goose and Little Jack Horner.
14. **Happy Christmas, Mother Goose** Little Miss Muffet, Little Jack Horner, Little Bo Peep, Little Tommy Tucker, Little Polly Flinders, Fairy Lethargia (and the Goose).
15. **Humpty Dumpty Sat On A Wall** Humpty Dumpty.
16. **Mother Goose's Golden Christmas** The Company.

With sincere thanks to
John Hole
for whom this is my tenth
commissioned play, and without
whose confidence, help and
encouragement I might have
given up after the first

ACT I

SCENE I

The Book. Home of the Nursery Rhyme characters. Dawn, Christmas Eve

This is their equivalent of a house; indeed it has a door, and maybe windows. It is suggested that the Book is three-quarters open, the covers facing the audience. On the front cover is the title—"Mother Goose's Golden Christmas Annual", with perhaps a picture representing Mother Goose flying on a Goose, accompanied by several young people. As perhaps the ideal time in which to set the play is Victorian, the design of the cover could well be in the style of one of the famous children's book illustrations of the period—e.g. Arthur Rackham or Kate Greenaway. It may be considered a good idea to start with the tabs already out, so that the audience can see the Book and its title before the House Lights go down. Alternatively, a painting of the Book on a gauze front cloth would give the magical possibility of "mixing through" to the real Book

Music, as the Lights come up on the Book

The door of the book opens and, surreptitiously, Little Miss Muffet creeps out, yawns and stretches, and looks both ways to see if anyone is coming. She beckons, and Little Jack Horner tiptoes out. They greet each other with excitement but no noise. Then Little Polly Flinders emerges, sweeping with a broom. The others shush her with a finger to their mouths and take away the broom, leaning it against the book. As the three huddle together, as though discussing a secret plan, Little Tommy Tucker comes out, eating a large sausage or a piece of pie, and not looking where he is going. He bumps into the group, who turn on him and shush him. Finally, Little Bo Peep, with her shepherdess's crook, comes out, ignoring the others but looking into the early morning light—in the hope of seeing her lost sheep. She shrugs her disappointment as Little Jack Horner takes away her crook and leads her to the others. This section should not take long. The idea is not to set up the individual characters, but rather to convey the fact that these five people live in the book, and, early this morning, having just woken up, are up to something secret

Little Miss Muffet shuts the door, and in fairly soft voices they sing.

SONG 1: We Wish You A Merry Christmas

During the song the children bring forward a Christmas tree and, setting it to one side of the stage, start to decorate it with tinsel and baubles, etc., which they take from a largish box labelled "Decorations", and which they wheel on for the purpose. Occasionally someone checks that no one is coming out of the door—the idea being, as we shall soon discover, that the children are doing this as a surprise for Mother Goose

Little Miss Muffet
Little Jack Horner
Little Bo Peep
Little Tommy Tucker
Little Polly Flinders

(singing)

We wish you a Merry Christmas
 We wish you a Merry Christmas
 We wish you a Merry Christmas
 And a Happy New Year.

Good tidings we bring
 To you and your kin
 We wish you a Merry Christmas
 And a Happy New Year.

Now bring us some figgy pudding
 Now bring us some figgy pudding
 Now bring us some figgy pudding
 And bring some out here.

We wish you a Merry Christmas
 We wish you a Merry Christmas

At this point the Christmas tree lights go on and the Children react happily

We wish you a Merry Christmas

Little Tommy Tucker is pushed forward. He gives a good tug on the bell-rope. The bell rings

And a Happy New Year.

Giggling with excitement, the Children hide to wait for the reaction

After a short pause, we hear Mother Goose's voice as she comes to answer the door, hurriedly putting on a dressing-gown

Mother Goose Who on earth can that be at this unearthly hour? (*She opens the door and steps out, and sees the lit-up tree. She gasps.*) Ah ...! Look what's grown in the night. An electric light tree. Someone must have planted a bulb!

The Children pop out from hiding, making Mother Goose jump. They gather round

Children Tara! Surprise, surprise! Happy Christmas, Mother Goose, etc.

Mother Goose Oh, little ones. All I can say is ... (*Suddenly*) Aaaaaah!

All jump

Little Tommy Tucker What's the matter, Mother Goose?

Mother Goose You're standing on my foot, Tommy dear.

Little Tommy Tucker Oh. Sorry. (*He moves*)

Mother Goose Thank you, dear, and thank you, all of you, for such a lovely seasonal surprise. But haven't you forgotten something?

Little Miss Muffet What?

Mother Goose I'm not sure. But somehow it doesn't look complete . .

The Children all think hard. Mother Goose suddenly sees the audience

Oh . . . ! *(To the audience)* Good morning. Hallo. Look, little ones, visitors. You're jolly early. I'm not even dressed yet. I don't usually open the door in my dressing-gown.

Little Jack Horner I didn't know you *had* a door in your dressing-gown. Tara!

Mother Goose Thank you, Jack. Anyway—*(to the audience)*—now you're here, I'm Mother Goose and I look after all the nursery rhyme children and we all live in this big Book, and I know there's something missing off that Christmas tree. Can *you* spot it?

The audience is encouraged to shout out that there is no fairy on the Christmas tree

Of course. That's it. They're right! The fairy. Where is she?

Little Bo Peep She only works at Christmas. Sleeps the rest of the year.

Mother Goose What a lazy fairy! Hibernating like a hedgehog. Anyone remember her name?

Little Polly Flinders raises her hand

Well, Polly?

Little Polly Flinders whispers in Mother Goose's ear, then smiles shyly

That's right. Fairy Lethargia. We'd better give her an alarm call and wake her up. After three. One, two, three.

All *(calling)* Fairy Lethargia.

No reaction

Mother Goose One, two, three.

All *(calling)* Fairy Lethargia.

No reaction

Mother Goose We need a few more decibels, I reckon. *(To the audience)* How about all joining in? Would you do that? Thank you. One, two, three.

All *(including the audience)* Fairy Lethargia.

Mother Goose And again. One, two, three.

All Fairy Lethargia.

Suddenly, a large yawn, accompanied perhaps by a drum roll, heralds the awakening of Fairy Lethargia. She crawls, unfairylike and anything but dainty, out of the decorations box. She holds a wand, complete with star on the end. She cannot stop yawning. This could possibly be accompanied by pretty, tinkling fairy music to point up the irony

Fairy Lethargia Oh no, it's not Christmas time again already, is it? *(She gives a huge yawn)*

Mother Goose Yes. And you're late, Lethargia.

Fairy Lethargia I'm sorry, I—ooh. *(Suddenly she sees the audience and makes*

an attempt to do a fairy balletic-type movement as she goes into rhyming couplets)

Hallo, hallo, 'tis Christmas Eve and I am Fairy Lethargia,
My wand and spells and magic powers are here to watch and guardjya
Throughout the festive season my eyes on you I'll keep (*Yawning*)
Except when they start shutting, 'cos I need my beauty sleep. (*She falls asleep on her feet*)

Mother Goose One, two, three.

All (*calling*) Fairy Lethargia.

Fairy Lethargia jumps awake

Fairy Lethargia Oh no, it's not Christmas time again already, is it? (*She gives a huge yawn*)

Mother Goose Yes, it is.

Little Miss Muffet And you're meant to be on the tree.

Fairy Lethargia I'm not sitting on that tree. It's all prickly. And I might drop off.

Little Jack Horner That's your trouble—you're *always* dropping off. Tara!

Fairy Lethargia Cheek. Tell you what; we'll compromise. (*She waves her wand*)

My magic wand looks like a star, I'll stick it on the tree
And like a beacon burning bright, it'll make you think of me.

(*She arranges her wand on the tree*)

Return I shall for turkey, for Christmas pud and booze
Till then I think I'll say ta ta and have a little snooze.

She nips back into the decorations box, yawns and vanishes from sight. N.B. It may well be advisable for the box to extend a little into the wings, so that Fairy Lethargia can escape through one side to the wings between appearances

Mother Goose Charming. Daintiness personified. She works too hard, that's her trouble. A twelve-hour year. She's the same every Christmas. Do you remember, little ones, when ... (*She breaks off, then turns to the audience*)
Oh, I'm sorry. How rude. I haven't even introduced my family to you, have I? Tell you what, let's see if you can guess who they all are—because ...

SONG 2: Once Upon A Time

Little Bo Peep	It Really won't surprise us
Little Jack Horner	If you recognize us
All the children	From a nursery rhyme
Mother Goose	And I'm sure you've heard them Or even learnt them Once upon a time.

The Children act out each other's story as appropriate. First, Little Bo Peep comes forward

Mother Goose Here's a girl all pale and wan
And she's crying, so something's wrong
Little Bo Peep I can't help but weep
I've lost all my sheep
And don't know where they've gone.

The music continues

Mother Goose (*speaking to the audience*) Who is she?

The audience may give her an answer. She adlibs her thanks

All She's
Little Bo Peep
Little Bo Peep
From the nursery rhyme
Little Bo Peep
You must have learnt it
Once upon a time.

Little Jack Horner I was eating Christmas pie
In the corner, then—who knows why?—

Mother Goose He put in his thumb
And pulled out a plum—

Little Jack Horner What a good boy am I!

Again Mother Goose asks the audience who he is

All He's
Little Jack Horner
Little Jack Horner
From the nursery rhyme
Little Jack Horner
You must have learnt it
Once upon a time.

Mother Goose Here's a girl you'll know, I s'pose
In the cinders she warmed her toes
All (*except Mother Goose and Little Polly Flinders*) Her mother then caught her
And told off her daughter
For spoiling her new clothes.

The audience shout out who it is

All She's
Little Polly Flinders
Little Polly Flinders
From the nursery rhyme
Little Polly Flinders
You must have learnt it
Once upon a time.

Little Tommy Tucker Now bring me some figgy pudding

Please bring me some figgy pudding—
 I am singing for my supper
 What shall we give him?
Mother Goose
 All (*except Little Tommy Tucker*)
 White bread and butter
Little Tommy Tucker It's no wonder
 I get fat
Mother Goose Who can tell me ...
 Who is that?

The audience shout out the answer

All He's
 Little Tommy Tucker
 Little Tommy Tucker
 From the nursery rhyme
 Little Tommy Tucker
 I'm sure you learnt it
 Once upon a time.
Little Miss Muffet In the forest yesterday
 I was eating my curds and whey
Mother Goose Along came a spider
 Who sat down beside her
Little Miss Muffet And frightened me away.

The audience call out her name

All She's
 Little Miss Muffet
 Little Miss Muffet
 From the nursery rhyme
 Little Miss Muffet
 I'm sure you learnt it
 Once upon a ...
 Little Miss Muffet
 Little Tommy Tucker
 Little Polly Flinders
 Little Jack Horner
 Little Bo Peep
 I'm sure you learnt them
Girls Once upon a time
Boys Once upon a time
Girls Once upon a time
Boys Once upon a time
 All Once upon a time

Mother Goose There you are, I told you you knew them all already! Right, little ones, breakfast time. (*She calls loudly*) Polly!

Little Polly Flinders comes forward shyly

Little Polly Flinders (*whispering*) Yes, Mother Goose?

Mother Goose Put the kettle on.

Music, as the Children revolve the Book, to reveal a room the other side. It is a kitchen with a large dining-table and a hearth complete with cinders, hob and traditional-style kettle. The Christmas tree and decorations box remains at the side of the stage. N.B. The revolve of the Book could take place during the last chorus of the song. Little Polly Flinders puts the kettle on. Mother Goose and the others sit at the table. Mother Goose pours herself some cereal from a packet or jar, and passes it down the line. First Little Jack Horner, then Little Miss Muffet pour themselves some; then Little Tommy Tucker pours all the remaining cereal on to his plate. The music stops as Little Bo Peep—on the end—bursts into tears. N.B. This section should be played at a fair speed

Little Jack Horner Oh, stop being weedy, Bo Peep.

Little Bo Peep I'm not being weedy. Tommy's taken all the cereal, the selfish pig.

Little Tommy Tucker I'm a growing boy.

Little Bo Peep Growing? Huh. If you grow any more you'll burst. Like a fat balloon.

Mother Goose Stop arguing, you two. Bo Peep, there's more cereal in the cupboard. So stop crying. Tommy, go and fetch her some.

Little Tommy Tucker does so

Little Miss Muffet She's always crying.

Little Bo Peep So would you if you kept losing your sheep. (*She starts sobbing again*)

Little Miss Muffet That's nothing compared with having to fight off great monster spiders every day.

Little Jack Horner So you say.

Little Miss Muffet What's that meant to mean?

Little Jack Horner Well, *we* never see these giant spiders of yours. *No one* sees them except you.

Little Miss Muffet Are you suggesting I invent them?

Little Jack Horner No. I'm just saying I've never seen one.

Little Bo Peep That's because he sits at home all day putting in his thumb and pulling out plums. What a waste of time.

Little Tommy Tucker No, it's not. They're very nice plums.

Little Bo Peep Well, we all know you're a greedy hog who never stops stuffing his face.

Little Tommy Tucker I'd rather be a greedy hog who never stops stuffing his face than one of your miserable stupid sheep who keep wandering off ...

Little Bo Peep is about to retaliate. Mother Goose interrupts

Mother Goose Ting-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling. End of Round One. That's enough. It's Christmas, time of good cheer. Now, what's the matter, little ones?

All the Children start to react angrily to the phrase "little ones". Then they think better of it. Silence

Eh?

Little Polly Flinders brings everyone a mug of tea

Thank you, Little Polly.

All the Children look at one another as if to say—"there you are". Little Polly Flinders sits

What have I said now?

Little Polly Flinders (*whispering*) Little.

Mother Goose Little?

Little Jack Horner Sorry, Mother Goose, but we're all getting a bit fed up with being "Little". *Little Jack Horner.*

Little Miss Muffet *Little Miss Muffet.*

Little Bo Peep We're all "Little".

Little Tommy Tucker And we always have to do the same old "little" things.

Little Jack Horner Day after day after day.

Little Polly Flinders (*whispering*) That's why we argue sometimes. It gives us something else to think about.

The others nod

Mother Goose I see. But, children, your nursery rhymes are so popular. Everyone knows them. You can't just stop doing what you do in them and start doing something else. People expect nursery rhymes to carry on for ever.

Little Jack Horner But I'm fed up with sitting in corners pulling out plums. There must be something more to life than that.

Little Bo Peep And I don't *enjoy* losing my sheep all the time. (*She starts to cry*)

Little Polly Flinders (*whispering*) I'd like to get away from my dirty old cinders sometimes. Not for always. Just sometimes.

Little Tommy Tucker All I do is sing for my supper. That's child's play. I'd like a challenge. An adventure.

Little Miss Muffet And I'm tired of being terrified by fierce spiders which nobody really believes I see anyway.

Little Jack Horner In short, Mother Goose, we're bored. Bored with being "Little" people of "little" consequence.

Pause

Mother Goose (*having an idea*) I tell you what. I was wondering what I could give you all as a Christmas present. And now I know. I'll think up a brand new nursery rhyme story with all of you in it.

The Children look interested

An adventure story. Excitement. Danger. A story in which each one of you does great things, each one of you has his or her big moment. How about it?

Children Yes, please; thank you, Mother Goose; how does it start?; let's hear it now; etc.

Hungry for More?

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