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Jack the Lad

A Musical Celebration

David Wood and Dave and
Toni Arthur

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION

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FOUNDED 1830

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JACK THE LAD

Commissioned by the Library Theatre Company, the play was first presented by the City of Manchester Cultural Services at the Library Theatre, Manchester, on 23rd March, 1984, with the following cast of characters:

Jack	David Scase
Nelson	Frank Elliott
Maria	Cynthia Grenville
Zeldy	Sophia Winter
Rose	Myra Sands
Tom	Ric Morgan
Young Jack	Howard Ward
Frank	Jeremy Swift
Reuben	Rod Arthur
Betsy	Michelle Fine
Darren	Sheldon Robinson
Charlotte	Nigel Murphy
Jason	Lindsey Ashworth
Dog	Claire Billingham
	Jason Pollitt
	Jason Shaw
	Bess

Director Roger Haines
Musical Director Simon Lowe
Choreography Jean Newlove
Designer Jenny King
Lighting Designer Tim Wratten
Sound Michael Williams

CHARACTERS

All are members of various branches of a gypsy family.

Jack	eighty years old, the elder of the family
Nelson	Jack's son, fiftyish
Maria (pronounced Marya)	Jack's daughter-in-law; Nelson's wife, fortyish
Zeldy	Jack's granddaughter; Nelson and Maria's daughter, twentyish
Rose	Jack's daughter, forties
Tom	Jack's son-in-law; Rose's husband, forties
Young Jack	Jack's grandson; Rose and Tom's son, twenties
Frank	Jack's grandson; Rose and Tom's son, twenties
Reuben	Jack's sister Alice's son, mid thirties
Betsy	Reuben's wife, mid thirties; Scottish*
Darren Charlotte Jason }	Reuben and Betsy's young children
Bess	Nelson's lurcher dog

The action of the play takes place in a gypsy encampment

Time—the present

*(See Production Note on page vi)

INTRODUCTION

Jack the Lad is a musical celebration of Jack, the ubiquitous hero or everyman of English legend, myth and folklore; from Little Jack Horner, through Jack and the Beanstalk to Spring Heeled Jack, the Terror of London.

The setting is a gypsy encampment, and the Jack tales and songs are performed by the gypsies to celebrate the eightieth birthday of their senior member—affectionately known to the family as Jack the Lad. Although the play depicts contemporary gypsy family life, as well as traditional gypsy customs and superstitions it is not a sociological play about gypsies.

It is important that the actors playing the gypsy family find a balance between truthfully playing each family member acting in a Jack tale and using their actors' skills to enhance the characterization. In other words, sometimes fun will be gained from a gypsy not being equipped to play a certain role in a Jack tale, but such moments should not be over-indulged. Every member of the gypsy family is, for the purposes of the play, a good actor!

The show uses a basic set—a gypsy encampment in the countryside, with an attractive wagon plus a flat wagon to act as an occasional platform. All props and extra costumes would be on stage, in or out of the wagon. The gypsies should appear to improvise telling their stories, so that simplicity and inventiveness of presentation is the key.

Apart from the show musicians, it is hoped that some of the cast will be able to play the simple basic gypsy instruments, like the melodeon and the mouth-organ, or the penny whistle. Jack himself, who does *not* play all the Jacks in the show, but is our focus, because it is his eightieth birthday and the other gypsies are paying their tribute, should be a fiddler. Naturally, the actor might have to mime playing the fiddle.

The musical depicts various gypsy skills, such as stepdancing—a simple form of tap-dancing. Other traditional dances will also be employed. Plus occasional acrobatics, puppetry, and story-telling.

A variety of theatre techniques will be employed also within the main framework, including a mumming play, stories narrated with accompanying mimed action, a shadow-mime, plus vocal and dancing skills.

In the script we have often indicated which gypsy character might best play which parts in the Jack tales. But occasionally we have left this to the director. In the narrated tales, it is suggested that several actors can share the narration; this spreads the load and also helps drive the story forward.

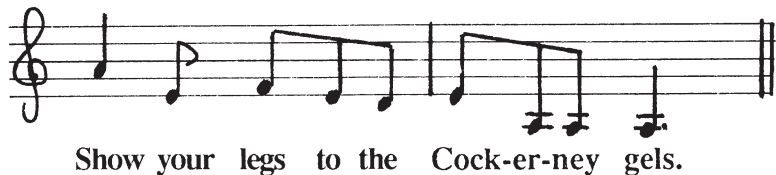
The action of the musical takes place in the evening. Night draws on as the show progresses.

David Wood and Dave and Toni Arthur

PRODUCTION NOTES

Betsy. If no member of the cast can produce an authentic Scottish accent then Betsy can be played as a Southern English gypsy. Drop any references to Scotland and anglicize Betsy's lines. Her mouth music (Music No. 6) would then be:

Derby, Derby, won't you marry me?
Derby, Derby, won't you say yes?
Derby, Derby, won't you marry me?
Show your legs to the Cock-er-ney gels.
Doo dee doo dee doo dee diddle dee
Doo dee doo dee diddle dee doo
Doo dee doo dee doo dee diddle dee
Show your legs to the Cock-er-ney gels.



Spring Heeled Jack. Some productions have just used the Spring Heeled Jack song (Music No. 9) to top-and-tail the story and not incorporated it into the story action.

Information on step-dancing and Broom Dances can be obtained from the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, English Folk Dance and Song Society, Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regents Park Road, London NW1 7AY. Telephone 071-284 0523.

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