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Old Father Time

A Family Musical

David Wood

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION

**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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OLD FATHER TIME

First presented at the Queen's Theatre, Hornchurch, on the 20th December 1976, with the following cast of characters:

Old Father Time	Brian Hewlett
Mrs Sparkle , a charlady	Penny Jones
Dodger , a gypsy busker	Mike Maynard
Bodger , his son	David Brenchley
The Flying Sauceress	Sue Lynne
Watchdog	
A German Tourist }	Pauline Lewis
Sergeant Watchit }	
A Caveman }	Tony Stephens
A Beefeater }	
The Dinosaur }	Sue Beresford
An American Tourist }	
The Prime Minister	
Head Caveman	Philip Newman
Head of the Yeomen of the Guard }	
A Japanese Tourist	
A Caveman	
Guy Fawkes }	Don Dryden
A Window Cleaner }	
Admiral of the Fleet	
A German Tourist	
A Conspirator	
A Caveman	Jeremy Roberts
A Postman	
The Lord Mayor	
An American Tourist	
A Cavewoman	
A Conspirator	Alison Robertson
A Road Sweeper	
Lady Mayoress	
Tourists, party guests, etc.,	Jane Alder
New Father Time, Puppy Watchdog	Jacqueline Boivin
	Ben Hole
	Lisa Hughes
	Wendy Jackson
	Alison McGuire
	Deborah Sinclair
	Frances Smith

The play directed by John Hole
Settings by David Knapman

The action takes place at the Palace of Westminster; inside the top of Big Ben; opposite the Tower of London; and in Space

Time—the present, to start with at any rate

Companies who require a large cast production could use up to thirty actors; but in the original production a cast of twelve, doubling or trebling, was used as shown in the cast list

MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT I

1	London, Wonderful London	Sergeant Watchit, Mrs Sparkle, Press Photographer, Tourists
2	Two-Man Busker Band	Dodger and Bodger
3	Old Father Time	Mrs Sparkle, Sergeant Watchit, Dodger, Bodger and Company
4	My Almanac, incorporating Mirabile Dictu (formula)	Old Father Time, Mrs Sparkle, Sergeant Watchit, Dodger, Bodger and Watchdog
5	Destination Earth	Flying Sauceress
6	The Flying Sauceress's Apprentice's Assistant	Flying Sauceress, Dodger and Bodger
7	Mirabile Dictu (formula)	Bodger

ACT II

8	UG!	Head Caveman, three Cavemen, Cavewoman
8A	Mirabile Dictu (formula)—reprise	Mrs Sparkle
9	Prehistoric Pet	Old Father Time, Mrs Sparkle, Watchdog, Dinosaur
9A	Mirabile Dictu (formula)—reprise	Old Father Time
10	Through the Fourth Dimension	Old Father Time, Mrs Sparkle, Watchdog, Dinosaur (with almanac), with Flying Sauceress, Dodger and Bodger on Saucer
11	Mumble, Mutter, Murmur	Guy Fawkes, four Conspirators (including Dodger and Bodger)
11A	Mirabile Dictu (formula)—reprise	Old Father Time
11B	Through the Fourth Dimension—reprise	Old Father Time, Mrs Sparkle, Watchdog, Dinosaur
11C	Mirabile Dictu (formula)—reprise	Flying Sauceress
12	Auld Lang Syne (song sheet)	The Company (apart from the Flying Sauceress) and audience
12A	Old Father Time—reprise	The Company (apart from the Flying Sauceress)

To AUJ
with love and thanks
for all your encouragement and loyalty
over the years

ACT I

SCENE 1

London. A street in Westminster. Eight a.m. on December 30th

The set is a composite one, to which the play will return several times. It should not be too solid, however, as it will need to disappear in sight of the audience, section by section, as we travel back in time. Visible are Big Ben, an arched entrance to the Houses of Parliament (Westminster Hall), a rooftop (practical), a sentry-box and a pillar-box. In Act II a door to the cellars of the Houses of Parliament will be needed; this could be a trap-door in the stage, if there is one. The same trap-door could also be used for the interior Big Ben scenes in both acts. Since the date is December 30th, there could possibly be some Christmas decorations in the street. (See set plans on pages 66–7, also special note on dismantling)

Before the Curtain rises, as the House Lights go down, we hear the introductory chimes of Big Ben—ding, dong, ding, dong. As the CURTAIN rises, music is heard, in time with which we hear eight chimes signifying eight o'clock

Sergeant Watchit is standing in front of his sentry-box. A group of Tourists faces him, turned away from the audience, giving rise to movement and expectant murmurs. Nearby, Mrs Sparkle, with her bucket and mop, is busy polishing the brass of the door leading into the Houses of Parliament. A Press Photographer waits outside, expecting the arrival of the Prime Minister

On the fourth beat of the chimes, Sergeant Watchit coughs to gain attention. On the fifth beat, he starts addressing his audience

Song 1

LONDON, WONDERFUL LONDON

Sergeant Watchit Ladies and gents, your attention, please. May I
Welcome you all to the
Houses of Parliament.

The music continues as the Tourists applaud, and Sergeant Watchit mimes the start of his lecture. The focus changes to Mrs Sparkle, who starts to sing

Mrs Sparkle London, wonderful London
So much to do
So much to see
In
London, wonderful London town
London's the place for me.

The Tourists turn and become a chorus, the Press Photographer too

All London, wonderful London
 So much to do
 So much to see
 In
 London, wonderful London town
 London's the place to be.

 Buckingham Palace, British Museum
 The Embankment after dark
 Tower of London, National Gallery
 Marble Arch, Hyde Park.

 London, wonderful London
 So much to do
 So much to see
 In
 London, wonderful London town
 London's the place for me.

The music continues. The Tourists turn to listen to Sergeant Watchit

Sergeant Watchit (*speaking*) Begun in eighteen forty on the site of the old Palace of Westminster, the Houses of Parliament has the most famous clock in the world. (*Indicating Big Ben*) When Parliament sits—a flag flies from Victoria Tower by day and by night a light burns in the St Stephen's Tower above.

The music continues, as the Press Photographer suddenly notices something of interest off

Press Photographer (*speaking*) Hey! It's the Prime Minister!

General excitement

All London, wonderful London
 So much to do
 So much to see
 In
 London, wonderful London town
 London's the place to be
 London we all agree
 London, wonderful London town
 London's the place to be.

They all get into a good position to see the Prime Minister

The Prime Minister enters, waving

Sergeant Watchit clears a path towards the arched door

Sergeant Watchit (*to the crowd*) No jostling of the Right Honourable gent, if you please. (*To the Prime Minister*) Kindly proceed. SIR!

The "Sir!" is exclaimed vehemently as Sergeant Watchit rigidly jumps to attention. It makes the Prime Minister jump

Prime Minister Thank you, Watchit.

Sergeant Watchit Chilly morning, sir.

Prime Minister I beg your pardon?

Sergeant Watchit Bit chilly, sir. Nippy.

Prime Minister Ah. Well, Watchit, that is something I can't make a snap judgement on. But when my colleagues in the Cabinet and I have discussed it thoroughly, I'll come back to you.

Sergeant Watchit Thank you very much. SIR! (*Another loud one*)

The Prime Minister jumps. A Tourist and the Press Photographer flash their cameras. The Prime Minister poses, then waves farewell. Stately music is heard

The Prime Minister goes into the Houses of Parliament

Sergeant Watchit returns to his sentry-box. The crowd disperses, but some remain on stage—Tourists with guide-books, etc. The music changes to "Yo-heave-ho"-type music

Dodger and Bodger enter, dragging their gypsy caravan—one pulling the shafts, the other pushing from behind. The colourful caravan—which is not very big—has written on one side "Dodger and Son", and on the other "Bodger and Father."

Dodger Whoa!

They stop. Dodger looks around happily

At last. London. City of dreams. Fame and fortune. As we tread these pavements paved with gold, I feel like telling the world ...

Bodger Ow, my feet ache.

Dodger (*carried away*) How my feet ache—no! Shut up, Bodger. I feel like telling the world—watch us, world, we're going places.

Bodger I'm going nowhere. My poor feet are killing me.

Dodger Stop rabbiting on about your feet. Savour this historic moment in our careers.

Bodger But, Dad, they ache something horrible. (*He notices the audience*) Ooh.

Dodger So do mine, but I'm not complaining.

Bodger (*whispering*) Dad ...

Dodger Mine ache with pride. They carried me to—(*with reverence*)—London.

Bodger Dad ...

Dodger City of opportunity. Our stairway to the stars!

Bodger Dad, look ...

Dodger Stars of stage, screen and televis—(*he sees the audience*)—oo-er!

Bodger What are they?

Dodger Waxworks?

Bodger No, they're moving, look! And that one's laughing. And that one's eating a sweet. And that one's rustling a book.

Dodger I've got it. (*Excitedly*) London. Tourists. They're tourists. He's rustling his guide-book.

Bodger So?

Dodger They're our first London audience. This is it. The moment we've waited for. Get the props, quick.

Bodger, smiling a glazed smile at the audience, edges to the caravan and goes in to find props, maybe special jackets and hats—plus any musical instruments the Buskers can play. Meanwhile Dodger makes his introduction
Ladies and Gentlemen, boys and girls—good morning.

After the audience's first response, which will be pretty feeble—

They're all foreigners!

Audience participation to get a decent reaction

Today we are privileged to impress you, our first London audience, with our travelling show. May I introduce the act: buskers, street entertainers extraordinary—(*indicating the side of the caravan*)—Dodger—(*indicating himself*)—and Son.

A chord of music. Dodger works to get applause. The Tourists on the stage begin to take an interest. As Dodger is about to continue, Bodger comes from the caravan, in costume, banging a drum or making some kind of "roll up" sound. Dodger quickly prepares himself for the act

Bodger Ladies and Gentlemen, boys and girls. Good morning.

Audience Good morning.

Bodger Today we are privileg . . . vilifrig . . . fullofveg . . . happy to—er—er . . .

Dodger (*prompting, whispering*) Impress you.

Bodger Undress you.

Dodger No!

Bodger No!

Dodger Golly, you're stupid.

Bodger (*to the audience, loudly*) Golly, you're stupid.

Dodger No!

Bodger No!

Dodger Apologize.

Bodger (*to Dodger*) I'm sorry.

Dodger Not to me! To them!

Bodger (*to the audience*) I'm sorry.

Dodger (*interrupting*) Ladies and Gentlemen, boys and girls, presenting, for your edification and delight, the two and only . . .

Bodger (*turning the caravan round to show the writing on the other side*)

Bodger—(*indicating himself*)—and Father!

During the song Dodger and Bodger employ any skills they have musically, plus juggling, acrobatics, dancing, etc. If one could be a kind of one-man band, it would be very effective

Song 2 TWO-MAN BUSKER BAND

Dodger One
 Two
 Three
 Four
Bodger Five
 Six
 Nine
 Eleven

Dodger gives Bodger a crushing look

Dodger {	We are the Two-Man Busker Band	{ <i>Singing</i>
Bodger }	The Two-Man Dodger and Bodger Busker Band	{ <i>together</i>
	Sunshine or rain	
	We entertain	
	Singing for our supper . . .	

By this time the song appears to be going well. The spectators on the stage are reacting favourably, clapping in rhythm, etc. Suddenly there is an interruption, as—

The Prime Minister storms in from the arched entrance

Prime Minister Quiet. Qui—et.

The song grinds to a halt

That's better. You will kindly cease this cacophony forthwith.

Bodger We weren't cacoffeeephoning, whatever that means, and we won't cease forthwith. Or fifthwith. So there. (*He puts out his tongue*)

Dodger Bodger. Manners.

Prime Minister Clear off—you—gypsies.

Dodger How dare you!

Prime Minister Busking is against the law. Clear off.

Dodger We're only trying to make people happy . . .

Mrs Sparkle Give 'em a chance, Prime Minister.

Prime Minister What?

Mrs Sparkle Give 'em a chance to make people happy.

Prime Minister Shall I?

Audience Yes!

Prime Minister What! Let them do their act now?

Audience Yes.

Prime Minister Oh, very well. Carry on. And if you make *everybody* happy I'll give you a special licence to perform anywhere in London.

Applause. The song continues

Song 2 TWO-MAN BUSKER BAND [*reprise*]

Dodger One
 Two

Three

Four

Bodger Ooh me poor old feet are sore.

Dodger looks witheringly at Bodger

Dodger	We are the Two-Man Busker Band	} <i>Singing together</i>
Bodger	The Two-Man Dodger and Bodger Busker Band	

Sunshine or rain

We entertain

Singing for our supper all over the land.

We are the Two-Man Busker Band

And the busking happy-go-lucky life is grand.

Let us brighten your day

You don't have to pay

To hear the Two-Man Busker Band.

Bashing out the rhythm on the big bass drum

Singing the kind of songs that people like to hum

Dodger and Bodger

Two-man travelling show

Just step up on the pavement now

And listen to us go!

Short musical virtuosity section

All They/We are the Two-Man Busker Band
The Two-Man Dodger and Bodger Busker Band
Sunshine or rain

They/We entertain

Singing for our supper all over the land.

They/We are the Two-Man Busker Band

And the busking happy-go-lucky life is grand

Let us brighten your day

You don't have to pay

To hear the Two-Man Busker Band.

Dodger	{	We don't need a microphone or studio	} <i>Singing together</i>
Bodger		We can make music live in any place we go	

Bet you we'll get you
Tap tap tapping your feet
And by the second chorus
You'll be dancing in the street.

Musical virtuosity section

This continues as long as practicable, using as many different sounds, etc. as possible

Dodger Come on
Set your feet a-tapping

The audience is encouraged to participate

Bodger Get your fingers snapping

Dodger { Swing to the right

Bodger { And the left
And the right

{ Singing
together

La la la the chorus
With all of your might.

Audience participation: "La la la" chorus

Let us brighten your day
You don't have to pay
To hear the Two-Man Busker Band.

We may not be the Philharmonic
But we guarantee a real good tonic
The Two-Man Busker Band.

Short section of musical virtuosity

Mornings, ev'nings, afternoons

Dodger I play the tunes

Bodger And I play the spoons.

Dodger { The Two-Man Busker Band

Bodger { So give a big hand

{ Singing
together

To the Two-Man Busker Band.

At the end of the song Bodger returns inside the caravan. Dodger takes one of the spoons he has been playing

Dodger Prime Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, boys and girls. Mind over matter. One ordinary silver spoon. Courtesy of British Rail. Before your astonished eyes I will cause it to bend to an angle of ninety degrees. Thank you. (*He prepares himself, then stops*) Can you all see? Not really? Very well. (*He goes to the caravan and produces a very large spoon, three or four feet long*)

Music for atmosphere

Dodger holds the spoon in the centre with one hand, and rubs the stem near the bowl with the other. Tortured grimaces of concentration. Eventually the other end—furthest from the bowl—bends. Dodger is intently watching the bowl end and does not notice until the last moment. (This should be based on the old pantomime gag of sawing one end of a piece of wood, and the other end falling off.) The crowd applauds. Dodger bows

Prime Minister Well, what does everyone think? Did they make you happy?

Audience Yes!

Prime Minister Very well. Here you are. (*He hands Dodger a licence*)

All Hooray!

Mrs Sparkle Three cheers for the Prime Minister. Hip, hip—

All Hooray.

Mrs Sparkle Hip hip—

All Hooray.

Mrs Sparkle Hip hip—

All Hooray.

Mrs Sparkle He's a real heaven sent.

Prime Minister Heaven sent?

Mrs Sparkle A real GENT! (Explaining) Heaven sent—gent.

Prime Minister (bemused) Oh. Thank you.

The Prime Minister exits. Bodger returns.

Mrs Sparkle comes forward. She carries her mop and bucket. She goes to Bodger and Dodger

And you two are real chunky! Got me plates of meat going.

Bodger (bewildered) Did we? Dad, we got her plates of meat going.

Dodger Good. (Whispering) What's she talking about?

Mrs Sparkle (laughing) Sorry, dearie, it's the Cockney rhyming slang. Plates of meat—(she encourages the audience to "translate")—FEET! You'll have to learn all that now you're staying in London. Listen, how do you fancy a nice cup of Rosie Lee?

Bodger Who?

Mrs Sparkle Rosie Lee—(she waits for the audience to "translate")—TEA!

Dodger Tea?

Mrs Sparkle You've got to keep your strength up. When did you last eat?

Bodger When we had our horse.

Mrs Sparkle You ate your horse?

Bodger No. We last ate when we had him but we had to sell him because we couldn't afford to keep him.

Mrs Sparkle That settles it. You're coming with me. Now, I'm Mrs Sparkle and I work for yer actual Old Father Time. He'll be very chuffed to meet you, I'm sure. Oh Sergeant Watchit!

Sergeant Watchit comes forward

Sergeant Watchit Sir! (He realizes) I mean—marm!

Mrs Sparkle All right if I take Mr Dodger and Mr Bodger for a cup of Rosie Lee with Old Father Time?

Sergeant Watchit Certainly, Mrs Sparkle. In fact—(he looks at his watch)—any moment now ...

A telephone bell rings. Bodger and Dodger look around

Ah! (He opens a section of his busby, revealing a telephone, and answers it) Watchit ... Right away, sir ... Thank you. (He replaces the phone and turns to the others) As I thought. I may have the pleasure of accompanying you to Old Father Time's office. My security round commences there.

Dodger But who is Old Father Time?

Mrs Sparkle You've never heard of Old Father Time?

Sergeant Watchit He controls every second, every minute, every hour of every day and every night of every week of every month of every year.

Bodger Where does he live?

Hungry for More?

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