

MR. TOAD AND COMPANY

*Adapted by Frumi Cohen
from the novel by Kenneth Grahame
Music and lyrics also by Frumi Cohen*

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PUBLISHED BY
ELDRIDGE PUBLISHING COMPANY

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STORY OF THE PLAY

The rich Mr. Toad develops a taste for driving and crashing fast cars. Finally, after being forbidden to drive, he steals a car and ends up in jail. The story's villains, the weasels and foxes, take over Toad's estate in his absence. Badger, Rat, and Mole come to the rescue, conquer the Weasels, and save Toad Hall from ruin.

The story of how bedtime stories were turned into the book, *The Wind In The Willows*, is told in this hour-long musical for young audiences. Biographical information about the author, Kenneth Grahame, his son Alastair, and how these stories came to be published, is revealed alongside adventures of the resourceful Rat, trusty Mole, gruff Badger, and the ever frivolous Toad.

SETTING

Two sets, the River and the Wild Wood are needed. The Wild Wood may be set behind the curtain and left there throughout the show. It can be as simple (backdrop) or as complicated as desired. Adding multi-level platforms will give it more depth. A rowboat facsimile is needed. Giant window frame is optional. The scene in Grahame's study can be simply suggested by a wing chair and bookshelves. A bench and appropriate lighting will suffice for the jail scene.

Mr. Toad and Company

3

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 M, 1 W, 4 Flexible, plus extras)

(Minimum 7 players)

ENGLISHMAN - Alastair Grahame

RIVER RAT - Kindly rat who loves the river (*Soprano, tenor*)

BADGER - Gruff, but wise (*Baritone, bass*)

MOLE - Gentle, prefers underground (*Baritone, second tenor*)

TOAD - Exuberant, loves fast cars (*Soprano, tenor*)

JAILER'S DAUGHTER - Helps Toad escape

POLICEMAN/WOMAN - Arrest Toad

WEASELS, FOXES - As chorus

*A woman may be cast as the River Rat, Toad or Mole because of the singing range of those roles.

SONGS

SONG OF THE RIVER by all Animals

MOLES SONG/RAT'S SONG by all Animals

THE LIFE ADVENTUROUS by Toad, Rat and Mole

SONG OF THE WILD WOOD by weasels and foxes

THROUGH THEIR WINDOWS by Mole, Rat, Animals

THE BATTLE OF TOAD HALL by Rat, Badger, Mole, Toad

FINALE: THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS by Entire Cast

COSTUME SUGGESTIONS

ENGLISHMAN: Three piece suit, early 1800s, spats.
RAT, MOLE, BADGER, TOAD: Normal clothes with animal accessories. Suit slacks, velvet suit jackets, vests, spats, suspenders, scarves, whiskers, tails, caps with ears, make-up. Toad can wear oversized painted green spectacles for toad eyes. Wears a shawl, bonnet and a skirt for the washerwoman.
WEASELS: Masks on popsicle sticks that are held in front of the face and removed to reveal make-up during the Weasel's Song. Gangster suits á la 1940.
JAILER'S DAUGHTER: Layers of aprons, high lace shoes, lots of make-up.

PROPS

Englishman-book
Rat-picnic basket, belts, pistols, swords, sticks
Toad-backpack laundry basket, scarf, helmet, and goggles
Wild Wood animals-drums and noisemakers
Jailer's Daughter- tray of food

SOUND EFFECTS

Motorcar approaching and leaving
Jungle drumming
Motorcar speeding in and away
Crashing noise

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: A study. A well-dressed old ENGLISHMAN looks up from a book he's reading and speaks to the audience from a wingback chair.)

ENGLISHMAN: Oh, hello. I didn't see you there right away. I was busy reading. Do you like to read? You know, sometimes when I sit down with a good story the room disappears and a new world springs up, right before my eyes. It's better than the movies. Even better than TV. At least, I think so. You see, I love stories. I love stories more than anything. Would you like me to tell you one? A lifetime ago, in England, there lived a young boy named Alastair, Alastair Grahame. He loved stories, especially the ones his father told him each night before bed. One night, it was a special night because it was Alastair's seventh birthday, he asked for a very special story about a mole, a water rat, and a giraffe. The little boy loved that story so much that every night he asked for more stories about the mole and the rat. The giraffe was not such a hit so he was forgotten, and instead a silly toad that Alastair loved very much took his place. And then Kenneth, that was Alastair's father's name, added one more animal to the crew, a Mr. Badger. They all lived near the riverbank....

(LIGHTS fade on MAN as voices are heard singing.)

End of Scene 1

Scene 2

(AT RISE: The riverbank. Behind it, the Wild Wood backdrop. A rowboat flat on wheels. WEASELS, RABBITS, FOXES, etc., are milling around.)

SONG: SONG OF THE RIVER

ANIMALS: OOO....OOO.....OOO...

(This continues, gets louder as LIGHTS come up. It continues as a counter melody to the river theme).

SHAKE AND SHIMMER, GLINT AND GLEAM
SPARKLE, RUSTLE, SHINE
BUBBLE, RIPPLE, CHATTERING
THE RIVER MOVES LIKE TIME.

(Enter RIVER RAT. He drags a small rowboat with oars, launches it and climbs in, obviously enjoying himself.)

RATTLE, WRINKLE, RUSHING IN
TATTLE, TINGLE, TWIST
MURMUR, MINGLE, MEANDERING
THE RIVER MOVES LIKE THIS.

(Enter BADGER)

BADGER:

TOO MANY PEOPLE ON THE RIVER THESE DAYS
WISH THEY'D ALL JUST STAY IN THEIR HOLES.
WHAT DOES AN ANIMAL HAVE TO DO
FOR SOME PEACE AND QUIET?
I'M GOING BACK TO THE WOODS. *(Exit BADGER)*

ANIMALS:

TWINKLE, TRIPPING, TATTLING

Mr. Toad and Company

7

SWELLING, SWISHING, SWIM
RACING, ROARING, ROLLICKING
THE RIVER'S LIKE THE WIND
THE RIVER'S LIKE THE
WIND IN THE WILLOWS IS THERE FOR THE LISTENING
NO MATTER HOW FAR AWAY, WE HEAR IT CLEAR AS CAN BE
CALLING US BACK TO A PLACE THAT WE KNOW
TELLING US STORIES OF HOME. (*Fade into dialogue*)

RAT: Ahh. What a jolly day for a jaunt. The wind is blowing just so through the willows, the sun is warming my coat, and The River is like a jeweled necklace adorning the earth's neck for my appreciation alone. And here I am in my boat. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats. Simply messing...messing about in boats...simply...messing...

(*A WEASEL steals something from a RABBIT and runs off laughing. Rabbit squeals and runs off after him.*)

ANIMALS:

FLOWING, FLYING, GLIDING, SPIN
GLIMMER, GURGLE, SWIRL
BABBLE, CHUCKLE, TELLING
THE BEST STORIES IN THE WORLD
THE BEST STORIES IN THE WORLD.
(*Exit ANIMALS. Enter MOLE as he sings.*)

SONG: MOLE'S SONG

MOLE:

WHEN IT'S COLD, IT'S COLD
AND IT'S DARK AND OLD,
OH, THE GROUND IS SO EXCITING.

JUST THE SMELL OF EARTH
AND THE FEEL OF DIRT
IT'S MY HOME AND SO INVITING.

End of Freeview

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