

LEAVE IT TO PUCK!

Music and lyrics by John Mann and Alex Thomas

SUMMARY

A sung-through, one-act musical fairy-tale about what happens when too much fairy dust gets thrown in the mix! 45 minutes of all-singing and all-dancing fun, with potential for puppetry and ambitious choreography.

ROLES: 8m, 7f, with flexible chorus including a number of small speaking roles.

SOLO SINGING ROLES

Puck (male, teenager or young adult)

Exuberant and mischievous, he needs charisma and athletic energy. Challenging singing, tenor range.

Young Willow (female, 6 years old)

A happy young girl. Simple vocal requirements. Can be performed by a young actor or by older Willow actor with puppet.

Willow (female, 13 years old)

A teenager with a big heart who tries to see the best in people, and who definitely believes in fairies. A challenging solo singing role, can involve puppetry (see above).

Jack (male, mid-20s)

A shy but honest young man who finds the love of his life and makes an idyllic life with her, only to jeopardise it for the sake of success. Major singing role, mid-range.

Jill (female, mid-20s)

A down-to-earth and imaginative young woman. She tries to persuade Jack not to fall for the allure of money and success. She helps Jack see the error of his ways.

The Fairy Quartet: Mustardseed, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth

Our narrators through the story, often in four-part close harmony. They are Puck's older siblings and constantly trying to prevent him getting carried away with fairy dust. They love happy endings and have a soft spot for Willow, who senses the magic of the forest. Challenging singing and dancing roles. Mustardseed and Moth are written for male voices, Peaseblossom and Cobweb for female, but there is flexibility here.

The Sinister Man (male, middle-aged adult)

Sharp suit, briefcase, fake smile. He lures Jack and Jill a wealthy lifestyle but destroys their simple, happy life in the forest. Can double as Headmaster. Challenging solo singing.

Headmaster (male, middle-aged adult)

Old-fashioned stuffy disciplinarian, complete with gown and mortar-board. Challenging solo singing.

Teacher (female, middle-aged)

A strict presence in the playground, she falls victim to Puck's love potion and falls madly in love with the Headmaster.

Guy (male, 13 years old)

An unpleasant, super-privileged boy who teases Willow. Limited solo singing.

Emerald (female, 13 years old)

An egotistical and spoiled girl who bullies Willow. Limited solo singing.

Joe (male, 13 years old)

A gentle but easily-led boy from an unhappy family. He befriends Willow but then goes behind her back. They make up at the end of the play.

ENSEMBLE ROLES

Fairy chorus: Strong singers and dancers, they are often on stage, unseen by the humans.

Ensemble: They play primary school infants, general crowd and secondary school pupils. Younger performers can be cast separately as the primary school infants.

ORCHESTRATIONS

Reed 1: Flute

Reed 2: Clarinet

Reed 3: Clarinet

Trumpet

Trombone

Bass guitar

Drum kit

Percussion

Piano

MUSICAL NUMBERS

1. Prologue	Fairy quartet
2. Picture This	Jack and Jill
3. My Family	Willow, Jack and Jill
4. Leave it to Puck!	Puck and Chorus
5. The Offer	The Sinister Man
6. New Girl	Guy, Emerald, Joe, Willow, Chorus
7. This Life	Willow, Jack and Jill
8. Is Anybody Listening?	Willow
9. Good Fairy	Puck and Fairy quartet
10. New Boy	Puck, Teacher and Chorus
11. The Problem With You	Jack and Jill
12. A Place of Education	Headmaster, Teacher
13. Epilogue	Fairy quartet, Willow and Joe
14. Curtain Calls	Company

FULL SYNOPSIS

The Fairy Quartet introduce us to the magical forest where they live (*Prologue*) and we meet Puck, their mischievous younger brother. Jack and Jill wander into a beautiful woodland glade for a picnic. Jack is obviously planning to propose to Jill but can't find the courage until Puck showers him with fairy dust, whereupon Jack conjures up a vision of their new life together (*Picture This*). 'The Hut' appears, their idyllic woodland home, along with Willow, their adored five-year-old daughter, who plays in the wood all day, half-aware of the fairies who play alongside her. We see Willow heading to primary school, telling her classmates about her wonderful parents and home (*My Family*). All seems perfect, until the reality of life kicks in with a sudden shower of brown envelopes which fall from the sky like autumn leaves. Jack decides to find work but no one will have him. Their life seems in danger; the

fairies sing a lament but Puck leaps into action with his fairy dust to solve the problem. He can't understand why humans seem so miserable all the time – they just need some fun! (*Leave it to Puck!*)

Unfortunately he flings too much dust around and his plan goes awry. A sinister man appears at The Hut, offering Jack a high-powered job which will mean he can take his family to a new life of luxury in the city (*The Offer*). Despite Jill's protests Jack signs the contract and we next see them in a clinical modern kitchen, where everything has changed: years have passed and Jack and Jill now have no time for Willow. They are wedded to their laptops and phones. She is about to start another new school, the best in the area, but is miserable at the prospect. We follow her over her first few days at the school, where she is picked on by a series of unpleasant classmates (*New Girl*) before returning home to parents who are always dashing off to a work meeting, leaving her dinner in the microwave. Only one pupil seems friendly, a shy boy called Joe. Willow tells him about her previous life and confides that she believes in fairies. He backs off, tells the other pupils, and Willow is mercilessly teased the next day. Her uniform ripped, her life in tatters, Willow runs home and confronts her parents (*This Life*) before returning to the magical forest for solitude (*Is anybody listening?*). The fairies, of course, are listening, and berate Puck for having ruined everything, encouraging him to think about the consequences of his actions (*Good Fairy*). He agrees to help Willow, and appears the next day at her school as a new pupil, Robin Goodfellow. He proceeds to use his magic to put the school bullies in their place and cause general mayhem (*New Boy*); Willow's teacher, attempting to intervene, is instead struck by a love potion which makes her pursue the Headmaster round the playground.

Robin Goodfellow disappears and Willow is summoned to the Headmaster's office, along with her parents, who find their car journey to Willow's school beset with difficulties (*The Problem with You*). Along the way, amidst mutual accusations, they realise that their life has gone wrong and that they have let Willow down. When the Headmaster tells them that their daughter is beyond hope (*A Place of Education*) they stand up for her. The meeting ends when the lovestruck teacher bursts into the Headmaster's office and chases him out. Jack and Jill apologise to Willow for their behaviour and suggest going back to the forest for a picnic at The Hut that evening. Willow says she will meet them there as she has something to do first... Back in the forest we see Joe wandering alone in the glade where Jack and Jill first met. The fairies are watching him with interest as Willow appears. Joe apologises and the two make friends, agreeing to share this special place (*Epilogue*). As the lights go down Puck appears behind them, blowing a final puff of fairy dust!

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Leave it to Puck! premiered at the Oxford Playhouse in June 2022, featuring alongside Bob Chilcott's *Birdland* as half of a double-bill of new musicals, as part of the Oxford Festival of the Arts. It was directed by Alex Thomas, with John Mann as musical director, and produced by Natasha Prince.