

Spotlight Publications

Dick Whittington

A pantomime by
Gill Morrell



Dick Whittington

Cast

Dick Whittington, the hero, young and idealistic, male or female

Tiddles the cat (probably a child)

Alderman Fitzwarren, Alice's father, wealthy but impractical

Alice Fitzwarren, his daughter, sweet, beautiful, a bit bossy, needs to be a strong singer

Dame Sarah, the shop manageress, our Dame

Idle Jack, lazy but likeable, in love with Alice

King/Queen Rat, evil and devious

Fairy Bowbell, the good fairy

Captain Cod'n'Chips, a lascivious sailor

Mate Salt 'n' Vinegar, male or female, helpful but dim

Sultan of Morocco, cruel and dramatic

Chorus:

Ratlets (children)

Undersea creatures (puppets operated by cast members)

Harem dancers

Londoners

Sultan's Guards

Place - Scenes in London, on board ship, and Morocco

Time - Mediaeval

ACT 1

Scene 1

Front of tabs - somewhere near Bath

King Rat sweeps onto the stage, swishing his cloak, baring his teeth and generally looking menacing

King Rat You! And you! And you there at the back! Stop fidgeting now and pay attention because things are about to get really, really, seriously bad. You know who I am, don't you? Don't you? So maybe you haven't read your programmes properly. Maybe you can't read. So, I'll start again. Prepare now to be aghast and appalled, for I am King Rat, the greatest and evillest rat in the long history of rats. Not for me a bit of dustbin devilry, or a adventure down a soggy, stinky sewage pipe - oh no! I have ambition, aggression, arrogance and aspirations beyond anything any rat has ever achieved before. I want to be the Bond villain of rats, I want world domination, I want it all and first I want money!! (*Pause for hissing and booing*) Don't waste your breath! And how am I going to start on this ascent to glory? Tonight, here at the magnificent (*local*) Theatre, in the mighty metropolis of (*local*), next to which Bath, Bristol, London and Paris fade into insignificance - this is where my journey begins - and you are going to be with me all the way. Oh yes, you'll be my minions, won't you? You'll support my rapid rise to wrathful revenge on humanity, won't you? Because, if not, things might get a little bit nasty round here.

The Ratlets creep in through the audience, threatening them as they pass

These Ratlets are my hench-rodents, my team Rodent, my gang of little nibblers who will help me get you to help me.

The Ratlets gather round him

Aha, I can see someone coming - hide!

King Rat and the Ratlets hide as Dick Whittington enters through the audience, carrying a bundle on a stick

Dick Hello, everyone. I said hello! That's better. It's very nice to meet you all. My name's Dick, Dick Whittington, and I come from the beautiful city of Bath. Do you know it at all? You do? I've lived there all my life, and it's full of tourists and shops and spas but - just between ourselves - it's getting a bit boring. And, more importantly, I'm determined to make my fortune. I need to go somewhere where the streets are paved with gold - Bristol, perhaps, or Gloucester - and I've heard that Swindon's quite nice ...

There is a flash as Fairy Bowbell appears from behind the tabs

Who are you?

Fairy Bowbell is a traditionally dressed fairy, given to twirling and waving her wand rather too much; she finds Dick's interruptions very irritating

Fairy I am a fairy, the fairy of Bowbell.

Dick (*interrupting*) I've never heard of Bowbell - to be honest, I've never believed in fairies, either.

Fairy I am a fairy, the fairy of Bowbell,

Bowbell of London, of which you've heard tell.

Dick Well, no, never heard of it ...

Fairy My magic task is to help you find fame ...

Dick Help me? Why!

Fairy ... And fortune - and that is why here I came.

Dick (*to audience, whispering*) She might have magic powers but she's not much good at poetry.

The Fairy is more and more annoyed, and does a twirl or two to settle herself down

Fairy 'Tis clear that you doubt me, but please have no fear,

I'll give you instructions, all very clear.

You're hoping to go where the streets run with gold,

So do what I say and do what you're told!
 First, make your way to great London city
 Where adventure and fortune and girls very pretty ...

Dick starts to speak and she taps him hard with her wand to shut him up

... Await you, and to help you achieve all of that
 I give you a companion, this very nice cat.

She disappears in a flash behind the tabs. At the same time, Tiddles the cat strolls on stage and wraps himself round Dick's legs

Dick Wow! Did you see that? I didn't imagine that, did I? I did grab a pint at the (*local pub*) before setting off ...
 Ouch! What's happening - oh, a cat! *The cat?* What's your name, cat?

Tiddles miaows and stretches and starts to wash

Of course, you can't talk, can you? Do you want to be my cat?

Tiddles jumps around enthusiastically

I shall name you - Tiddles! (*Tiddles shows pleasure*) The only thing is, Tiddles, I've apparently got to go to London and it's a long way. You might get tired.

Tiddles leaps into Dick's arms

Yes, I suppose I could carry you, sometimes. Okay, do you know the way to London?

Tiddles runs offstage and returns with a satnav

Of course! Here in the 14th century just everyone uses a satnav - so, I'll put in 'London'... and here's the route.
 That way!

He points, Tiddles indicates that he's pointing in the wrong direction

No, this way!

He picks up his bundle and they do a little march / dance on stage

Song 1

Dick Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag
 And smile, smile, smile.
 Don't let your joy and laughter hear the snag,
 Smile boys, that's the style.
 What's the use of worrying?
 It never was worthwhile,
 So pack up your troubles in your old kit bag
 And smile, smile, smile!

Exit Dick and Tiddles

King Rat and the Ratlets emerge before the end and parody their dance

King Rat How nauseatingly optimistic and credulous! But how fortunate - that fairy has shown me the way to fame and fortune - Dick Whittington's fortune, but it will all come to me!! Follow me, my little nibblers - we'll watch and wait our chance, and then we'll pounce! Ha, ha, ha, ha!

King Rat and the Ratlets exit as the tabs open

Scene 2

Medieval London outside Mr Fitzwarren's Emporium of Delights, a big notice in the window 'Staff wanted'; a concealed cat flap in the door; a dustbin US with a removable lid, big enough for King Rat to get into with an open back to backstage. Ideally, a backdrop showing a London skyline including a church tower with bells
A group of townspeople led by Idle Jack on stage. During the song, Alice, Fitzwarren (wearing dressing gown over shirt and breeches, and slippers) and Dame Sarah all appear and join in

Song 2

All Anytime you're Lambeth way,
 Any evening, any day,
 You'll find us all doin' the Lambeth walk.
 Every little Lambeth gal,
 With her little Lambeth pal,
 You'll find 'em all doin' the Lambeth walk.
 Everything's free and easy,
 Do as you darn well pleasey,
 Why don't you make your way there,
 Go there, stay there.
 Once you get down Lambeth way,
 Every evening, every day,
 You'll find yourself doin' the Lambeth walk.

Dame Sarah goes into the shop, and the crowd take turns to go in and out to buy stuff

Idle Jack Well, that was great, but I'm exhausted. Time for a bit of a sit down till lunch, and then maybe a lie down - for digestion, you know. That should take me nicely to tea time, and after that I'll be bone-weary and I'll need a proper rest till half past five when the shop closes. And I'm always worn out at the end of a long day at work, so I'll be ready to drop by then. Oh, it's a hard life.

Fitzwarren It's not for nothing they call you Idle Jack. You weren't by any chance thinking of taking a break, were you?

Idle Jack Me, Mr Fitzwarren, sir? No sir? Of course not sir.

As soon as he can, he finds a corner and goes to sleep

Fitzwarren You know we're hopelessly understaffed at the moment. I've done everything I can think of to attract new staff. There's an ad in the Lambeth Lollipop (*one of the crowd is carrying a copy of this local paper, based on a local paper*) and a notice in the shop window. How else can we attract new workers?

Crowd One: What about the Internet, sir?

Fitzwarren The Internet? Never heard of it.

Crowd Two: It's the modern way to communicate, sir.

Crowd Three Everyone's using it, sir.

Crowd Four Try Facebook and WhatsApp, sir.

The crowd all produce phones and start texting

Fitzwarren (*moving from person to person with no response*) So what do I do? How do I start? Who do I contact? Where do I buy one? Will nobody help me!! Is nobody listening to the human voice any longer?

There is a deafening silence as they all focus on their phones

Alice Never mind, Dad. You might be a bit of a dinosaur, but I love you. I just wish we weren't so busy all the time.

Fitzwarren Never complain about too much trade. Business is the backbone of the country. Ask Philip Hammond, ask Mark Carney, ask George Clooney ...

Dame Sarah (*surging out of the shop*) If only ...

The crowd quickly become a queue waiting to go into the shop

Fitzwarren What are you doing out here? Can't you see how many people are waiting to be served? Oh dear, I don't know how we're going to cope! Always more people wanting to spend their money at my shop, and

never enough people to serve them! Oh dear, oh dear!

Dame Sarah goes into the shop again

Alice We'll manage somehow, but have you forgotten you have a meeting at the Mansion House today with the Lord Mayor?

Fitzwarren You're right, and I'll never be ready on time! Just look at me!

Alice Just you stand still and we'll have you ready in no time. Help, everyone!

The crowd help her lift him off his feet and feed his arms into a coat, place boots on his feet, and a hat on his head. Meanwhile Idle Jack 'shaves' him with a very large and lethal looking cut throat razor

Off you go. Good luck!

Crowd exit excitedly with him

Alice Poor old Dad. He's so good at making money and so bad at everything else. I could never ever leave him to manage on his own. He can't even make a cup of tea.

Idle Jack (*breaking into her thoughts*) Hi there, Alice ...

Alice What? Oh, it's you, Jack. What do you want?

Idle Jack I was wondering if you'd like some of my sweets?

Alice Oh Jack, that's so kind of you. But I shouldn't have more than one, you know, or I might get fat, and you certainly shouldn't eat too many sweets, or your teeth will turn black and fall out.

Jack Not really? But I love sweets! Is it happening already?

He opens his mouth and shows a black tooth - perhaps a piece of black liquorice

Alice Goodness me, yes. Oh that's horrible - you'd better get to the dentist straightaway.

Jack But what can I do with all these sweets? There's loads of them. I don't want to throw them away.

Alice Look at all these people here watching us. I wonder if they'd like some sweets? Would you?

Jack (*holding back*) But what if they get fat and their teeth go black and fall out? (*To the audience, waving the sweets under their noses and withdrawing them*) You wouldn't want to risk that, would you? No, I'm sure you'd not want to take that risk. I'll just have to eat them all after all.

Alice Now, Jack, that's mean. One little sweet never hurt anyone. I'm quite sure all these boys and girls - and grownups - are very sensible and only eat sweets on special days - like Christmas.

Jack And when they go to the pantomime? That's special.

Alice Exactly, so they can all have a sweet or two. Catch!

Alice and Jack distribute the sweets and come back to the stage

And now you'd better go and find a dentist.

Jack If I must. But when I come back, Alice, can I have a word with you, a very special word?

Alice What? Oh, I suppose so. Now, off you go. (*Jack exits reluctantly, waving to her*) Poor Jack, I know exactly what he wants to say, and I keep having to find excuses why I can't listen to him. You see, he thinks he's in love with me, but I don't love him back. It's not just that he's so lazy - though he is, it's not just that he's not great at personal hygiene - though he isn't, I just don't love him, and it's no good agreeing to marry someone if you don't love him, is it? He's nice, and kind, and generous, and really rather sweet, so I don't want to tell him. And the thing is, maybe he is the best man I'll ever meet. Maybe I shouldn't be so picky and it makes me feel so very sad sometimes. What do you think? Should I marry Jack when he asks me, or is there someone else out there? I'm sure there is, you know, a whole world of love just waiting for me to find it.

Song 3

Alice Somewhere over the rainbow, way up high,
There's a land that I've heard of once in a lullaby.
Somewhere over the rainbow, skies are blue,
And the dreams that you dare to dream
Really do come true.

Someday I'll wish upon a star,

And wake up where the clouds are far behind me,
Where troubles melt like lemon drops,
High above the chimney tops,
That's where you'll find me.

Someday, over the rainbow, blue birds fly,
Birds fly over the rainbow
Why then, oh why can't I?
If happy little bluebirds fly beyond the rainbow
Why, oh why can't I?

Exit. Enter Dame Sarah, putting up 'gone to lunch' sign on shop door

Dame Sarah Wasn't that lovely? Miss Alice is such a nice girl, and a proper catch, of course. Mr Fitzwarren has never been short of a penny or two, but recently business has been booming. Blooming and booming, a bit like me, don't you think, dears? Especially in this frock. I bought it in *(a local store)*, in the sale. I have really good fashion sense, I'm just too poor to prove it. Though I do have these rather nifty tights. *(Lifts her frock)* My knees are a little swollen at the moment - you know what happens when a little digestive air needs to escape and just has nowhere to go? Oooh, I haven't introduced myself properly, have I? *(She slaps her wrist)* My name is Dame Sarah, a widow at present *(suggestively)*, and I want to know all about you.

She advances into the audience and finds a man to sit on

What's your name? Oooh, that's such a lovely name. I'm looking for a man, too, you know, it's not just Alice who's in the market, oh no! And I have the advantage of age and maturity - like a good bit of Cheddar. So much more tasty, don't you agree? Do you want a taste? No? Oh very well, then, please yourself. *(Returns to the stage)*

Course, men don't want to get married in the modern world. I know - I've asked dozens of them. Though I have been married before *(counts on fingers)* - four richer, four poorer, four better, four worse. How many is that? Sixteen? Are you sure? *(To her victim)* And are you sure you don't want to be number seventeen? After all, practice makes perfect. The last one, he passed away after falling into an enormous vat of coffee granules. It was sad but at least it was instant.

Now then, I have a problem. No, not just him *(pointing)*, another problem. I am manageress of Mr Fitzwarren's Emporium of Delights, selling sausages, string, swizzlesticks and sweets, but we just can't get the staff. Idle Jack's precisely that - bone idle, never as happy as when he's asleep. Alice is kept busy looking after her dad, and her dad - well, I just don't know how someone so inefficient makes so much money, but he certainly doesn't have a minute to lend a hand behind the counter. So if you should happen to come across a likely candidate, you will tell me, won't you?

Dick, with bundle on stick enters behind her and sees 'Staff wanted' sign, and audience hopefully shout 'Behind you'

That's right, what a good audience you are, so much better than the one we had yesterday - they were rubbish - but you have to wait till someone really is behind me, you know.

The audience are encouraged to shout again by Dick

Dick Whittington

A fresh version of the classic adventure story with the added ingredients of comedy and spectacle.

Plot Summary

Dick, accompanied by his new friend Tiddles the cat, and encouraged by Fairy Bowbell, journeys to London, not realising that King Rat and his Ratlets intend to use him as a way of getting enough money to be able to conquer the world.

The shop manageress, Dame Sarah, gives Dick a job at Alderman Fitzwarren's Emporium of Delights. He and Alice Fitzwarren immediately fall in love, to the dismay of Idle Jack who also loves Alice.

Jack and Tiddles have to guard the payroll overnight, but King Rat and the Ratlets sneak in and steal it. Jack starts back home, but the Fairy tells him to return, as one day he will be Lord Mayor of London.

Meanwhile, Alderman Fitzwarren has a massive order from the Sultan of Morocco for cereals, so everyone boards a ship, including Dick, Tiddles and the Rats as stowaways. There is a terrific storm, everyone is cast overboard, and when they reach the shores of Morocco, the good characters are reunited just before they are arrested by the Sultan's guards.

Their fate as slaves and harem girls is, however, prevented when the Rats infest the palace but are driven off by Tiddles. The Sultan sets them all free and rewards Dick handsomely and they all return to London, where Dick is made Lord Mayor.

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