

THE CHRISTMAS CRACKER

A Play

(with suggested songs)

by Jenifer Hillman

SchoolPlay Productions Ltd

THE CHRISTMAS CRACKER
and
WHO IS WELCOME?

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CAST

Mother
Fire Crackers - Spark
Ash
Flame

North Wind
Santa Claus
Rudolph
Tim Elf
Tom Elf
Bill Elf
Sprite
Michael
Sarah
Snowflake 1
Snowflake 2
Man in Kitchen
Balthazar
Melchior
Casper
Shepherd 1
Shepherd 2
Shepherd 3
Shepherd 4
Shepherd 5
Shepherd Boy
Angel 1
Angel 2
Angel 3
Joseph
Mary
Donkey
Cow
Sheep
Dove
Angels
Shepherds

Elves
Snowflakes
Homeless
Stars

Suggested songs for THE CHRISTMAS CRACKER

Customs Old and Customs New.

Words and Music by Jan Holdstock, *from Sing the Christmas Story*,
Pub: Ward Lock Educational

Heigh ho, heigh ho.

from Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Music - F. Churchill

Hallelujah, Songs of Praise.

Words and Music by Colin Tarn, St. Saviour's Carols

Ten ten, Now is the hour.

from Blast off. Words - T. Stamier, Music - J. Parker.
Pub: International Music Publications.

Walking in the Air.

Howard Blake.

Streets of London.

Words and Music by Ralph McTell

We are the Eastern Kings.

Words and Music by Irene Babsky, *from The Christmas Search.*
Pub: Cambridge University Press

Rise up you Shepherds.

Words and Music by Ian A. Lawrence, *from Sing the Christmas Story.* *Pub:*
Ward Lock Educational

Sleep Quietly, My Jesus.

from Carol, Gaily Carol. *Pub:* A&C Black Ltd.

In Bethlehem is born this day.

Words and Music by Colin Tarn, St. Saviour's Carols

In the Bleak Midwinter.

Gustav Holst.

Ring out the Bells at Christmas.

from The People's King. *Pub:* Oxford Univ. Press.

Flickering Candles in the Night.

Words and Music by Geoffrey Gardner, *from* BBC Publications.

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SCENE 1. INSIDE THE HOUSE.

Song: CUSTOMS OLD, CUSTOMS NEW

Mother, sitting at a desk, writing a letter.

Mother: Dear Father Christmas. My name is Mrs. Brown and I am writing to ask for your help. I have two children called Michael and Sarah. Their father died two years ago. We miss him every day and find Christmas very hard. Instead of being happy like other boys and girls, Michael and Sarah are sad and lonely. Father Christmas, you give to children all over the world, please give Christmas back to our house. Thank you.

(MOTHER puts the letter into an envelope and leaves it on the desk. She goes out).

Song: FIRECRACKER SONG

Fire Crackers: Watch out! Watch out for the fire crackers!

Spark: This is fun, Ash! Look at my black footprints!

Ash: I can make the carpet glow, Spark! Look at my flickering light!

Flame: Get back into the grate! You're burning the carpet.

Spark: But we have to get the letter, Flame! We must send it up the chimney.

Ash: And then the North Wind will take it to Father Christmas.

Flame: If we touch it we'll burn it.

Spark: I'll be very careful. Look.

(He runs to the desk and picks up the letter. Then he runs back to the grate).

Flame: Quickly. Let's take it up the chimney.

SCENE 2: SANTA'S WORKSHOP.

Song: **HEIGH HO!**
[from *Snow White*].

Santa: Ho! Ho! Ho! Good morning everyone! Elves! Let's get to work. Show me what you're making for all the boys and girls for Christmas.

Tim: I'm making a Buzz Lightyear that can fly through Outer Space.

Tom: I'm making a Spice Girl doll, but the voice sounds rather funny.

Santa: Don't worry, no one will notice. Carry on.

Bill: I'm making a fluffy rabbit for a baby.

Santa: Great work.

(The NORTH WIND enters).

Santa: Hello North Wind. What have you got there?

North Wind: A special letter. My friends the Fire Crackers sent it to me. It's a bit burned around the edges, and it's covered in soot, but they said it was important.

Santa: Thank you North Wind. Go and sit in the fridge for a while to cool yourself down. And help yourself to ice cream.

(He reads the letter).

Santa: Hmm. Someone's in trouble. Who can I send to help?

(Enter SPRITE. She is wearing bright clothes and singing).

Song: **HALLELUJAH, SONGS OF PRAISE**

Sprite: Santa! I've just come to tell you that my Cracker Machine has just produced its millionth cracker! It's the biggest cracker in the world. It has a jet engine, a CD player, and very good central heating!

Santa: Well, let's see it!

(CRACKER is brought on to stage. It is, as SPRITE describes, huge and big enough for BOB to fit inside).

Sprite: The cracker can fly very fast and inside it there are five smaller crackers. They are magic and they show what Christmas is all about.

Santa: Why, it's wonderful! And it's given me a very good idea. Sprite, you must take this cracker to help some sad children. I'll draw you a map to show you how to get there.

Sprite: I'll fill up with fuel and food.

(He gets a large bottle of Coca Cola which he pours into the engine of the cracker. Then he loads up a picnic hamper. FATHER CHRISTMAS returns with the map).

Santa: This will show you where to go. Enjoy your Christmas journey.

(The CRACKER takes off).

Song: TEN TEN NOW IS THE HOUR

SCENE 3: THE HOUSE.

(The CRACKER lands with a crash on the living room floor).

Michael: Sarah! What's that noise?

Sarah: I don't know. It was downstairs.

(She opens the door).

Sarah: Michael! Come here! There's an enormous Christmas Cracker in the living room!

Michael: Wow! How did that get there?

Sarah: Look there's a label on it. What does it say? *(She reads).* Pull me.

Michael: Well what are we waiting for?

(They pull the Cracker. SPRITE comes out).

Sprite: Phew! For one moment I thought you were going to leave me in there. It gets very hot inside crackers, especially when you're so close to the gunpowder.

Sarah: Who are you?

Sprite: Oh. I'm sorry. My name is Sprite. I make all the crackers in Santa's workshop.

Michael: Pleased to meet you Sprite.

Sarah: What are you doing here? And why are you in a cracker? And how did the cracker get through the window without breaking it?

Sprite: Aha: A little magic goes a long way. But there's no time to lose. We have a long way to go before morning.

Sarah: Where are we going?

Sprite: We're going to find the spirit of Christmas.

Children: Oh Christmas.

Sprite: Yes. I heard you didn't like it any more.

Michael: Well, since Father died it hasn't really been any fun.

Sarah: We miss him so much.

Sprite: Christmas is different for everyone. But even people who are sad and lonely can find something to smile about at Christmas. Look. I have five crackers. Maybe by the time you've pulled the last one you'll have found your own Christmas spirit. Let's pull the first one.

(They pull the first CRACKER).

SCENE 4: THE SLEIGH.

(SANTA is on his sleigh surrounded by presents).

Santa: Onward! Faster! We have to deliver these presents by morning. Hello Michael. Hello Sarah.

Sarah: We're on Santa's sleigh.

Michael: Look! Rudolph is lighting the way with his red nose.

Sarah: And it's starting to snow. There are snowflakes everywhere!

(SNOWFLAKES dance round the sleigh as it flies through the air).

Song: THE SNOWMAN

Snowflake: We can't stop. We're going to give the world a white Christmas

Snowflake: It's so exciting! Just think how pleased all the children will be!

Snowflake: I hope I'm made into a snowman.

(The SNOWFLAKES flutter off).

Sarah: Weren't they lovely!

Santa: Whoa! Whoa! Quick children! Let's get down this chimney and fill up the stockings.

(Musical sequence while they fill up the stockings).

Santa: Whew! Only two million, nine hundred and ninety nine to go!

Michael: Don't you have anyone to help you?

Santa: No, just me. The elves get air sick and Mrs. Claus is allergic to soot.

Sarah: Don't you get lonely? It must be hard work delivering all these presents on your own.

Santa: Lonely? Hard work? I love it! I can ride on a sleigh at ninety miles an hour with no policemen around. I can zoom faster than Concorde. And I'm giving presents to everyone. I make people happy. It's the best part of Christmas!

Sarah: Could we help you for a while?

Santa: I'm afraid not. If you don't pull the next cracker soon the magic will take you home before the adventure has begun. I'll drop you off in this field. Have a merry Christmas!

(The CHILDREN climb out of the sleigh).

Santa: Goodbye!

Children: Goodbye Santa!

Michael: That was so much fun!

Sprite: Yes, Santa makes all the hard work fun. He loves giving all the presents at Christmas. Now, let's pull the next cracker.

SCENE 5: THE SOUP KITCHEN.

(The CHILDREN are in a room where there are lots of poor looking people. They are being fed soup and bread by some girls).

Song: **STREETS OF LONDON**

Sarah: What's happening here? Who are all these people?

Michael: They look so dirty.

Sarah: They smell so awful.

Michael: His clothes are in rags.

Sarah: What has she got in her bag? Sprite, where are we?

Sprite: We're in a London soup kitchen. All the people who have no home to go to, come here at Christmas to be given food and shelter.

Michael: If they have no home to go to, where do they live for the rest of the time?

Sprite: Well they live on the streets. They sleep under bridges or in shop doorways.

Sarah: It must get very cold.

Michael: And lonely. Who are all the people giving out the food?

Sprite: They are volunteers who give up their time to help. Watch out!

(SARAH is not looking where she is going and an old man bumps into her and drops his bowl of soup).

Sarah: Oh! I am sorry, let me get you another one.

Man: Thank you.

(SARAH gets another bowl).

Sarah: Here you are. Is the soup nice?

Man: It's the most delicious soup I've tasted all year. Merry Christmas to you.

Sarah: Merry Christmas? What does he have to be cheerful about at Christmas?

Sprite: He has food and shelter. Christmas is a good time to forget our troubles and enjoy what we have.

Michael: We have much more than that. We have food and shelter and our Mother. We're very lucky, even if we don't have a Father.

Sprite: Yes, you are. It's time to pull the next cracker.

(They pull the cracker. The THREE KINGS appear).

Song: **WE ARE THE EASTERN KINGS**

Balthazar: Casper! I think we've already passed that bush three times. Are you sure you know the way?

Casper: I know it better than you. When you were leading we went straight home. I've studied all my charts and all we have to do is follow the brightest star in the sky.

Melchior: They all look the same to me. How can you tell which is the brightest?

Casper: My Mum makes me eat a lot of carrots and that helps.

(They walk round again).

Balthazar: Casper, we've passed that bush again

Casper: *(Throws his map on the ground).* Well you're spoiling my concentration. It's very difficult to follow stars in the dark!

Melchior: Which star are you following?

Casper: That one. *(He points to a star).*

Balthazar: That one? That's not the brightest! You are hopeless Casper! We've been following the wrong star! No wonder our camels got the hump and left.

Melchior: And all this walking has given me a blister.

Sarah: Aren't they funny! Who are they?

Michael: They're the three kings. They're on their way to give their gifts to the baby Jesus.

Sprite: Yes and they're very lost!

Sarah: Look! What's that star doing?

Michael: I think it's trying to tell us something. Bethlehem this way. It's showing the way to Bethlehem! Perhaps we should tell them.

Sarah: Excuse me.

Casper: Go away. We don't need help.

Balthazar: Don't be so rude, Casper.

Sarah: It's just that the star over there has the words "Bethlehem, this way", on it. Does that help you?

Melchior: That's the one I saw four hours ago. Nobody ever listens to me.

(They get up to go, leaving a bag behind).

Michael: You left your bag.

Balthazar: The gifts! We mustn't forget them!

Sarah: Oh, may we see them?

Balthazar: Of course. Look, we have gold that's money! Frankincense the spice of princes, and myrrh for when he dies.

Casper: We must go or we'll lose the star again.

Melchior: Thank you for your help. Goodbye.

Children: Goodbye.

Song: WE ARE THE EASTERN KINGS [Reprise]

Sarah: They've walked a long way just to give gifts to a baby.

Michael: And with blisters!

Sprite: Let's pull the next cracker.

(They pull the cracker).

SCENE 6: THE SHEPHERDS.

Song: SHEPHERDS WATCHING THEIR FLOCKS BY NIGHT

Michael: Where are we?

Sarah: It's so cold. There's a fire over there. Perhaps we can keep warm.

Michael: There are people around it.

Sarah: Excuse me.

Shepherd 1: Shh! You'll wake the sheep.

Sarah: Oh, sorry.

Shepherd 2: Come and sit over here. I have a cloak you can rest on.

Michael: Thank you.

(They sit down. ANGELS appear).

Song: SLEEP QUIETLY, MY JESUS

Shepherd 1: What a beautiful lullaby. The sheep will be asleep now.

Shepherd Boy: Dad! They're angels.

Michael: They're so beautiful.

Sarah: Look at the light glowing around them. I wish Mother could see them.

Angel 2: Do not be afraid. We are here to bring you great news.

Angel 1: There is a baby, born in a stable in Bethlehem. He is the son of God and the Prince of Peace.

Angel 2: Leave your sheep and go to see him.

Shepherd 3: But who will look after the sheep?

Angel 3: Do not worry. They will come to no harm.

Shepherd 2: We must take something to give to the new Prince.

Shepherd 4: We have nothing to give.

Shepherd Boy: He could have my pet lamb, Hercules. He's a very strong lamb and I'm sure he'll be good.

Shepherd 1: That's a good idea. Fetch your lamb, son. We must go quickly before the sheep wake up and find us gone.

Shepherd 2: I'm sure they won't be that bothered.

(The SHEPHERDS leave).

Sarah: How kind of the shepherd boy. He loves that lamb very much.

Sprite: Yes, I think he does. It will make a very special present.

Sarah: Wouldn't it be lovely to see the baby.

Michael: We still have one cracker left. Perhaps if we wish very hard when we pull it

(They pull the last cracker).

SCENE 6: THE NATIVITY.

Song: IN BETHLEHEM IS BORN THIS DAY

Sarah: Oh! It's Mary and Joseph, and the baby. And look at all the animals.

Michael: Shh! Here are the kings.

Balthazar: I have gold for the new king.

Casper: I have frankincense.

Melchior: *(Limping)*. And I have myrrh.

Joseph: Thank you for all your wonderful gifts, and for coming from so far away to see the new baby.

Shepherd 1: We have brought a gift too.

Shepherd Boy: This is Hercules.

Mary: Thank you shepherd boy. We will look after him well. Joseph, we have so many presents for our new baby. Even the animals have given to him.

Michael: But how can the animals give to Jesus? They can't even talk.

Sprite: Shh. Listen.

Shepherd Boy: Jesus, our brother, kind and good,
Was humbly born in a stable rude,
And the friendly beasts around him stood;
Jesus our brother, kind and good.

Donkey: 'T said the donkey, shaggy and brown,
I carried his mother up hill and down;
I carried her safely to Bethlehem Town,
I, said the donkey, shaggy and brown.

Cow: 'T said the cow, all white and red,
I gave Him my manger for his bed;
I gave him my hay to pillow his head;
'T said the cow all white and red.

Sheep: 'T said the sheep with the curly horn,
I gave Him my wool for his blanket warm,
He wore my coat on Christmas morn.
'T said the sheep with the curly horn.

Dove: 'T said the dove from the rafters high,
Cooed him to sleep, that he should not cry,
We cooed him to sleep, my mate and I.
'T said the dove from the rafters high.

Mary: Thus every beast, by some good spell,
In the stable dark was glad to tell
Of the gift he gave to Emmanuel,
The gift he gave to Emmanuel.

Sarah: Everyone has given something except us. Michael, what can we give?

*Song: **IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER***

(At the end play a verse on the piano as the children fall asleep and the Nativity clears. Mother comes in).

Mother: Michael! Sarah! Wake up. You must have fallen asleep by the fire.

Sarah: I had a fantastic dream. It was all about Christmas and the wise men had lost their way and all the animals spoke.

Michael: Yes, and we helped Santa deliver the presents and the snowflakes danced for us.

Sarah: Sprite tried to make us see the spirit of Christmas.

Michael: Everyone was trying to make others happy, and it was so much fun!

Sarah: The people in the soup kitchen spent time giving soup to the homeless.

Michael: Santa works hard to give presents to everyone!

Sarah: The three kings gave gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Michael: And all the animals gave to the baby - but it wasn't just presents. The donkey carried Mary and the doves sang him to sleep.

Sarah: And the shepherd boy gave his favourite lamb.

Mother: Yes, there are many different ways of giving at Christmas.

Sarah: We are going to give you the best Christmas ever, Mother. We'll help you cook the dinner, and decorate the tree, and try to remember Father in a happy way, and not be sad.

Mother: Well then,.. It looks as if we have lots to do. It's Christmas Eve and we have presents and decorations and food to buy. Go and get dressed.... and wear warm clothes. It's been snowing in the night. We're going to have a white Christmas!

(MICHAEL and SARAH exit. MOTHER is left on her own. She goes to her desk, and starts writing).

Mother: Dear Father Christmas, Thank you for putting the smiles back onto my children's faces and for reminding them of the Spirit of Christmas. It is the best Christmas present I have ever been given.

*Song: **RING OUT THE BELLS AT CHRISTMAS***

THE END