

Dick Whittington

by

Peter Webster



DICK WHITTINGTON
A pantomime in 2 acts

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CHARATERS

DICK WHITTINGTON – our hero

CALICO – Dick’s cat

ALDERMAN FITZWARREN – Dick’s employer

ALICE FITZWARREN – his adopted daughter

PHOBIA FITZWARREN – his wife

TAPIOCA DRIPPING – Fitzwarren’s cook

CAPTAIN COCKLESHELL – the ship’s captain

SALTY SWAB – the ship’s first mate

SNITCH – the Chief Rat

BOHO – the King of Barbary

BLACK BERRY – the pirate captain

Chorus of: townspeople, courtiers, rats, cats and pirates

A note: A ‘calico cat’ is another name for a tortoiseshell, and is seen as lucky in some societies. Some stage directions have been provided for Calico, but whoever plays him will have to react to everything said and done on stage, in as catlike way as possible.

SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE: The town square (*Main stage*)

SCENE TWO: A road leading to the harbour (*Lower stage/half tabs*)

SCENE THREE: The town square (*Main stage*)

SCENE FOUR: A quiet place (*Lower stage/half tabs*)

SCENE FIVE: The galley of the Unicorn (*Main stage*)

SCENE SIX: Another quiet place (*Lower stage/half tabs*)

SCENE SEVEN: The town square (*Main stage*)

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE: The town square (*Main stage*)

SCENE TWO: On Highgate hill (*Lower stage/half tabs*)

SCENE THREE: Aboard the Unicorn (*Main stage*)

SCENE FOUR: Below decks (*Lower stage/half tabs*)

SCENE FIVE: The King's palace (*Main stage*)

ACT ONE**Scene One**

Overture of songs used during the show; directors are free to make their own choice of songs and to decide their place in the action. As the overture ends the curtains open to the town square and the chorus go straight into their opening song. At this point everyone is on stage except FITZWARREN, ALICE, TAPIOCA, PHOBIA, CAPTAIN COCKLESHELL and SALTY SWAB; DICK and CALICO are on stage but unseen, as they are both sitting slumped at the back of the stage, hidden by the crowd. As the song ends the crowd parts, so that DICK and CALICO are now in view.

1ST CITIZEN: Here! Who are you? And what are you doing cluttering up our nice tidy part of London Town?

2ND CITIZEN: And does that cat belong to you? Great hairy thing! Bet it's got fleas.

DICK: Well, that's a fine welcome for two tired strangers, I must say. (*CALICO nods in agreement.*) Anyway, what's your problem? We're not doing any harm.

1ST CITIZEN: I told you; you're making the place look untidy....

2ND CITIZEN: And you're up to no good, I'll be bound.

DICK: Look, just leave us alone; we'll have our rest and then we'll be on our way.

3RD CITIZEN: Well I say, lock 'em up! They can have a nice long rest in gaol. (*General assent from the crowd; CALICO shakes his head in disbelief.*)

4TH CITIZEN: We won't be able to sleep securely in our beds with all these strangers about.

DICK: All these strangers? One boy and a cat?

1ST CITIZEN: And I need my beauty sleep.

2ND CITIZEN: (*To 1ST CITIZEN.*) Too right you do! With your looks you need all the sleep you can get! (*General laughter.*)

1ST CITIZEN: Just say that again!

2ND CITIZEN: (*Squaring up to 1ST CITIZEN.*) You could sleep for a week, but it wouldn't improve your looks!

1ST CITIZEN: Why you.....

DICK: (*Butting in.*) Alright! Alright! We're going before anyone gets hurt! (*DICK and CALICO get up and start gathering their few possessions; then sarcastically.*)

Thank you all so much for your hospitality. And, don't worry – we won't be back! (*DICK turns to go while CALICO, in his turn, performs the most sarcastic bow he can think of.*)

ALL: Good riddance! (*Alice enters.*)

ALICE: What on earth is going on? What's all this noise?

3RD CITIZEN: (*Pointing to DICK and CALICO.*) It's these two, miss. Strangers, up to no good. We've told them to move on.

ALICE: Why, what have they done?

1ST CITIZEN: Well nothing – yet.

ALICE: Then that's hardly fair! Has everyone forgotten their manners? (*Looking DICK and CALICO up and down.*) They don't seem to be much of a threat to me. Just two tired and hungry fellow beings.

DICK: That's exactly what we are; no more and no less.

ALICE: (*Turning to the crowd.*) You should be ashamed of yourselves! How would you like to be a stranger in a strange town? (*The crowd look sheepish. Then to DICK.*) Now, let me fetch my father, he'll know what to do with you. (*ALICE shouts into the wings.*) Father! Please come here a moment, we need your advice! (*After a short pause, FITZWARREN, PHOBIA and TAPIOCA enter.*)

FITZWARREN: What is it my dear? We were in the middle of planning next week's menus.

PHOBIA: Yes; mince, mince and more mince! (*To TAPIOCA.*) Call yourself a cook?

TAPIOCA: It's not my fault; I've only got to page one in my recipe book.

ALICE: (*Indicating DICK and CALICO.*) This boy and his cat are strangers here; they're tired and hungry and no one knows what to do with them.

1ST CITIZEN: I know what I'd do with them, if I had my way!

FITZWARREN: (*To all in general.*) Please be quiet while I sort this out. (*Turning to DICK.*) What's your name boy?

DICK: Dick. Dick Whittington.

FITZWARREN: And where have you come from?

DICK: We've run away from the poorhouse; we've been walking for days.

PHOBIA: Run away from the poorhouse, eh? Why, I wonder? Best place for your type.

DICK: It's simple – there was no food. And no future either. I decided I'd rather take my chances in the wide world, than stay there and rot.

TAPIOCA: But where are your parents, dear?

DICK: I'm an orphan; that's why I was in the poorhouse. This cat (*Indicating CALICO.*) is my only friend.

TAPIOCA: And why did you come here, to London?

DICK: Everyone told me that London was the place to make your fortune – that the streets were paved with gold. (*Everyone falls about laughing.*) I haven't seen much gold so far. I feel such a fool. (*CALICO tugs DICK'S hand for attention and whispers in his ear.*)

ALICE: Just a minute! Did your cat talk to you? What did he say?

DICK: He said 'I told you so'.

TAPIOCA: That cat's got more sense than you have.

ALICE: Father, can't we help him? Can't you find a job for him?

PHOBIA: What? And take in every waif and stray who turns up on our doorstep?

FITZWARREN: Hush dear. Now Dick, tell me what you can do that might help you earn a living?

DICK: I can read and write, and I can keep books; I can cook and sew a bit. At least they taught us useful stuff in the poorhouse. And I'm good with my hands.

PHOBIA: Yes, helping yourself to other people's goods I suppose.

ALICE: Mother! That's very unfair! Just because he's poor doesn't mean he steals.

DICK: No, no, the lady is right to be suspicious – but I've never taken anything that wasn't mine.

TAPIOCA: If there's anyone around here with sticky fingers it's me; it's all that treacle!

FITZWARREN: I'd like to believe you lad, and it just so happens that I need someone I can trust to help me plan my voyages and to keep track of everything in the cargos. In fact, you can start today!

DICK: Thank you sir, you're very kind; but do you have a place for my cat? I couldn't bear to part with him. (*CALICO falls at FITZWARREN'S feet and clasps his paws in pleading.*)

PHOBIA: Can a cat read? Can it write? It's no use to us. Get rid of it – nasty, hairy beast! One stray is enough to take in.

ALICE: Surely he can be useful somehow? (*CALICO again tugs DICK'S hand and meows in his ear.*) Now what's he saying?

DICK: He says that if you've a problem with rats or mice, he can solve it.

TAPIOCA: I've got an idea! He's a cat – just what I need to solve the problem of all the rats and mice that keep getting into my pantry and making off with the cheese! (*CALICO gets up and performs a pounce.*)

FITZWARREN: But what about all the traps you set for them?

TAPIOCA: Oh these rats are too clever for traps. They steal the cheese out of them and then hide the traps in my bed. And when I climb in, all ready for my beddy byes, off go the traps. Snap! Snap! Snap! My poor toes are black and blue.

DICK: Don't worry, he'll get rid of your rats, I promise you. There wasn't a single mouse or rat left in the poorhouse by the time he'd finished. (*CALICO gestures like a prize fighter.*)