

Christmas Pudding

A musical play for young performers

Words and Music by Cenarth Fox

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Cast

Speaking Parts

Raisin Taxes – bossy, strong leader
Cherry Picker – relaxed, easy-going, friendly
Custard Runs – nervous, coward
Nut Meg – clown, silly as a fruit-cake

Currant Event – radical, opportunist
Brandy Snaps – bully, loud, brash
Almond Icing – quiet observer
Housewife/Mother – salt of the earth

Set

Christmas decorations dominate. A large tree either real or painted on a backdrop is upstage. We're inside a room in a house where the ingredients are celebrating Christmas. It need not be realistic. Some solid coloured-presents will allow young performers to be raised slightly above floor level. The colour of the costumes and the decorations will dress your performing space. Below is an illustration of how your set might look plus an explanation of the stage directions.

Time

At night when the humans are asleep. In the month of December.

Notes for the Teacher/Director

1. The main characters, the principals, have definite and unique characteristics. There's the leader, the agitator, the clown, etc. Give each principal the chance to be and display their characteristics.
2. The teacher's version of the script [beginning on the next page] has many stage directions and ideas. The students' version [which you may copy] has larger print and few, if any directions.
3. Each song contains a dance or movement section. It may be better to allow most of your choreography to occur at this time rather than when the children are singing. That's not to say you can't have choreography during the singing but always allow the words to be heard and understood.
4. The main characters have a pun in their name. Discuss the meaning of these puns. Do the characteristics of the characters match their names?
5. Costumes. You could use larger-than-life realism. Giant blobs with wrinkled or smooth surfaces for the various dried fruits. Custard could be a jug and Brandy a bottle. Alternatively have leotards and tee-shirts with the name of the main characters on their chests. Avoid having the principals lost amongst the chorus. Perhaps a touch more colour for the main characters.
6. The characters have no specific gender. Every reference to him and her is interchangeable.
7. In the dialogue, a word or words in italics means an emphasis e.g. *Another* tax rise? Stress **another**.
8. If you wish to have Father Christmas, he can enter during the last song. Although it might upset/confuse some of your performers, you could introduce Father Christmas as a surprise i.e. only you and Santa know he is to appear. Oh all right, tell the principal if you must!
9. The recipe gives you the opportunity to combine cooking with drama. The students could make their own pudding at home and/or you can all work on making a pudding. Small pieces of pudding, sensibly wrapped, will make ideal gifts at the end of the show.

Script for the Teacher/Director

[Curtain rises on set which is filled with ingredients. MUSIC BEGINS. Fill the stage with your performers allowing space C and DC for major movement and dancing. Christmas decorations are everywhere and the ingredients celebrate this important time in their life. They sing and dance with gusto, pride and glee. It's soon to be pudding-making time. Everyone sings]

Song – CHRISTMAS PUDDING

Company

*Where would Christmas be without a pudding?
Without a pudding?
A P U double D I N G. Oh!
Where would Christmas be without a pudd?*

*You probably need a stocking
And even a Christmas tree
You may enjoy sauces, quite a few courses
Gobble a roast turkey
You really should have some presents
A little of all that's good
But one thing is essential
You've gotta have Christmas pudd!*

*You've gotta have Christ-mas pudd!
Gotta have Christmas, gotta have Christmas
Gotta have Christmas pudd!*

[Company dance, repeat the song, then relax. They are happy and tired from their spirited song and dance. Many chat amongst themselves. Saying "rhubarb" en masse several times is a good way to create a hubbub!]

RAISIN Okay, let's have some quiet.

[Company continue chatting. BRANDY takes over and snaps]

BRANDY Righto! Knock it off!

[Company stunned by BRANDY'S loud snap. They fall silent]

CURRENT *[Famous for sarcasm]* That's right. All quiet for our wonderful leader. What is it this time? Another tax rise?

CUSTARD *[Upset]* Oh please, no more arguing. I get so nervous when you squabble like this.

RAISIN I'm not here to argue but it's true, we do have some bad news.

[COMPANY groans. They dread these announcements]

ALMOND *[An aside to those nearby]* They call her Raisin Taxes for nothing.

RAISIN As from tonight, all ingredients will live in smaller containers.

[Another outburst from the COMPANY. They protest as one. "That's not fair!" "Rhubarb!" etc]

RAISIN *[Continues over the protests]* Don't blame me; we are in a recession.

NUTMEG *[Excited]* Oh I love a procession. Bags go first. *[Moves DC]* Everyone behind me. Quickly! *[No-one moves]* Well come on, we're having a procession.

[Slowly CHERRY moves to NUTMEG and whispers to NUTMEG who gives a puzzled look]

NUTMEG Oh recession. Why didn't you say? *[CHERRY smiles and leads NUTMEG upstage]*

CURRENT So because of the recession, the poor workers suffer a lower standard of living?

RAISIN Unfortunately, yes. *[COMPANY groans]* Christmas puddings will now be mass produced.

COMPANY *[Stunned, furious]* Mass produced!?

CURRENT You mean we're all going to be the same?

RAISIN We have to keep costs under control.

ALMOND *[Distressed]* We'll all be the same size. *[COMPANY upset]*

BRANDY *[Distressed]* And the same flavour. *[More distress]*

CUSTARD *[Distressed]* This'll mean custard from a packet. *[Horror then sympathy for CUSTARD]*

RAISIN It must be done. There is no alternative. *[COMPANY scoffs]*

NUTMEG Why don't we raise some money?

[Sudden silence. Pause. COMPANY turn and stare at NUTMEG. Is this a plan?]

BRANDY *[Sarcastic]* Oh brilliant. And how do we do that?

NUTMEG *[Thinking. Gets brainwave]* We could have a procession!

[COMPANY groans and turns away from a disappointed NUTMEG]

ALMOND I hate to admit it but Raisin is right.

CURRENT Not necessarily. We have one last card to play.

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RAISIN Don't be ridiculous.
CURRENT We can go on strike. *[Huge buzz from COMPANY]*
COMPANY Go on strike!
BRANDY Yeah! Let's stand up for our rights. *[Starts chant]* No plastic puddings! No plastic puddings!
[The chant is taken up, not by everyone at first, but soon most are chanting loud and long led by the rebels, CURRENT and BRANDY]

COMPANY No plastic puddings! No plastic puddings! *[Continues]*
[RAISIN moves to a raised area, produces a whistle and blows it hard. The chanting stops immediately. There is a pause and stunned silence. Make sure the chant builds in volume. Start softish, build a crescendo and at its peak, have RAISIN blow the whistle. RAISIN moves amongst the COMPANY admonishing the fearful ingredients]

RAISIN Now that is really stupid. Going on strike will ruin your chance of ever becoming a Christmas Pudding and won't change a single thing. No-one will ever know or care. *[Emphatic]* We are not important.
[COMPANY sad]

CURRENT Everyone's important. *[Soft agreement]* And it's the principle that counts. *[Bigger agreement]*
ALMOND Raisin is right. We need to do something to attract attention.
CUSTARD Good idea. Let's all go lumpy. *[Not much support]*
BRANDY We could have a bonfire. I look terrific in blue. *[Not much support]*
CHERRY Why don't we give everyone the pip? *[Not much support]*
ALMOND There's only one way to really attract attention. *[COMPANY turns to face ALMOND. Pause]* We could cancel Christmas. *[COMPANY gasps]*

COMPANY Cancel Christmas!?
CURRENT *[Excited]* Sensational! Absolutely stunning.
BRANDY The people who make us would get an incredible shock.
[Support for the plan is growing rapidly. Hubbub with lots of chat]

RAISIN *[Calling over the noise]* Are you mad? You can't cancel Christmas!
CURRENT Can't we? All those in favour say "I".
COMPANY *[Roaring]* "I"

[MUSIC BEGINS and the COMPANY launches into the song with fervour. They are determined. RAISIN is forced aside. During this song, the decorations are removed hence the need to hang/place them simply in the first place. The performers take down the decorations. The streamers and bunting are removed, "undecorated" the tree, any unwrapped presents are stored offstage or placed to one side – wherever you have room. Careful rehearsal is required. The choreography here is not so much dancing and movement but set reconstruction. Plan it well]

Song - CHRISTMAS IS OFF

COMPANY

*Hide all the holly
Take down the tree
Pack up the presents
Forget the glee
No goose for gobbling
No drinks to quaff
No cakes or pudding
Christmas is off!
This year Christmas is cancelled
No more food or good cheer
This year Christmas is cancelled
Try again next year!*

[During the song and more particularly, the instrumental section, the performers attack the set. This is a song with actions. There is a non-singing section – bars 53 to 68 – when most of the removal/storage could take place. Of course it could happen throughout the song but SINGING-REMOVAL-SINGING is a nice balance. The decorations and props must not be damaged and everything should come down/be removed with safety. Done well, the song will have a dramatic impact. The idea is bold and unusual, the music lively and the action powerful. Make it work. The song finishes, beautifully timed by you, with the decorations removed and the COMPANY in strong formation. As the song ends, the last trace of Christmas disappears. The COMPANY is frozen]

RAISIN *[Moves to one side, sarcastically clapping]* Wonderful. The work of a genius. *[COMPANY breaks up and returns to original positions]* Just look at the place. Go on, look at it. *[COMPANY studies the undecorated set]*
CURRENT Well done, everyone. This'll shock 'em. This'll show we mean business.
CUSTARD Right on. Now we'll see who's got a yellow streak.
[CUSTARD realises his pun and is teased by some]
RAISIN It's called cutting off your holly to spite your pudding.

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BRANDY We've made a stand, Raisin. *[COMPANY agree]* We're fighting back.
ALMOND Yes but they were our decorations.
NUTMEG So? Now we forget Christmas till next year.
CHERRY Hang on. What id we go off? What about our use-by date?
[Sudden hubbub from COMPANY. They hadn't thought of that]
RAISIN Ah, so the penny droips. Listen, Cracker-Heads, all this demolition is pointless. If the cook won't use us, we're good for nothing!
[Stunned silence]
CUSTARD *[Distressed]* You mean, we won't be a Chistmas Pudding?
NUTMEG *[Equally distressed]* Oh no! I wanna be puddingised! *[Sobs and is comforted by CHERRY]*
CURRANT Don't despair. We tried. We had a go and that's what counts.
BRANDY Yes but now we're finished. Our Christmas has disappeared.
ALMOND I've got an idea.
RAISIN What? Winning the lottery? Forget it.
CHERRY Well I'd like to hear Almond's idea. It might be the icing on the cake.
CURRANT Yes, Almond, let's hear it.
ALMOND Perhaps we're wrong. Instead of fighting them, why don't we win them over?
RAISIN *[Angry]* Don't you listen? We're in a recession. Cutbacks are essential.
ALMOND But if we took their minds off the recession, Christmas Puddings might come back.
[Hubbub from COMPANY. This sounds interesting]
CURRANT Good thinking. We need to remind people that Christmas is important.
CHERRY It's a time for families to get together.
BRANDY You're right. If families celebrate Christmas, they'll forget their worries.
ALMOND But we need a new angle. People need to re-think their approach to Christmas.
NUTMEG You mean like have it in June? *[OTHERS groan, NUTMEG upset]*
ALMOND How about a role-reversal Christmas?
COMPANY *[Buzz]* Role reversal?
CUSTARD I get it. You have custard as an entrée. *[OTHERS frustrated with the clown]*
RAISIN If you're thinking of Mother Christmas, forget it. Tradition is too strong.
ALMOND Not Mother Christmas, just mothers in general.
BRANDY *[Snaps]* Could you get to the point?
ALMOND In most families, who does the Christmas shopping, cooking, serving and cleaning up?
COMPANY Mother.
ALMOND So let's have one Christmas where Mother does next to nothing.
CUSTARD You mean, what Father and the kids do?
ALMOND It's a fresh approach. People will be so busay discussing the new Christmas, they'll forget the recession.
CHERRY That's a fantastic idea, Almond. Brilliant. *[OTHERS congratulate ALMOND]*
RAISIN Hold it! We're trying to promote individually-made Christmas Puddings, right?
COMPANY Yes ... That's right ...
RAISIN Well have you thought this through? It could mean disaster. *[Stunned silence]*
CURRANT You're jealous. Almond thought of it and you've got your skin in a wrinkle.
[OTHERS agree]
RAISIN If fathers do the cooking, you'll have the worst Christmas Pudding ever!
CURRANT I diasagree. Let's push Almond's plan. *[Loud voice]* Change the Cooks for Christmas!
COMPANY *[Fired up – roar]* Change the Cooks for Christmas!
[MUSIC BEGINS. The ingredients attack the rap number with fervour. RAISIN is moved to one side but eventually joins in. During the instrumental breaki in the song, MOTHER enters – rapping of course – to a right royal welcome]

Song – REVOLUTIONARY RAP

BRANDY Here's a way to celebrate Christmas
CHERRY One that'll start a new trend
ALMOND Here's a way to celebrate Christmas
NUTMEG And include your favourite friend
CUSTARD Try a little role reversal
CURRANT Give your current job a swap
RAISIN It's a simple role reversal
SEPTET Guaranteed to make things hop.

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COMPANY

*Someone else does the shopping
Mother has a lovely cup of tea
Someone else does the cooking
Mother has another cup of tea
Someone else does the serving
Mother gets a healthy share
Someone else does the washing up
Mother has a sleep in her chair.*

[MOTHER enters to great acclaim. She is dressed as a housewife and teaches the ingredients how to rap. She does a solo rap at bar 19 and the COMPANY join her at bar 27. Everyone repeats the "Somebody else ..." bit at bar 35. The sound of the whistle start and end the non-vocal sections. The rap finishes with all turning/kneeling and pointing to MOTHER. A small box wrapped as a present is pushed forward just as the song finishes with MOTHER sitting on it right on cue C/DC as the last line is sung. She waves. The COMPANY is abuzz with excitement. The rap song has them fired up as has the idea of role reversal and the presence of a famous person – a mother]

RAISIN

Mother, on behalf of all the ingredients, welcome to our humble home.

MOTHER

Thank you. I'm delighted to be here and to finally meet you all in person.

CURRENT

What do you think of our Change the Cooks for Christmas plan?

MOTHER

[Diplomatic] Well it's certainly different. *[Buzz from COMPANY]*

CHERRY

Excuse me, Mother. I'm Cherry. You made my grandfather in the Pudding opf 88

MOTHER

[Shaking hands] Oh that's right. You've got a marvellous family tree.

CUSTARD

And me. You poured my cousin Custard in last year's Pudding.

MOTHER

[Happily remembers] So I did. She's the runner in the family. *[CUSTARD thrilled]*

NUTMEG

Bet you don't know me? Here's a clue. My friends call me Fruit Cake.

MOTHER

Are you stored in the nut case?

NUTMEG

That's me! Nutmeg the nut case. *[Laughter and happiness all round]*

BRANDY

Mother, please tell us what you like best about Christmas?

[OTHERS agree. They are keen to hear from MOTHER]

MOTHER

[Pause] Well, I guess I'm a little different. I like individually made Christmas Puddings.

[Gasp of glee from OTHERS and spontaneous applause breaks out]

MOTHER

I like families being together, sharing and thinking about the real meaning of Christmas.

CURRENT

But that's what we think. *[OTHERS agree]*

MOTHER

Although I do seem to disagree with you in one way.

RAISIN

How do you mean?

MOTHER

Well I like lots of decorations. *[OTHERS smile]* I like a tree and presents in a room where friends and family can be together.

ALMOND

We like those things too.

MOTHER

You do? But your tree is bare. There are no presents or decorations. *[COMPANY quiet]*

RAISIN

Some of us took them down as a form of protest. *[OTHERS suddenly ashamed]*

MOTHER

Protest?

CURRENT

We decided to cancel Christmas.

MOTHER

[Rises stunned] Can cel Christmas! I don't believe you. *[Present returned upstage]*

CHERRY

It's true. We don't want to be mass produced.

ALMOND

We want to be individually made. *[OTHERS agree]*

BRANDY

And appreciated. *[More agreement]*

MOTHER

But you don't understand. Christmas is about giving and sharing. It's about celebrating and helping those less fortunate than you.

[COMPANY quiet, ashamed]

CURRENT

We didn't really think about that.

MOTHER

Christmas is a time for giving, for sharing. Don't cancel Christmas, celebrate Christmas.

RAISIN

But what about the recession, the cutbacks?

MOTHER

All the more reason for you to help in any way you can.

ALMOND

Mother's right. We should stop being selfish. *[Calls]* Let's celebrate Christmas!

COMPANY

[Enthusiastic] Yes!

MOTHER

Good for you. Now listen. You celebrate Christmas and I'll make you into the best Christmas Pudding ever! *[Big cheer from COMPANY]*

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[MUSIC BEGINS. The decorations are returned and replaced. The COMPANY sings. Second time through, Father Christmas could enter with a sack of individually wrapped portions of Christmas Pudding. Alternatively, MOTHER has a hamper delivered and the pudding-pieces are in the hamper. Third time through, the cast distribute the pudding-pieces to their family and friends in the audience. Fourth time through, COMPANY return to the stage for a final sing, bow and wave]

Song – MERRY CHRISTMAS

COMPANY

*Christmas is for everyone
Merry Christmas
So much joy and so much fun
Merry Christmas
Celebrate, your worries shun
Merry Christmas
Peace on Earth to everyone
Merry Christmas.*

The end

There are five Christmas musicals suitable for young performers. All five are available in the one book and with a backing CD make a wonderful resource for any junior school, youth theatre company of Sunday School. Visit www.foxplays.com and click on CHRISTMAS MUSIC

