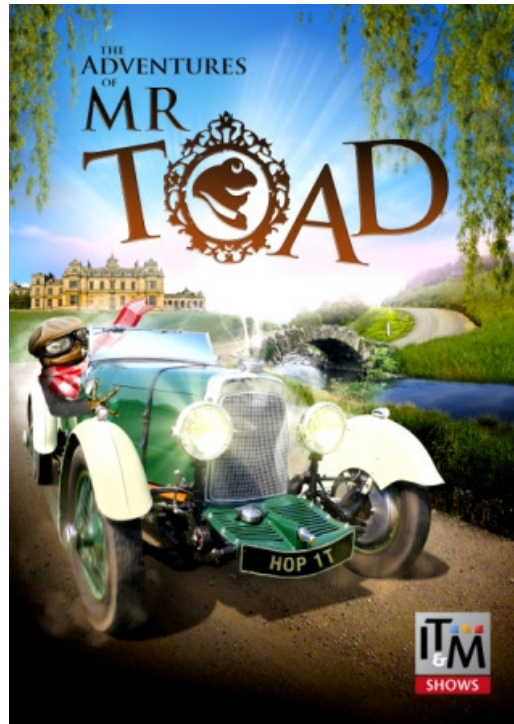


THE ADVENTURES OF MR TOAD



Book, music & lyrics by
Piers Chater Robinson

Based on the *Wind in the Willows*
by Kenneth Grahame

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The Characters:

Toad

Larger than life. Loud, boisterous, conceited - and he would be the first to admit it. "Well, I have a lot to be conceited about don't I? I am utterly wonderful!". He takes the boundaries of self-esteem onto a new level. Rich [much too rich for his own good really], he inherited all his fortune from his hard-working ancestors, none of whom survive. Toady is our Playboy Of The Riverbank. Due to his social standing as owner of "Toad Hall", an enormous mansion with spacious grounds to match, he is popular and much admired. He knows it and loves it. Probably quite tubby, but the actor who plays Toad needs to be fit. Strong Baritone and he needs to be able to move well/dance - but there again, he will probably charm the audience into thinking he can dance anyway.

Mole

Timid, shy, naïve, gentle, loveable in his own simple sort of way, gullible. Probably easy prey for the more dubious members of society - for he is a trusting soul. Wishes no one harm and, due to his lack of life experience, easily shocked. High Baritone / Tenor. Ability to move.

Rat

Everybody's friend. An outgoing fellow with warmth. Much admired for his generosity, kindness and good spirit. A dashing, but not conceited member of the Riverbank society. Tenor. A Good Dancer. A loyal friend to Toad - though one could say he does tire of Toad's antics.

Badger

The grandfather of the river bank. Experienced, wise and a little stern or gruff one might say. Often played with a Geordie accent. Tall 6ft plus. Thick set. He has a kind heart but will not tolerate the reckless behaviour of Mr Toad. Rich Bass Baritone. Dance skills not essential but a good mover.

Chief Weasel

He is a mixture between Elvis Presley (in his slim days) and a visually terrifying half human half weasel. Often costumed in leather and fur he might be seen as strangely sexy also. He represents everything that is evil in the story. Strong Rock voice, High Baritone and excellent mover / dancer. Stage

Rosy (the Gaoler's daughter)

The Gaoler's daughter. 16-17 years old; pretty, sweet, kind, innocent and petite. She has a good Mezzo Soprano belt. Good dancer.

Lady Magistrate

Totally mad which is bizarrely unsettling. To the smaller children in the audience she may even seem frightening. She wears an overly large and outrageous wig and she may well be size 16 plus. Strong Operatic Soprano.

Clerk (of the Court)

We have often doubled him with the Chief Weasel. He is tall, thin, gaunt with a sallow complexion with piercing eyes. High Baritone. Good dancer/mover.

Aunt (the Washerwoman)

Often doubles with Lady Magistrate. Large, cuddly, kind and a little eccentric. Soprano. Basic movement skills.

Policeman

A pantomime law enforcement agent. Any size, stupid and self important. Baritone.

The Horse

Typical pantomime horse, two actors in a bright colourful horse skin. Non- singing role

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Synopsis:

ACT ONE

The scene opens on a riverbank. The birds are singing on a glorious spring morning and the Riverside Animals are playing. Noises are heard from beneath the ground. All the animals cease their activities and are startled as Mole pops up. Mole is very excited to be above ground during spring. ("Hang Spring Cleaning") Staring into the river, Mole sees his reflection and thinks he is seeing another mole but is unable to get a response. Mole gets a bit discouraged because every time he extends his hand to touch his "friend," the reflection disappears. Finally, Rat peers over his shoulder and greets Mole. Mole explains that he's never seen a reflection before; in fact, he's never seen a river. Rat tells him that there is nothing as wonderful as having a great time in a river. ("Messing About") The two have a delightful time at the riverbank with other animals emerging and joining in.

Mole gets so excited about the river that he asks Rat to teach him how to swim. Rat goes off to get his picnic basket while Mole excitedly anticipates his new "river life." The other animals giggle as they see Mole investigating his newfound world. Mole introduces himself to them, and they whirl him dangerously close to the river.

Rat returns with a basket of delicacies and Mole soon forgets about the river incident. Rat is enjoying studying his newfound friend who is eating to his heart's content. Mole asks Rat about Wild Wood, the land off in the distance. Rat explains that the Riverbankers don't go there. In Wild Wood, there are a wide variety of animals led by the Chief Weasel who can't be trusted.

Rat settles down for a nap before giving Mole his first rowing lesson, and Mole cleans up lunch. While Rat sleeps, Badger emerges from a pile of dead leaves. Mole wakes up Rat to talk with Badger who has come to find Mr. Toad. Badger tells them that Mr. Toad has found himself a new contraption. He has been off in the countryside making an absolute human of himself. Badger must talk some sense into Mr. Toad. Mr. Toad is rich and always good-tempered, affectionate, simple, and good-natured. However, as good as he may be, he has one or two important lessons to learn about behaving decently in the community. He has crazes all the time: one time it was sailing, then punting, then houseboating. Rumor has it that he is doing something else to make him a disgrace to the animal community. Badger is off to see exactly what Toady is up to now.

With that, Toady appears from the clearing very grandly and makes his way over to Rat and Mole. He lives the life of luxury and loves being greeted by everyone he meets. ("Introducing Mr. Toad") Toady arrives (demanding applause from the audience, which he gladly welcomes), greets Rat and is introduced to Mole. Yes, Toad has been dodging Badger all day - not wanting to hear one of his sermons. Toady finally drops his grand veneer and asks Rat and Mole to help him with his new occupation. He points to a bright yellow Gypsy Caravan being pulled by a horse. He wants them to join him and jump aboard the caravan for an adventure down the dusty highway and over the rolling hills. ("Let's Jump Aboard") After a bit, Mole and Rat are convinced to go along. All three of them jump on the cart and

they are off on an adventure -- to where they don't know.

The scene shifts to the Wild Wood, the most menacing of places. The trees have large gnarled roots and some trunks almost look human in shape. Wind, thunder and lightning swirl around them. Led by the Chief Weasel, a group of Weasels begin their tribal dance. The Weasels are preparing to seize Toad Hall. ("Weasels Reign") They see the approaching Gypsy Caravan carrying Toad and his friends. They can hear a car approaching from the opposite direction, which crashes into the Caravan and sends everyone into a ditch. Rat and Mole are quite disturbed, but Toad is thoroughly enjoying the adventure of it all. Rat takes Toad home, leaving Mole behind. Rat reminds Mole not to enter Wild Wood because it isn't safe. He is on the edge of Wild Wood, and that's as far as he should go.

No sooner have they left than the wind begins to howl. Mole stares about as whispering voices are heard all around him. Mole begins to make his way to the cart when it begins to snow very heavily. Faces pop out from behind trees but disappear every time Mole turns to see them. Mole finally makes out the whispering words: "Mole, this way. Mole, this way for shelter and warmth." Mole becomes panic stricken and calls out to Rat. The voices tell him that Ratty isn't coming back for him; it's best he make his own way through the wood. The Weasels are luring Mole into Wild Wood until Mole hears Ratty approaching.

Mole tells Rat what has just happened. Rat understands and insists that Mole be careful of the Weasels and their ways in Wild Wood. Rat tells Mole that he ran into James, Toady's hedgehog, who kindly said he would take Toad to Toad Hall.

Rat is ready to go home, but Mole is so worn out from his brush with the Weasels that he needs to rest a while. Rat insists they find some shelter from the snow and asks Mole to follow him. No sooner have they started on their journey than Mole trips and falls and cuts his leg very badly. Examining the leg, Rat observes that the cut is a very clean one, as if it was made by a sharp edge of metal and not a stump or branch. After he bandages poor Mole's leg, Rat starts digging in the snow. Mole is confused by this and even more confused with Rat begins dancing a triumphant jig. He has discovered a doorscraper, a doormat, and a sign that reads "Mr. Badger," in short, Badger's home. They ring the bell and Mr. Badger shows up, lantern in hand. Badger is upset until he realizes it is Rat and Mole at the door, and he invites them in. The Chief Weasel appears and proclaims that he shall take Toad Hall and be King of them all!

Two weeks later, the Riverside Animals are going about their business outside Toad Hall. There is a buzz of excitement in the air. Mr. Toad will take delivery of another motor car today - the third one this week. He keeps crashing them. Mr. Toad appears, outfitted in the latest style of motor wear. The animals want to know all about his new car and how he plans to keep this one in one piece. Toad quickly fires back, "I am Toad! The Terror of the Highways! The Traffic King!" ("Mr. Toad") His new car arrives and Toad drives off. The animals are still waving goodbye when they hear the screeching of breaks and an appalling crash. Toad appears, clutching the steering wheel, and announces that the car was the wrong color anyway!

Inside Badger's House, Mole is enjoying what he likes best of all: eating. ("Breakfast") Rat and Badger enter and discuss their friend Toad's driving misfortunes. They decide they must do something. The hour has come! ("Duty to Perform") Off they go to teach Toad how to drive safely before he hurts himself and others.

Back at Toad Hall, Toad appears dressed in his new driving outfit. He has a large bandage over his forehead and one arm in a sling and a plaster cast on one foot. Badger, Mole and Rat arrive and pin him to the ground ready to give him some safety instructions. Badger takes Toad inside to continue the lecture. Rat and Mole wait outside convinced it will take more than lecturing to reform Toad. As they wait, Rat whistles a little tune he has written. ("Ducks' Ditty")

Badger emerges, followed by an unhappy Toad, who has taken off his motoring clothes. Badger says Toad has seen the error of his ways and is truly sorry for his misguided conduct. Indeed, he has promised to give up motor cars entirely. Badger tries to make Toad tell everyone just how sorry he is and that he now sees the folly of his ways. Instead, Toad says he isn't sorry at all. In fact, he has loved every minute spent in a car. He even plans on getting a new car as soon as possible! With that, Badger orders Rat and Mole to take Toad and lock him in his bedroom. They are going to force him to reform once and for all!

Inside his bedroom, Toad is dreaming of driving a car. Wild with excitement, he waves his hands and yells at approaching vehicles. Badger and Rat burst into the bedroom and find their friend on the floor with sheets, feathers and pillows strewn everywhere. They lift him back into bed, where he rests peacefully. Badger and Mole go for a walk, leaving Rat on guard.

As soon as they leave, Toad wakes up and realizes Rat is the only one there. Toad says he really isn't well and he desperately needs a doctor and a lawyer. Rat hesitates, but he finally gives in and goes to fetch these people for Toad. As soon as Rat is out the door, Toad is out the window - off to find a new motor car. ("Mister Toad - Reprise")

ACT TWO

The scene opens in a courtroom where everyone (including Badger, Rat and Mole) has gathered for the trial of Toad. The Weasels are chattering excitedly and behaving badly. Toad's three friends are sitting with long faces. A clerk silences the court as the Lady Magistrate enters. There are three counts against Toad: stealing a valuable car, excessive speeding, and gross impertinence. As Toad is brought into the courtroom, the Weasels jeer. Witnesses are called to the stand. The Policeman who arrested Toad for speeding states that Toad was driving fifty miles per hour over the speed limit. Not only that, Toad called the officer "Fatty Chops" during the arrest. Toad argues that he actually just borrowed the car; he didn't steal it. Toad also claims that he was describing what he had for lunch; he didn't really call the Policeman "Fatty Chops." The Court finds Toad guilty of all charges and sentences him to twenty years in prison. ("Goodbye Toad") The deeply saddened friends have to leave the panic-stricken Toad in the hands of the law.

Some months later, Toad is sleeping peacefully in the dungeon. Rosy, the jailer's daughter, enters carrying Toad's breakfast. Toad reminisces about his home and wishes he had listened to his friends. If he had he wouldn't have ended up in this terrible place. Rosy encourages him to talk about his home, because it seems to cheer him. ("Toad Hall") It is the finest home in the district and has been in his family for many generations. Toad promises that Rosy will be his first guest of honor at the party he will throw as soon as he escapes from prison. The much-enchanted Rosy offers to help Toad escape by having him disguise himself as her aunt, the prison washerwoman. If Toad gives Rosy's poor aunt some money, she's sure she can make the plan work.

Rosy goes off to get her aunt while Toad counts out some gold coins. When Rosy returns with her aunt, the woman gives him her clothes and he gives her the pile of coins. Rosy suggests that they tie up the aunt so it appears that Toad forced her to do this. Soon, Toad is dressed as the washerwoman, the aunt is bound and gagged in the corner, and Toad steals out of the dungeon.

Down by the riverbank, the animals are playing and life continues as normal. ("Messing About - Reprise") Rat joins in with the other animals. After dancing about, the animals disappear leaving Rat by himself. A familiar voice is heard. An exhausted Toad enters in his

disguise. Rat sends Toad off to change out of his ridiculous outfit. Badger and Mole enter, looking tired and solemn. Mole tells Rat that it is worse than they expected: Toad Hall is surrounded by the Wildwooders. Toad re-enters, looking like his old self, and tells his friends he wants to have a party tonight. Rat tells him that the Wildwooders have taken over Toad Hall, and they say they've come to stay for good. What used to be a glorious place is now a reckless house of depravity. Toad bursts into tears and Badger tries to calm him. Tonight they themselves will attack Toad Hall, via a secret underground passage that leads from the riverbank directly to the middle of Toad Hall. Tonight is the Chief Weasel's birthday and all the weasels will be gathered in the dining hall to celebrate. They won't be armed. During the party, Toad, Badger, Mole and Rat will sneak in with their weapons and take back Toad Hall. ("Off A-Bashing")

That night the four friends make their way to the banquet hall via the secret passage. A wild party is in progress above them. Not only are they celebrating the Chief Weasel's birthday, but also the fact that Toad is no longer with them. ("Toad Has Gone to Prison") The Chief Weasel even thanks Toad for being sent to prison. Toad emerges from the shadows and informs the Weasels he has returned. Toad's armed friends enter and take the Weasels completely by surprise and chase them off. Only the chief Weasel remains to fight Toad. After an extensive fight, Toad defeats the Chief by bopping him on the head, rendering him semi-conscious.

Toad has his house back. Everyone, including the Chief Weasel straightens up the room for the evening's party. Badger, Mole and Rat have another surprise for their dear little friend: they've repaired Toad's cart. It's as good as new and is lead in by a horse. Toad celebrates as everyone decorates the room for the party. Rosy comes to dance with a very happy Toad who has everything he wants: his home, his friends, his cart, and his girl. ("Let's Jump Aboard").

THE ADVENTURES OF MR TOAD

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