

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS



Book & Lyrics by
Chris Blackwood

Music by
Piers Chater Robinson

Based on the novel by Jules Verne

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A World of Adventure - Author's Notes

When starting out on my journey with Jules Verne, I was struck by the notion that, like our protagonist Phileas Fogg, I was setting myself a challenge too. How could I produce a set of larger than life characters and show the constantly changing continents and locations on one stage?

Around the World in 80 Days, with its rich treasure chest of colourful characters and situations, was a novel I had long wanted to adapt as a stage musical. Each time I begin a project, I see it played in my mind's eye; I hear the voices of the characters and see them move like chess pieces across my imaginary stage.

I try to give each show a distinct style but also allow for the creativity of the director and performer. And yes, it is true that I have my own vision of how it should be produced but I am always amazed and delighted at the ingenuity of the companies who choose to stage it. It was for this reason that I took on such an exciting project as Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days*.

I chose to set the piece in something akin to one of the East India Company's warehouses; a company which traded overseas and folded a few years before our story begins. Like our world and the British Empire things were changing. I hoped that a warehouse full of travelling trunks, costume skips, various bric-a-brac would be building blocks enough to create the many countries and transport across the globe. I wanted to create a true ensemble piece where each and every performer would be an indispensable part of the show, creating elephants, sleds, steamships and myriads of other settings and modes of transport right before the eyes of the audience.

I felt it was necessary to keep the playing area moving without scene change and this is why the cast create locations as the show moves swiftly onward on a multi functional set. Clever lighting can be used to delineate many different playing areas, in both space and time. No covering incidentals and clumsy long set changes to slow the pace of the show and only underscore to pick out a few moments for pathos or adventure.

I wanted larger than life characters to fill the stage creating breakneck farcical moments and comedy, though still able to produce softer emotional moments. It should be cheeky, playful and exciting, using physical comedy, and all the ingenious ideas each company can bring to it.

Although the script can be quite specific in its stage directions, it can be as elaborate or as minimal as a company wishes. I am sure that an innovative cast and director can bring out the fun and excitement of creation in a thousand different ways.

In a world where theatre has become able to show the most minute detail using projection and high tech gadgetry, I chose to write something that would remind the audience how to use their imagination. After all, the mind is the most fantastic piece of technology we have.

I hope that this new and exciting piece will inspire you to take risks, be creative and, above all, have fun.

CHRIS BLACKWOOD

Around the World in Eighty Days

The style of this production allows for theatre groups to cross gender many of the non-singing roles. As it has a very high comic style, female members of a company can play roles such as Captain Speedy, Mr Oysterpuf and Reverend Wilson etc. as 'gentlemen'. It has many roles and can also be presented in a way that is suitable for all groups with a high volume of female members. It is all down to the comic characters they can play. False beards and moustaches will add to the humorous quality of the piece. Bandits, servants, townspeople, natives are all interchangeable regarding speaking roles.

Main Characters and Suggested Doubling

Phileas Fogg	40 years old. The epitome of the British stiff upper lip. Stoic, reserved. Upright and gentlemanly. Politeness embodied. Rational, calm, generous and with complete self-control. Unfazed by anything. Totally centred on one thing – proving that the world can be traversed in eighty days.
Passepartout	30 years old. Wily French valet of Fogg. Acrobatic, physical. Comical. Honest, exudes warmth. Brave. Flamboyant. Excitable and resourceful. He is fiercely loyal to his master.
Inspector Fix	50 years old. Single minded, dyed-in-the-wool old school policeman. East End cockney. Comical in his unshakable belief that Fogg is the robber of the Bank of England. Proud of his reputation as a tenacious man of the law. His motto – I always get my man. Easily frustrated.
Aouda	20 -30 years old. Parsee Indian princess. Educated in England. Demure. Sometimes displays a quiet strength. Beautiful and emotional. Caring, thoughtful and loyal. She grows to love Fogg for his kind heart and care.

Gauthier Ralph	50-60 years old. Pronounced 'Rafe'. Director of the Bank of England. Portly. Old school British. Full of gout, senior member of the club. Proud.
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Brig.Gen. Sir Francis Cromarty	50 years old. Gilbert and Sullivan's Major General. Archetypal Upper Class Englishman.
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Andrew Stuart	45-55 years old. An engineer. Pessimistic, sneering, slightly slimy. The chief disbeliever. Upper class. Thin and willowy.
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John Bunsby	45-55 years old. A salty seadog. The sea is his home. Ravished by sea related accidents. Eye patch, peg leg... you name it, he has it.
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Captain Speedy	50 years old. Irascible. Salty sea dog. Red faced and hot tempered.
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Thomas Flanagan	45-55 years old. A brewer. Irish. Brawny, red cheeked and strong. Down to earth.
Judge Obadiah	50 years old. Irritable. Thinks he is always in the right. Suspicious of everyone. A little addled.
Elder Hitch	40 years old. High and mighty. A preacher.
John Sullivan	40 years old. A banker. Upper class. Immaculate and precise.
Mr Oysterpuf	35-45 years old. Long suffering clerk of the court. Knows he will always be in the wrong even if he is in the right with Judge Obadiah. Wants an easy life.
Mudge	60 years old. A backwoodsman. Fully bearded and grizzly. Kind hearted.
Samuel Fallentin	40 years old. A banker. Good natured. Down to earth.
Col. Stamp Proctor	40-50 years old. Hell-raising, southern states soldier. Goatee beard. Likes his whiskey. Easily provoked and ferocious. Staunchly true to those he respects.
Mr Carstairs	55 years old. The Head of the Servants' Labour Union. Very Upper class. Upright. The epitome of the manservant.
Forster	35 years old. Mr Fogg's ex-butler. Put upon. A man pushed to his limits. Retains some of his upright demeanour but is a broken man.
Thomas	20 upwards. A butler. Quite upright and upper class.
Dolly	20 upwards. A maid. Cockney and quite cheeky.
Kim	18 upwards. Female. As a young boy. South Asian Indian Elephant driver. He is wily and clever. Becomes loyal to Mr Fogg. Almost a tour guide.
High Priestess of Kali	30 upwards. A fearsome bloodthirsty creature. A banshee.
Miriam	20 upwards. Elder Hitch's First wife
Ruth	20 upwards. Elder Hitch's Second wife
Blue Lotus	30-40. A femme fatale. Beautiful, sexy, alluring. Wicked. Seductress.
Rev. Wilson	Any age. Typical English country vicar.

Around the World in Eighty Days Synopsis

Act I

The story begins in London on October 2nd, 1872, the day of a daring robbery of the bank of England. Passepartout secures a manservant job with the meticulous Mr Phileas Fogg (**His name is Fogg/ A Quiet Life**) and settles in to his new position as his new master sets off for the Reform club. Fogg wagers £20,000 that he can traverse the globe in eighty days while his fellow members disagree that the feat can be managed (**Around the World in Eighty Days**).

Fogg sets off that very evening and arrives in Suez where an unfortunate likeness to the Bank robber makes him the unwitting suspect of the tenacious detective Fix (**I Always Get My Man**). As he cannot secure a warrant for his arrest on time, Fix follows Fogg on board the steamer bound for Bombay, hoping to glean some information from Passepartout about his master. Fix, still without a warrant seizes upon an incident between some priests and Passepartout to slow Fogg down. Fogg and Passepartout catch a train to Calcutta but the train line is not completed so Fogg searches for a suitable mode of transport to where the track begins again.

They buy an elephant (**Elephant Ride/ Kali Ma**) and rescue an Indian princess, Aouda, from a funeral pyre making them two days late. Fogg is arrested with Passepartout in Calcutta because the latter desecrated a temple by wearing shoes. The Judge sentences them to a prison sentence which will surely make them lose their bet. Fogg posts and subsequently jumps bail, much to the annoyance of Inspector Fix, who had set the whole thing up to delay them.

Still without his warrant, Fix follows the company on board a steamship to Hong Kong, where Fogg hopes to deliver Aouda to her uncle. Passepartout meets Fix on board, and becomes suspicious of him but agrees to go for a drink with him to see if he is really a spy for the Reform Club. Fix tells him that his master is a criminal but Passepartout will not believe it. Fix plies him with drinks to prevent him telling his master of the premature departure of their next vessel. Passepartout gets drunk and falls under the spell of the femme fatale, Blue Lotus (**The Dragon Tattoo**).

Fogg and Aouda, having found her uncle has moved to Holland, arrive at the port to find their ship gone and Passepartout nowhere to be found. Under the guise of Francis Ball, Fix keeps Fogg in his sight and the three find a boat that will take them to Shanghai where they will meet the steamer for Yokohama. Just as they arrive in the port of Shanghai, their steamer is leaving so they alert them with a cannon shot (**All at Sea**).

Act II

Fogg and his company arrive in Yokohama. Fix has no way of arresting Fogg as his newly arrived warrant now is invalid out of British territory (**Around the World in Eighty Days – Reprise**) so he decides to stay on board until Fogg is in his grasp again. Fogg finds Passepartout who has been working in a street theatre since being put onto the steamer to Yokohama in a drunken state, but Passepartout has no time to tell him of Fix. Once on board the steamer to San Francisco, Passepartout meets Fix once more and is told that the detective will help his master get back to Britain as fast as he can as he wants to prove Fogg is a criminal. Aouda is falling in love with Fogg (**What Do I Know**). In this uneasy state, they arrive in San Francisco during a political rally where Fogg accidentally angers Colonel Stamp Proctor. Vowing revenge, Proctor is swept away in the crowds. (**Time to do Some Electin'**). On the train to New York, they encounter a number of obstacles, such as a Salt Lake Missionary, (**That's Reason to Rejoice**), a herd of buffaloes, a collapsing suspension bridge, a duel with Colonel Proctor and bandits. As Passepartout unhooks the runaway engine from the carriages, he is kidnapped by the bandits and is rescued by Fogg and Proctor.

This has made the company miss their train so they are taken across the snowy plains by Mudge and his wind powered sledge (**Morning Star**) to Omaha and on to New York by train. Arriving forty-five minutes late for their ship, Fogg and Aouda search for an alternative, leaving Passepartout and Fix to search together (**Stuck With You**). Fogg, having found a boat that will only take them to Bordeaux, bribes the crew and takes over the vessel from a cantankerous Captain Speedy. As they run out of fuel, Fogg buys the boat from Speedy and they burn every flammable part of it for fuel. They arrive in Liverpool just as the fuel runs out. As soon as Fogg steps on to British soil, Fix arrests him. Fogg sits in his cell and contemplates (**Could Have, Should Have, Would Have**). Fix rushes in, telling Fogg that the real robber was caught three days earlier and is punched to the ground.

Arriving in London five minutes late, Fogg has lost his wager. Aouda professes her love for Fogg and they send Passepartout to arrange a wedding for the next day (**This Much I Know**). Passepartout realises that they have arrived twenty-four hours in advance because they crossed the International dateline and the company rush to the reform club. Fogg gets there at the last second and wins his bet (**Around the World in Eighty Days – Reprise**)

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