

SPARKY'S MAGIC PIANO • TUBBY THE TUBA THE LAUGHING POLICEMAN AND OTHER CHILDREN'S FAVOURITES

Compiled by **Peter Dempsey**

JUNIOR
CLASSICS

CHILDREN'S
FAVOURITES



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- 1 **The Laughing Policeman** (Billie Grey) 2:42
Charles Penrose with orchestra conducted
by Stan Greening (Columbia WA 3197)
Recorded April 1926, London MINDER
- 2 **Uncle Mac's Nursery Rhymes Medley** 3:31
Intro: (a) Girls And Boys Come Out To Play
(b) Sing A Song Of Sixpence
(c) Little Bo-Peep (d) Humpty Dumpty
Uncle Mac (Derek McCulloch of the BBC)
with Dorothy Helmrich (mezzo-soprano),
Stuart Robertson (baritone) & Children's Chorus &
Orchestra conducted by Philip Green (HMV OEA 7075-3)
Recorded November 1938, London
- 3 **Old MacDonald Had A Farm** 3:12
(Brown–MacDonald, arr. Del Porter & Spike Jones)
Spike Jones & His City Slickers (Victor – D6 VB-2027)
Recorded June 1946, New York
- 4 **Granny's Old Armchair** (Read) 3:23
Frank Crumit with orchestra conducted
by Leonard Joy (Victor BVE 57184-3)
Recorded December 1929, New York DAREWSKI

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- 5 **(They're Changing Guard At) Buckingham Palace** 2:27
(Harold Fraser-Simson–Alan Alexander Milne)
Ann Stephens with orchestra conducted
by Clifford Greenwood (HMV OEA 8645)
Recorded July 1940, London ASCHERBERG
- 6 **Woody Woodpecker** 2:13
(George Tibbles–Ramey Idriss)
Danny Kaye & The Andrews Sisters with
The Harmonica Gentlemen (Decca WL 4838)
Recorded June 1948, Los Angeles MCA
- 7 **I'm Popeye The Sailor** (Lerner) 2:32
Billy Costello ('Popeye, The Paramount film star')
with Novelty accompaniment (Brunswick 17393)
Recorded April 1935, New York F.D. & H./REDWOOD
- 8 **Who's Afraid Of The Big Bad Wolf?** 2:46
(Frank E. Churchill–Ann Ronell)
Les Allen with Henry Hall & The BBC
Dance Orchestra (Columbia CA 14060)
Recorded October 1933, London F.D. & H.

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- 9 **Ten Green Bottles** (Traditional) 3:12
Harold Williams (baritone) & The BBC Male Chorus
conducted by Joseph Lewis; Ernest Lush, piano
(Columbia CA 14112)
Recorded November 1933, London
- 10 **Mad Dogs And Englishmen** (Noël Coward) 2:38
Danny Kaye with male quartet & orchestra
conducted by Johnny Green (Decca WL 4664)
Recorded December 1947, Hollywood CHAPPELL
- 11 **The Three Billygoats Gruff** (Luther) 6:14
Narrated by Frank Luther
At the organ: Milt Herth (Decca 74467 & 74468)
Recorded December 1947, New York
- 12 **I'm Glad That I'm Bugs Bunny** 3:15
(Foster, Maltese, Mel Blanc)
Mel Blanc with Billy May's Orchestra (Capitol 6024)
Recorded May 1950, Hollywood
- 13 **Tubby The Tuba** (Kleinsinger–Tripp) 8:56
Danny Kaye with Victor Young's Orchestra
(Decca LX 4424 & 4425)
Recorded May 1947, New York MCA

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- 14 **Blow The Man Down** (Trad. arr Lord, Breen & De Rose) 2:28
Billy Costello ('Popeye, the Paramount film star') with Novelty accompaniment (Brunswick 17394)
Recorded June 1935, New York
- 15 **Snow White – Selection** (Larry Morey–Frank E. Churchill) 6:15
Intro: (a) Someday My Prince Will Come
(b) Heigh-ho (c) I'm Wishing
(d) With A Smile And A Song
(e) Whistle While You Work (f) One Song
Ann Stephens with Children's Chorus & orchestra conducted by Clifford Greenwood
(HMV OEA 14075 & 14076)
Recorded July 1949, London CHAPPELL
- 16 **The Bee Song** (Kenneth Blain) 2:43
Arthur Askey At the piano: Kenneth Blain
(HMV OEA 6295)
Recorded April 1938, London KEITH PROWSE
- 17 **Christopher Robin Is Saying His Prayers** 2:18
(Harold Fraser-Simson–Alan Alexander Milne)
Ann Stephens with orchestra conducted by Clifford Greenwood (HMV OEA 8646)
Recorded July 1940, London ASCHERBERG

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- 18 **Little Man, You've Had A Busy Day** 3:16
(Mabel Wayne–Maurice Sigler–Al Hoffman)
Paul Robeson with orchestra conducted by Ray Noble
(HMV OB 7423-2)
Recorded June 1934, London WARNER-CHAPPELL
- 19 **Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer** (Marks) 3:10
Gene Autry with instrumental accompaniment
(Columbia 38610).
Recorded August 1949, Hollywood
- 20 **All I Want For Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth** (Gardner) 3:13
Spike Jones and his City Slickers; George Rock,
vocal (Victor D7-VB-2342-2).
Recorded November 1947, New York
- 21 **The Teddy Bears' Picnic** 2:56
(John W. Bratton–Jimmy Kennedy, arr.
Henry Hall & Burton Gillis)
Val Rosing with Henry Hall & The BBC Dance Orchestra (Columbia CA 13051)
Recorded September 1932, London FELDMAN
- 22 **Laughter And Lemons** (Billie Grey) 2:38
Charles Penrose, Frank Biffo (cornet) &
The Boy With The Lemon (Columbia WA 3199)
Recorded April 1926, London MINDER

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- 23 **Mr Froggie Went A-Courtin'** 3:08
(Burl Ives–Tony Mottola)
Burl Ives with guitar (Columbia CO 41633)
Recorded c. January 1950, New York
- 24 **The Runaway Train** (Guy Massey, Carson Robison) 3:15
Vernon Dalhart with orchestra conducted by
Debroy Somers (Regal WAR 593)
Recorded March 1931, London FELDMAN
- 25 **We're Off To See The Wizard** 2:35
(Harold Arlen–Ed 'Yip' Harburg)
The Ken Darby Singers with Victor Young's Orchestra
(Decca DLA 1849-A)
Recorded July 1939, Los Angeles EMI UNITED PARTNERSHIP
- 26 **The Little Fiddle** ('Symphony For Unstrung Tongue') (Sylvia Fine) 6:28
Danny Kaye with sound effects & orchestra
conducted by Johnny Green (Decca WL 4586 & 4587)
Recorded November 1947, Los Angeles

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- 27** **Mother Goose Medley** (Trad. arr. Del Porter – Spike Jones) 3:23
Intro: (a) Brahms' Lullaby (b) The Farmer In The Dell
(c) Hi, Diddle, Diddle (d) Sing A Song Of Sixpence
(e) Little Boy Blue (f) Hickory, Dickory, Dock
(g) Jack And Jill (h) Old King Cole
(i) London Bridge Is Falling Down
Spike Jones & His City Slickers; Animal & bird impressions
by Dr. Horatio Q. Birdbath & Chorus (Victor D6-VB-2025)
Recorded June 1946, New York
- 28** **Dance Duet** (*Hansel And Gretel* – 3:22
Englebert von Humperdinck)
Manchester Children's Choir
(Chorus Mistress: Gertrude Riall) with The Hallé Orchestra conducted by Sir Hamilton
Harty (Columbia WAX 5058)
Recorded June 1929, Manchester
- 29** **The Owl And The Pussycat** 2:12
(Victor Hely-Hutchinson–Edward Lear)
Stuart Robertson (baritone) with orchestra
conducted by the Composer (HMV OEA 1982)
Recorded September 1935, London PATERSONS

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- 30 Coronation Scot** (Vivian Ellis) 2:54
The Queen's Hall Light Orchestra
conducted by Sidney Torch (Columbia CA 20709)
Recorded April 1948, London CHAPPELL
- 31 I Taut I Taw A Puddy Tat** (Alan Livingston – Billy May) 3:08
Mel Blanc with Billy May's Orchestra (Capitol 1360)
Recorded c. November 1950, Hollywood WARNER
- 32 The Dicky Bird Hop** (Ronald Gourlay – Leslie Sarony) 2:41
Gracie Fields with Ben Frankel's Orchestra (OGF 1)
Recorded November 1938, London WARNER-CHAPPELL
- 33 Grandfather's Clock** (Henry Clay Work) 3:20
Harold Williams (baritone) with The BBC Male Chorus
At the piano: Ernest Lush (Columbia CA 14113)
Recorded October 1933, London
- 34 The Prune Song** (Frank Crumit–De Costa) 3:31
Frank Crumit (vocal, guitar) with Lou Raderman (violin),
Jack Shilkret (piano-accordion) (Victor BVE 43536)
Recorded April 1928, New York F.D. & H.
- 35 The Man On The Flying Trapeze** 2:41
(attrib. George Leybourne)
Billy Costello ('Popeye, the Paramount film star')
with novelty accompaniment (Rex CTB 3195)
Recorded c. 1937, Hollywood FELDMAN

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- 36 Sparky's Magic Piano** (Alan Livingston) 18:39
Henry Blair (voice of Sparky) with Ray Turner at the piano
& Billy May's Orchestra
Narrator: Verne Smith
(Capitol 2400-2, 2401-2, 2402-3, 2419-2, 2420-3 & 2421-4)
Recorded October 1947, Hollywood
- 37 When Father Papered the Parlour** 3:04
(Billy Williams–Bert Weston)
Regal 27407 (G6860)
Recorded January 1911, London F.D. & H.
- 38 Goldilocks And The Three Bears** 5:56
(Miller–Philip Green)
Ann Stephens with Franklin Engleman (of the
BBC Light Programme) with supporting cast
& orchestra conducted by Philip Green
(HMV OEA 14141 & 14142)
Recorded September 1949, London BOSWORTH

Total time: 2:26:39

SPARKY'S MAGIC PIANO • TUBBY THE TUBA THE LAUGHING POLICEMAN AND OTHER CHILDREN'S FAVOURITES

While the very young may be surprised to hear the corny things our parents and grandparents listened to for their amusement, this cornucopia will come as a welcome trip down Memory Lane for the older children-at-heart among us.

However, regardless of age and time-spans, it is interesting to reflect on the fact that a demand for such things has existed undiminished throughout recording history. Indeed, not long after Edison (apocryphally) first uttered "Mary had a little lamb" into his tinfoil phonograph of 1877, its hand-cranked successor Emile Berliner's gramophone was, at least initially, a toy aimed at children: the first catalogue of commercial records, flat 5" black shellac discs issued in 1889, comprised mostly nursery rhymes. Moreover, this profitable youth market has endured uninterrupted for well over a century and, whereas children's video may now have overtaken disc sales, the records which not so long ago captured our imagination on children's radio can still charm young and old alike with a palpable nostalgia.

The Laughing Policeman was an estimated million-selling record and it would surely still win the No.1 children's favourite slot (were a poll ever to be held, that is). This evocation of a jovial, old-fashioned bobby, however irrepressibly delivered, was not however truly the work of its attributed creator, the music-hall comic Charles Penrose (1876-1952). Rather, Penrose (also heard here in the droll B-side of his most famous disc, **Laughter And Lemons**) merely adapted it from a 'coon' laughing-song of the 1890s popularised in England on record by the American comedian Burt Shepard (c.1854-1913).

Another classic voice, and one also certain both in vintage and timbre, the distinctive 'Uncle Mac' – aka Derek Ivor Breashur McCulloch (1897-1967) – regaled successive generations of British children with his weekly broadcasts of nursery rhymes. Born in Devonshire, Derek first joined the BBC in 1926 (when radio announcers still wore evening dress to read the news!) and by 1938 had risen to the directorship of the Corporation's children's

programmes. Several years later he was also to become, perhaps less obtrusively, the voice of 'Larry The Lamb' in *Toytown*.

A fair proportion of highest qualifiers for the Golden Oldie Children's Classics list are of vaudeville, country & western, or Hollywood and therefore, in the broadest sense, American origin. There is a side-splitting demolition of **Old Macdonald Had A Farm** (executed in brilliant trad. jazz style by the band of the Californian arch-prankster Spike Jones (1911-1965) who encores with similarly brilliant demolitions of **All I Want For Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth** and **Mother Goose**); there is also **Granny's Old Armchair** (a witty dissection with a moral by Ohio-born actor, vaudeville entertainer and author Frank Crumit, 1889-1943, also heard in **The Prune Song**).

We detour back to England (or rather to the specifically autobiographical England of A. A. Milne (1882-1956) and his young son Christopher Robin in *When We Were Very Young*) for (**Christopher Robin**) **At Buckingham Palace**, the first of two selections from the 1924 song-cycle by the London-born Harold Fraser-Simson (1878-1944).

However internationally accepted, to some the sardonic, occasionally acrid humour of Danny Kaye (1913-1987) may be

an acquired taste. Preserved for posterity in such films as *The Secret Life Of Walter Mitty* (1947), *Hans Christian Andersen* (1952) and *Peter Pan* (1976), Brooklyn-born singing-actor and dancer Kaye (aka David Daniel Kominsky) was, by dint of his rapid, tongue-twisting patter-songs, a formidable live wire on-stage.

And certainly, whether he is debunking coloratura sopranos in "The Fairy Pipers", playing the fool in **Woody Woodpecker** and **The Little Fiddle**, mocking English mores à la Noël Coward in **Mad Dogs And Englishmen** or jerking tears with "The Ugly Duckling" and the monumentally sentimental **Tubby The Tuba**, his contribution to classic recordings for children would be difficult to overestimate.

Next, we catch our first earful of **Popeye, The Sailorman**, the daring, seafaring, spinach-swallowing creation of E.C. Segar who, between 1932 and 1950, was the hero of more than 250 Paramount cartoon shorts realised by Austrian-born cartoonist-producer Max Fleischer (1889-1972). Later, 'Popeye, the Paramount Filmstar', incarnated by the gravel-toned Billy Costello, delights us again with his renderings of the sea shanty **Blow The Man Down** and **The Man On The Flying Trapeze** (a song of disputed authorship, dating from 1868, originally made famous

by the English music-hall *lion-comique* George Leybourne).

In previous decades, as now, America lead the English-speaking children's market around the world via the organisation of Walt Disney (1901-1966). His 1933 cartoon *The Three Little Pigs* first introduced **Who's Afraid Of The Big Bad Wolf?** (with words and music by Disney staff composer Frank E. Churchill (1901-1942) and additional lyrics by Ann Ronell) while the Churchill-Larry Morey score for *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs* is still to many minds the Disney masterpiece. But traditionally also from the USA, other and more multifarious delights have arrived over the decades to delight and entertain us, and from these we have selected some classic examples.

First, Illinois-born itinerant balladeer-turned-dramatic actor Burl Ives (aka Burle Icle Ivanhoe, 1909-1995) offers a gentle homily in **Mr Froggie Went A-Courtin'**. Next, after a short, helter-skelter jaunt with pioneering C & W star 'Vernon Dalhart' (aka opera-singer-turned-entrepreneur Marion Try Slaughter, 1883-1948) on **The Runaway Train** (a million-seller written pseudonymously by Dalhart with guitarist-vocalist and champion whistler Carson Jay Robison, 1890-1957), **We're Off To See The Wizard** with a chorus of Munchkins from MGM's 1939 Oscar-winning escapist epic *Wizard Of Oz*, for many the greatest

re-evocation of lost youth, enshrined in Judy Garland's immortal Dorothy. Then, still smiling at the vocal antics of Warner Brothers' resident voice expert Mel Blanc (1892-1989) in (**I'm Glad I'm Bugs Bunny** and **I Taut I Taw A Puddy Tat**, we enter the Never-Never Land of **Sparky's Magic Piano** (given here in its original, uncut version).

Several other American children's classics have stood the test of time. Composed in 1907, **The Teddy Bears' Picnic** was originally conceived as a salon novelty for piano. Its composer, John W. Bratton (1867-1947), a native of Wilmington, Delaware, was first a baritone in operetta and vaudeville before turning to acting, producing and music publishing. We now know his most famous composition best through this million-selling 1932 recording by Henry Hall's BBC Dance Orchestra. And, if the sheer number of airings on children's programmes and LP and CD re-issues gives any indication, Texas-born 'Singing Cowboy' Gene Autry (1907-1998) must have secured a large portion of Children's – as well as Seasonal – revenue with **Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer**. The best known of his 200+ songs, this Columbia Records all-time best-selling record was a 1949 US No.1 and a Golden Disc – Gene's fourth. It eventually sold over eight million copies, making it pre-1955 an easy runner-up to Bing Crosby's

"White Christmas" in the Christmas All-Time Bestsellers List.

Children's classics of more typically 'British Empire' orientation, many and varied, include: **The Owl And The Pussycat** (the best known of the 1871 *Nonsense Songs* by the London-born poetaster and traveller Edward Lear (1812-1888) was set to music by Dr. Victor Hely-Hutchinson, a sometime music-professor and Director of BBC Children's Radio); **My Grandfather's Clock** (although sung here by The BBC Chorus with Australian baritone Harold Williams (1893-1976), this song, now virtually a folk song, was entirely the work of the 'Connecticut Yankee' Henry Clay Work, 1832-1884); and **When Father Papered The Parlour** (the oldest classic children's recording included in our anthology, this is a fine example from the prolific discography of 'The Man In The Velvet Suit', the London-based Australian music-hall entertainer Billy Williams, c.1877-1915). This recording was made in 1911.

Loved and admired for her ingenuous good humour on both sides of the Atlantic, the childless Gracie Fields (1898-1979) from Rochdale loved children and at the height of her fame in the 1930s financed a children's orphanage (here 'Our Gracie' offers **Dicky Bird Hop**, a number originally featured by its composer, the blind English entertainer Ronald Gourlay). Also still remembered with

affection by many for his endearing silliness, the diminutive, Liverpudlian 'Cheery Chappy' Arthur Askey (aka Arthur Bowden, 1900-1982) regales us once again with his famous **Bee Song**. And that Anglicised American Paul Robeson (1898-1976) croons us again to sleep as in days of old with **Little Man, You've Had A Busy Day**, an unrivalled tear-jerker from the pen of Brooklyn-born entertainer-songwriter Mabel Wayne (b.1904).

Rehearing these classic records of childhood days past is like a trip across green pastures of lost youth on the **Coronation Scot**. Hopping aboard this magic train transports us immediately back to halcyon days. Originally composed in 1938 by Vivian Ellis (1903-1996) and popularised in this famous recording by Sidney Torch (1908-1990), it remains one of the most evocative pieces in the British light music repertoire. A firm BBC *Children's Favourites* top-liner, for many years it also prefaced the BBC's *Paul Temple* radio programme.

Peter Dempsey

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Compiled by **Peter Dempsey**

Since the beginning of the recording era, the radio, the 78 and LPs have produced an unforgettable list of Classic Children's Favourites. Here, on this unique set, are many of the finest, performed by great stars of the past. Danny Kaye presents *Tubby the Tuba* and others; Spike Jones sings *Old Macdonald Had A Farm*, Harold Fraser-Simson is *At Buckingham Palace* (with Christopher Robin). There is *The Runaway Train*, *The Owl and the Pussy Cat*, *The Teddy Bears' Picnic* and *I Taut I Taw A Puddy Tat*. On a gentler note, the inimitable Paul Robeson sings *Little Man*, *You've Had A Busy Day*. There is the cut-glass accent of Uncle Mac, the uninhibited rasp of *Popeye*.

A delight for parents, grandparents and children alike.

CD ISBN:

978-962-634-279-4

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Compiled by Peter Dempsey
Produced by Nicolas Soames
Mastered by Sarah Butcher, SBS

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Total time
2:26:39