

Good King Whatsisface Cast List

6 Male, 5 Female, and Extras M/F

KING WENCESLAS (M) Robust, usually merry king, who has become disenchanted with his nobles and cynical about Christmas.

QUEEN (F) High-browed (without being haughty), clever queen who appreciates an orderly banquet.

JESTER (M) The royal court jester and right-hand-man to the king who keeps him on his toes.

HERALD (M) The royal announcer and master of ceremonies at all banquets, very prim and proper.

PRINCE WENDEL (M) Son to King and Queen, witty, charming, debonair, but a bit spoiled.

PRINCESS GWENDEL (F) Prince's twin sister, also a bit spoiled but good-natured and discerning.

LADY DIMWITTY (F) Ditzzy personal lady-in-waiting to the queen, married to Lord Doltfoot.

LORD DOLTFOOT (M) One of the king's nobles and a bit daft like his wife, Lady Dimwitty.

LADY FIONA (F) Supposedly a lady-in-waiting to Princess, but a bit catty and conniving.

LADY PEONY (F) Another lady-in-waiting to Princess, loves a good party and loyal to Lady Fiona.

STEWARD (M) The royal wassail server, a somewhat nervous chap.

PAGE, GUARDS (NON-SPEAKING) (M/F) The royal couriers of things and people.

[PLEASE NOTE: Cast actors of similar height and build to play KING, JESTER, LORD DOLTFOOT, and HERALD; cast actresses also of similar height and build to play QUEEN and LADY DIMWITTY.]

Sample Pages

FANFARE AND WELCOME

(When the guests have been seated, a second BRASS FANFARE will signal all entertainers to clear the hall. Follow-spots on PAGE and STEWARD entering from opposite directions at floor level, PAGE preoccupied and rushing with sheaf of papers and STEWARD carefully carrying a large carafe. They meet in middle, pirouette around each other in near collision, STEWARD holding carafe high, PAGE clutching papers low. PAGE bows profusely begging STEWARD's pardon, then turns and rushes on his way groaning and sighing fretfully. STEWARD sighs, shaking his head as he watches PAGE exit, then turns to continue on his own way and freezes as he "discovers" the audience.)

STEWARD: Oh, Good Gracious, you're here ALREADY?! —Well! —er—That's grand! Yes indeed . . . A most hearty welcome to you, honored guests of the royal court, for the always-appetizing, ever-entertaining Yuletide Feast! . . . And, um . . .

JESTER: *(Enters.)* What ho, Steward?

STEWARD: *(Whispers sharply to JESTER.)* Hang that Herald; he let the guests in already! *(To audience.)* Begging your pardon— *(Leaning forward as if to let audience in on a secret.)* You see, normally we'd have welcomed you with much pomp and flair and jolly whatnot, but— *(Looking furtively around.)* — things are a bit tense at court this year. His Majesty is not himself you see—

JESTER: *(To audience.)* We've all been feeling the bite and 't isn't the frost what's biting if you take my meaning *(Winces and rubs rump as if bitten.)* —

STEWARD: Lest we forget OURSELVES, and our places *(Murmuring to JESTER.)* —MY place is with the wassail; what do we do about *(Nodding head toward audience.)* Nuh-huh-huh...?

JESTER: Not to worry, you go warm your wassail, and I shall do the warm-up.

STEWARD: But Herald—

JESTER: Isn't here now is he? *(Shooing him off.)* Go-go-go.

(STEWARD hurries off nervously.)

JESTER: I've always wanted to do this! *(Clears his throat.)*

Ready the meal and heat the wassail!

(HERALD enters.)

Bring forth the meat and finest of ale!

Blow— *(Spots HERALD.)*

HERALD: Precisely. *(Waves him off curtly.)* BLOW. *(JESTER mockingly genuflects and steps aside. HERALD clears his throat.)*

Blow the clarion! Singers appear!
The king and his court are drawing near!

STEWARD: *(Re-enters quickly.)* The King is still upstairs! The Court is still waiting on him!

JESTER: *(Smiles awkwardly at audience.)* Oops. Let's try that again.

Keep the meal warm and hold the wassail!
I think it's time that I had some ale!

HERALD: Jester!

JESTER: Right. Steward, you talk to the cooks; Herald, you talk to the Court; and I'll talk to the King. *(To audience.)* And you, honored guests, just . . . talk among yourselves!

(JESTER, HERALD, and STEWARD all scramble to exit in opposite directions, nearly colliding but finally working out a way to get around each other. Lights down.)

(Lights up on side stage where KING sits Indian-style reading through mounds of papers atop a small desk center stage. Banquet tables are already in place behind him although not part of this scene.)

KING: Ah! Arrgh! *(Sighs.)* Mhm! Humph! *(PAGE approaches, carrying tray heaped with more papers.)* What, MORE?! *(PAGE cringes, sets tray down gingerly, exits timidly. KING mimes reading contents of papers – tosses disgustedly, chuckles, winces, other funny gestures culminating in jumping up and down on whole pile like an ape. JESTER enters amid this and watches for a bit, mouths “what is he doing?!” to audience, then addresses KING.)*

JESTER: S-sire—?

(KING stops abruptly in midst of eating a paper — stares at JESTER with paper dangling from his mouth.)

JESTER: Tsk, tsk, tsk — has it come to THIS, Your Majesty?

KING: *(Still squatting on papers.)* Come to add your OWN list to the heap, have you?—Well and why not— Jester needs a new set of juggling pins I suppose! —or a new —whatdoyoucallit, that STICK thingamabob you gesture with!

JESTER: Jesters gesture with a shtick stick —it's called a kabonger. No, Sire, my pins and sticks are sharp as ever; I don't have a list—

KING: Then you are the only one in the entire kingdom! Even my dear Queen does not neglect the custom — let me see, where did I put hers? *(Fumbles through pile.)*

JESTER: 'Tis indeed a sad state of affairs, but after all, Sire, it IS tradition.

KING: Bah! A pox on this tradition — what FOOL ever started it in the first place?

JESTER: *(Beat.)* Uh, you did, Sire.

KING: Well that's beside the point. The point is, the point is ... well, *(Pointing to piles.)* what IS the point of all this? *(Pointing to JESTER.)* —THAT's my point!

JESTER: Why, you remember ... to give your courtiers gifts at Christmastide, to bring them mirth, merriment, joy —

KING: JOY! Humbug! My courtiers indeed—spoiled, demanding little leeches, the lot of them — they always expect me to give them gifts for Christmas — and the GIFTS they ask for — more outlandish every year — listen to this one (*Reading.*) “One partridge in a pear tree?!” ... And just what have they ever given ME, eh?

JESTER: (*Beat.*) Taxes?

KING: Hm? —Well, I must put a stop to this nonsense once and for all; it’s gotten out of hand. Gift-giving USED to put a shine to my face and a spring in my step and a...

JESTER: Song in your heart?

KING: Precisely. (*Sighs.*) But now it only wearies me. Always the same— the lists flurry in, the nobles flock together for the feast, and then they flutter away with their presents. What have I accomplished? Have I infected THEM with a spirit of giving? Nooo.... Would they care a wit about ME, I wonder, were I not so generous? — Why, they don’t REALLY KNOW me anymore, beyond this ritual— I’ll bet they’ve even forgotten my NAME! (*JESTER frowns, biting his nail — KING notices.*) —Ha! What’s my name?

JESTER: Your Majesty, I—

KING: WRONG!

JESTER: But Sire!—

KING: WRONG AGAIN!

JESTER: (*Re-directs.*) Well, what is MY name?

KING: That’s easy. It’s Jester.

JESTER: No, it isn’t. It’s Chester.

KING: (*Glances sharply.*) Che—? Oh-rrmnph! (*Frustrated muffled growls as he jumps down and paces.*)

JESTER: I know your name, Sire. (*With flair.*) His Royal Majesty, Head of the Commonwealth and Defender of the Realm, George Alfred Humphrey Maximilian Lucius Wenceslas. (*KING pauses, nodding and smiling faintly at each name.*) —Feel better?

KING: (*Scowls again.*) That one person in the whole kingdom actually knows my real name? Don't make me laugh.

JESTER: But it's my job to make you laugh.

KING: (*Resumes pacing.*) A king whose court doesn't even know his name — well I won't have it I tell you! I want to teach these courtiers a lesson!

JESTER: Oh dear...

KING: (*Stops pacing, finger points up.*) I know! NO gifts for my nobles this year. Instead, I shall disguise myself and go out among the POOR And I shall give gifts to THEM ... dressed in a red peasant's suit—

JESTER: I'm sorry, Sire —that's already been done.

KING: Oh? Hm, well then let me see... Ah-ha! I have it! I shall roam the countryside, STEALING from the rich and giving to the poor, disguised—

JESTER: In a GREEN suit? That's been done before also, I'm afraid.

KING: Ergghh! Well, I still want to make myself unknown to my subjects — I shall switch places with someone ... a pauper perhaps (*Glances at JESTER, who is shaking his head. Sighs.*) I know...

JESTER/KING: It's been done before.

KING: Arrgh!! I wish I never was born! (*JESTER raises finger, starting to speak.*)—DON'T SAY IT!!!

(*KING paces, stops, studies JESTER a moment, and gets a gleam in his eye.*)

KING: Hmmm... switch places indeed ... perhaps not as a pauper Maybe not really go out into the streets—in fact, I won't even have to leave court — I have an idea. (*Whispers to JESTER, who becomes stiff & wide-eyed.*)

JESTER: Oh, no, no, NO, Sire!

KING: Oh, yes, yes, YES, (*Grins.*) ...CHESTER.

JESTER: But, Your Majesty!

KING: (*Escorting JESTER as they exit.*) Come with me; I have a plan.

(Lights down. Desk and papers are removed from stage.)

FANFARE AND PROCESSIONAL

(Lights up on center stage as HERALD appears and signals the brass players. BRASS FANFARE.)

HERALD: Hear Ye, Hear Ye! Clarion will blow and wassail will flow! All hail Good King Wet-Knee-Socks ... er ... Whiffle-Toss ... uh ... Wish-Him-Lots ... hm ... Woosh—no. Wuh-e-e-e-e-e-e-elcome His Imperial Majesty! Mark ye now the Royal Procession!

(BRASS FANFARE. QUEEN appears somewhat flustered, holds hand out expectantly, looks behind her and awaits the “KING” to escort her across the hall. “KING,” who is really JESTER in disguise, hangs back. QUEEN jerks her head as if to say “Come on!” and JESTER bounds up beside her, bumping her in the process so she has to grab and steady her crown.)

QUEEN: *(Muttering through smile-clenched teeth as she gives a queen-wave from side to side.)* Why are you lagging so far behind? —And so skittish—what’s gotten into you?

JESTER AS KING: I’m sorry, Your Majesty — I mean, er—my Dear. My shoes are too big.

QUEEN: Since when? And why do you insist on wearing your cowl up? I can’t even see your face.

JESTER AS KING: I—er—it’s chilly in this drafty banquet hall, and I believe I’m catching a cold. *(Sneezes hard so that cowl momentarily drops partially exposing JESTER to audience while QUEEN looks other way; JESTER whisks it back up.)*

QUEEN: Oh dear —and I was so looking forward to whirling around with you this evening in the Royal Dance!

(“KING” and QUEEN approach the table —ROYAL COURT [LADY FIONA, LADY PEONY, LADY DIMWITTY, and LORD DOLTFOOT] bow to “KING” and QUEEN —JESTER bows back, which confuses ROYAL COURT and they all bow again — JESTER repeats his bow until QUEEN smacks his arm.)

QUEEN: WhatEVER are you doing? You don’t bow to your courtiers —are you FEVERISH as well?

(JESTER AS KING and QUEEN step up to their places at table —JESTER sits, but instantly realizes his faux pas and stands holding chair for QUEEN. QUEEN sits, motioning JESTER with a jerk of her head to sit also; JESTER sits; ROYAL COURT approach their places at table. As each one does so, JESTER springs back up again; each courtier, confused, stays standing until QUEEN motions —with increasing fervency each time— JESTER to sit back down; fourth time, before JESTER is up QUEEN blocks his ascent with a firm hand to the shoulder, pushing him back down.)

FANFARE AND WASSAIL

(BRASS FANFARE. STEWARD enters and sets wassail goblets down before JESTER and QUEEN. Servers place wassail goblets before other members of the ROYAL COURT. Other servers distribute wassail to the guests. ROYAL COURT all stand, holding up goblets, pause, waiting — JESTER, who had sprung up when they did, glances around uncertainly as all watch him expectantly.)

QUEEN: *(Through gritted teeth.)* The Royal Toast...?

JESTER AS KING: *(Looking around at courtiers.)* Well, some would call them the “Upper Crust” but “Royal Toast”? —I like it—has a certain crispness to it.

QUEEN: *(Rolling her eyes at him.)* NO, Dear, the Royal *(Raising her goblet inconspicuously.)* TOAST...

JESTER AS KING: Ah! Yes—the TOAST, TOAST, hm... it’s a CRUMMY job but I’d BUTTER get down to it before we are both in a JAM. *(QUEEN does a quizzical double-take.)* Let me see, how does it go— *(Mustering a kingly voice.)* WELCOME ONE AND ALL ... TO THIS FAIR HALL ... MAY YOU ... uh ... may you ... *(Singing like “Ring-around-the-Rosy.”)* Toast a drink of wassail, drink a toast of wassail, lift it, lap it, we all sit down! *(Sits happily, relieved; QUEEN stares at him.)*

COURTIERS: *(Confused but following protocol.)* Hear, hear! All hail Good King Whatsisface!

HERALD: *(To audience.)* Grip your glasses, hold them high, merry now, together cry, “Hail Whatsisface!”

(Pause for audience response toasting “Hail Whatsisface,” after which HERALD discreetly exits.)

LADY FIONA: *(To LADY PEONY.)* His Majesty is a touch—

LADY PEONY: Touched? *(Tapping head.)* You noticed it, too? But silly or sober, no one can throw a better party —and give better presents—than Good King ... Whatsisface?

LADY FIONA: Hear, hear. *(Raising her goblet.)* Here’s to King ... Whatsisface.

LADY PEONY: I asked you first.

LADY FIONA: Asked me what?

LADY PEONY: Whatsisface?

LADY FIONA: That’s right.

LADY PEONY: Well then?

LADY FIONA: Well, what?

LADY PEONY: WHATSISFACE?

LADY FIONA: What about him?

LADY PEONY: *(Turning in frustration to LADY DIMWITTY.)* Lady Dimwitty, if you please, Whatsisface?

LADY DIMWITTY: What's whose face?

LADY PEONY: The King.

LADY DIMWITTY: What about his face? —It's covered up. Isn't that odd, though?

LADY PEONY: I give up. *(Spots PRINCE and PRINCESS approaching from the other side of JESTER and QUEEN.)* Ah, here come the royal twins.

(BRASS FANFARE. HERALD enters.)

HERALD: Announcing the Fruit and Buns! *(PRINCE and PRINCESS halt and frown at HERALD.)* — And their Royal Highnesses, Prince Wendel and Princess Gwendel.