

DINOS CONSTANTINIDES

LAZY JACK

for reader, violin, and five instruments

LRC 200



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Lazy Jack (2001) is the third in a series of projected musical stories for children, involving a small ensemble, reader and solo instruments. *The Dancing Turtle* (1999) and *The Singing Cucaracha* (2000) are the previous pieces in the series.

The story of *Lazy Jack* is adapted from a familiar English folktale about a simpleton who tries to please his mother by doing what she says, with comical results. At last, he unwittingly wins the hand of a fair maiden and they live happily ever after.

Lazy Jack

Once upon a time, there was a poor woman who had only one son, whose name was Jack. Day after day, the poor woman would work her fingers to the bone to put food on the table for them to eat, while Jack would laze around under a tree in the backyard and play his fiddle. That's why people called him "Lazy Jack."

One day, his mother called Jack to her and said: "Jack, I can no longer support us both--the time has come for you to go to work!" So Jack reluctantly put his beloved fiddle aside and set off slooowwwly to find work.

A little ways down the road, Jack was hired by a farmer, and after working all day the farmer gave him a sixpence for his wages. Jack took the coin proudly, and set off home tossing the coin up and down in the air as he walked. On the way, he had to cross a bridge over a stream, and oh my! Jack tossed his coin up and it fell into the water and was washed away: his first day's pay--gone!

Sadly, he told his mother what had happened, and she said: Oh, you FOOLISH boy! You should have put the coin in your pocket where it would have been safe!" "Oh," said Jack, scratching his head. "Well, I'll do better next time!" and he picked up his fiddle and fiddled the night away.

Next day, Jack went off and apprenticed himself to a dairy farmer who paid him with a pitcher of milk. Well, Jack took the pitcher, and, remembering his mother's words, carefully put it in his pocket and went off towards home whistling. By the time he reached his house, the milk had all spilled out of the pitcher and onto his trousers and he had nothing to show for his work. " You NINCOMPOOP!" said his mother. "You should have placed the pitcher on your head and walked home carefully!" "Oh," said Jack, looking around for his fiddle, "I'll do better next time," and he fiddled and frittered the night away.

Well, next day Jack worked for the same dairy farmer and received a nice pound of fresh butter for his efforts. Jack took the butter very carefully, put it on his head and started home. Unfortunately, it was a very hot day and the butter began to melt--it melted over Jack's hair, his face, his ears, and down his shirt, and by the time he

reached home, there was nothing left! "Oh, you SILLY boy," sighed his mother. "You should have wrapped the butter in leaves and carried it home in your hands." "Oh," said Jack, checking around for his fiddle, "I'll do better next time!" and he played a merry tune.

The following day Jack went to work for a baker, and was rewarded at the end of the day with the gift of the baker's cat. Jack remembered what his mother had said, took some leaves, wrapped the cat up and tried to carry it home in his hands. The cat was having none of that, and scratched and clawed Jack's hand sooo hard that Jack had to let it go.

"Jack! You SIMPLETON! You should have tied a string around the cat's neck and led it gently home!" "Oh," said Jack cheerfully, "Well, I'll do better next time!"

Next morning, Jack found work with the town butcher and received a large roast beef for his help. Jack remembered what his mother had said, reached into his pocket for some string, tied it around the meat and dragged it home proudly. Of course, by the time he reached home, the meat was all dirty and dusty and not fit to eat. Jack's mother lost her patience: "Jack! You NITWIT! Whatever shall I do with you? Why oh why didn't you carry the meat on your shoulders?" "Well," said Jack, "I'll do better next time," and he picked up his fiddle and played it--a little sadly.

The next day was Sunday, and Jack and his mother had to eat cabbage stew without meat, and Jack didn't feel much like playing his fiddle at all.

On Monday, Jack found work with a rancher, who had lots of cows, horses, sheep and donkeys to watch over. At day's end, the rancher gave Jack a fine-looking donkey. Jack looked at the donkey, shook his head doubtfully, BUT, remembering what his mother had told him, he bent down, picked up the donkey, slowly hoisted it onto his shoulders feet upwards, and started home.

Now as it happened, Jack had to go through the town on the way home, and passed a rich man's house. This man had a beautiful daughter who had never laughed or danced, and, in spite of all her father had done to entertain her, she spent her days looking sadly out of her window. Her desperate father promised her hand in marriage to anyone who could make her laugh. When Jack passed by with the donkey on his shoulders, legs sticking straight up in the air, bellowing and kicking with all its might, the girl leaned out of her window to see the strange sight, and she began to laugh. She laughed so hard and so long at Jack and his donkey that tears streamed down her cheeks. Her father was overjoyed and gave Jack his daughter's hand in marriage. Jack brought his mother and his fiddle to town for the wedding, and he had a fine time fiddling while his wife danced. Of course, his mother never called Jack a Nincompoop again! As for Jack, he never had to do another lick of work, and he and his bride lived a life of laughter, music and dancing ever after!