# JUMP INTO MY SACK 

Musical fable in one act
Dedication: in memory of my father, Emile

## Music by JULIAN GRANT

Libretto by MEREDITH OAKES
based on a Corsican folk-tale told by Madame Marini, collected by J.B. Frédéric Ortoli in Les Contes Populaires de l'île de Corse (Paris 1883) and included in Italo Calvino's Fiabe Italiane (1956)

## Characters

| Francis | baritone |
| :--- | :--- |
| Fairy/Boy | soprano |
| Old Woman/ Young Man/ Death | mezzo-soprano |
| Father/ Devil/ Doctor | tenor |

also: Brothers, Gamblers, Chorus, Narrators, all performed by the above four singers

## Instrumentation

Clarinet in Bb
Clarinet in Bb (+ bass clarinet in Bb )
Guitar
Violin
Cello
Double-bass

## Duration

42 minutes

Jump Into My Sack was premiered by Mecklenburgh Opera at the MacRobert Centre, Stirling, on May 301996.
London premiere: Covent Garden Festival, Cochrane Theatre, 4 June 1996
Francis - Wyn Pencarrig
Fairy/Boy - Adey Grummet
Old Woman/Young Man/Death - Rebecca du Pont-Davies
Father/Devil/Doctor- Niall Morris
Music Director - Paul McGrath
Designer - Agnes Treplin
Director - John Abulafia
Jump Into My Sack was commissioned by Mecklenburgh Opera with funds from the Arts Council of England

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[1] Prelude

| [2] ALL: | Many years ago, in the barren mountains of Niolo, lived a father with twelve sons. |
| :---: | :---: |
| FATHER: | Sons, I have no more bread. Go into the world. Leave me. |
| ALL: | The youngest son was lame. He started weeping. |
| FRANCIS: | How can I leave you, father? How can I earn my bread? |
| FATHER: | Don't cry. Go with your brothers. What they earn will be yours as well. Go! |
| [3] ALL: | They walked a whole day. Then another. And the little lame boy kept falling behind. On the third day, the brothers said: |
| BROTHERS: | Our little brother Francis is nothing but a nuisance. Let's leave him in the road. That will be best, for him as well, for some kindhearted soul will come along and pity him. |
| FRANCIS: | Brothers! Wait! |
| BROTHERS: | They stopped no more to wait for him, but walked to Bonifacio where they took a boat. |
| FRANCIS: | Brothers! Wait! |
| BROTHERS: | There was a huge storm. |
| FRANCIS: | Brothers! Wait! |
| BROTHERS: | The boat was dashed to pieces. All the brothers drowned. |


| FRANCIS: | Brothers! Wait! |
| :---: | :---: |
| [4] TWO WOMEN: | Meanwhile the fairy of Lake Creno, watching from a treetop by the road, cast a spell to put Francis to sleep. |
| FRANCIS: (asleep) | mmmmmmm... |
| TWO WOMEN: | Then she came down from the tree, picked certain special herbs, and prepared a plaster which she smoothed on the lame leg. |
| FRANCIS: (asleep) | mmmmmmm... |
| TWO WOMEN: | Then she disguised herself as a poor little old woman and sat down on a bundle of firewood. |
| FRANCIS:(restless, waking up) mmmmmmmm.... |  |
| (He prepares to limp off and finds he can walk, and run, and jump) |  |
|  | Madam, have you seen a doctor round here? |
| OLD WOMAN: | What would you want with a doctor? |
| FRANCIS: | I want to thank him. A great doctor must have come by and cured my lame leg. |
| OLD WOMAN: | I cured your lame leg! |
| FRANCIS: | How can I thank you, ma'am? (He kisses her.) Let me carry your bundle of wood. |
| ALL: | He went to pick up the bundle, but, [5] when he stood up, he faced, not the old woman, but the most beautiful maiden, with diamonds, blonde hair, a blue dress embroidered with gold, and two stars on her boots. |
| [6] FAIRY: | Ah! It was a trick to test you, Francis. Make two wishes and I will grant them. Ask! |
| FRANCIS: | I would like a sack that will pull in whatever I name. |
| FAIRY: | A sack? You'd like a sack? Very well, such a sack you will have. Anything else? Ask! |
| FRANCIS: | I desire a stick that will do whatever I say. |
| FAIRY: | A stick? You'd like a stick? Very well, such a stick you will have! |
| ALL: | The fairy vanished. |
| [7] FRANCIS: | A loaf of bread into my sack! |
| OTHERS: | Zoom! A loaf of bread came sailing into the sack. |


| FRANCIS: | And a bottle of wine. |
| :---: | :---: |
| OTHERS: | Zoom! There was the bottle of wine. |
| FRANCIS: | A roasted partridge into my sack! |
| OTHERS: | Zoom! A partridge fully roasted flew into the sack. |
| FRANCIS: | With pastries! |
| OTHERS: | Zoom! |
| FRANCIS: | Oysters! |
| OTHERS: | Zoom! |
| FRANCIS: | And apricots! |
| OTHERS: | Zoom! |
| ALL: | Francis ate a first rate meal. Then he set out again, limping no longer, and next day found himself in Mariana. |
| [8] DEVIL: | At that particular time the Devil was particularly fond of Mariana. |
| ALL: | Disguised as a handsome young man the Devil beat everyone at cards, and when they ran out of money. |
| DEVIL: | He purchased their souls. |
| FRANCIS: | Francis went to the casino. |
| ALL: | There was great turmoil, with all the people crowded round one spot. |
| FRANCIS: | Who's this? |
| DEVIL: | He was a gambler who lost his entire fortune and thrust a dagger into his heart not a minute ago. |
| ALL: | All the gamblers were sad-faced. |
| FRANCIS: | Francis saw one who stood in their midst laughing up his sleeve. Francis saw one negligently stretch out his leg and show a cloven hoof. |
| DEVIL: | It was the Devil. |
| FRANCIS: | Very well. He will meet his match. |
| DEVIL: | Quick, take this unfortunate man out and let's get on with the game. |


| FRANCIS: | Francis who didn't even know how to hold the cards in his hands... |
| :---: | :---: |
| ALL: | Lost everything that day. |
| FRANCIS: | By the second day he knew a bit about the game. |
| ALL: | And lost even more. |
| FRANCIS: | Losing did not trouble him in the least. He had his sack. Zoom! |
| OTHERS: | Zoom! |
| FRANCIS: | By the third day he was an expert... |
| ALL: | And lost so much that the Devil was sure he was ruined. |
| [9] DEVIL: | Noble prince, I can't tell you how sorry I am at your misfortune. But I can help you recover everything. |
| FRANCIS: | How? |
| DEVIL: | Sell me your soul. |
| FRANCIS: | So that's your advice to me, Satan! Jump into my sack! |
| DEVIL: | Ah! It was a trick to test you, Francis! |
| FRANCIS: | Stick, beat him! |
| DEVIL: | Ow! Stop, let me out! Oo! Ah! |
| FRANCIS: | Bring back to life all those poor gamblers who killed themselves because of you. |
| DEVIL: | It's a bargain! |
| [10] DEAD YOUNG MEN: | Aoo!! |
| DEVIL: | Can you hear me? |
| YOUNG MAN: | It's dark! |
| DEVIL: | Is it hot in there? |
| YOUNG MAN: | It's hot! |
| DEAD YOUNG MEN: (howling in | in torment) Aoo!! |
| DEVIL: | Up from under the ground! |
| DEAD YOUNG MEN:(chanting) | Up from under the ground! (etc) |


| YOUNG MAN: | I'm burning! |
| :---: | :---: |
| ALL: | Up from under the ground came a throng of young men, pale of face and with feverish eyes. |
| FRANCIS: | My friends you were ruined gambling and killed yourselves. Promise to gamble no more. |
| GAMBLERS: | Yes, yes, we promise! |
| FRANCIS: | Here are a thousand crowns for each of you. |
| [11] YOUNG MAN:(with GAMBL | LERS:) I must go home to my father and brothers who've given me up for dead. |
| FRANCIS: | Father! Brothers! Home! |
| [12] OTHERS: | In the road stood a boy wringing his hands in despair. |
| FRANCIS: | How now, young man. What's the matter? |
| BOY: (sobbing) | My father's a woodcutter. This morning he fell from a chestnut tree and broke his arm. I ran into town to fetch the doctor, but the doctor won't come. |
| FRANCIS: | What is the doctor's name? |
| BOY: | Doctor Pancrazio. |
| FRANCIS: | Doctor Pancrazio, jump into my sack! |
| ALL: | Zoom! Into the sack, head first, went a doctor with all his instruments. |
| FRANCIS: | Doctor Pancrazio! |
| DOCTOR: | Shh! There's a blackness before my eyes! |
| FRANCIS: | Doctor Pancrazio! |
| DOCTOR: | Fetch a doctor, I'm ill! |
| FRANCIS: | Why won't you cure the woodcutter? |
| DOCTOR: | Because he's too poor. |
| FRANCIS: | Stick, pound him for all your worth. |
| DOCTOR: | Help! Mercy! |
| FRANCIS: | Promise to cure the woodcutter free of charge! |


| DOCTOR: | I promise whatever you ask! |
| :---: | :---: |
| ALL: | The doctor ran to the woodcutter's bedside and treated him, while the woodcutter's wife and children stared in amazement. |
| [13] FRANCIS: | How solemn the little children look. How close they sit. How much they love their father. |
| [14] ALL: | Francis came home to his village. His father was dead. |
| [15] FRANCIS: | Ah! How bitter is all my good fortune. Brothers, where are you? I've long since forgiven you for running off and leaving me. [16] Brother John! Jump into my sack! |
| OTHERS: | Zoom! |
| FRANCIS: (recoiling) | Ah! |
| OTHERS: | It was a heap of bones! |
| FRANCIS: | Brother Paul. Jump into my sack! |
| OTHERS: | Zoom! Another heap of bones. |
| FRANCIS: | Brother Peter! Into my sack! |
| OTHERS: | Heap of bones! |
| FRANCIS: | Brother Mark! Into my sack! |
| OTHERS: | Bones! |
| FRANCIS: | Brother Albert! |
| OTHERS: | Bones! |
| FRANCIS: | Brother Charles! |
| OTHERS: | Bones! |
| FRANCIS: | Brother Matthew! |
| OTHERS: | Bones! |
| FRANCIS: | Anthony! |
| OTHERS: | Bones! |
| FRANCIS: | Edward! |
| OTHERS: | Bones! |
| FRANCIS: | Luke! |


| OTHERS: | Bones! |
| :---: | :---: |
| FRANCIS: | Brother Aloysius! Jump into my sack! |
| OTHERS: | Bones! |
| FRANCIS: (like a groan) | Ah! |
| [17] OTHERS: | Meanwhile the hunger in the village.... |
| FRANCIS: | Ah! |
| OTHERS: | Was even greater than before. |
| [18] FRANCIS: | Ah! I shall provision an inn where all can eat their fill without paying a penny. Into my sack a roasted chicken! Into my sack a bottle of wine! |
| OTHERS: | He did this for as long as the famine lasted, but he stopped once times of plenty returned so as not to encourage laziness. Ah! |
| FRANCIS: | And so he lived on in prosperity and doing good. |
| [19] ALL: | Do you think he was happy? Of course not! |
| FRANCIS: | I am old and alone. I have seen enough of the world. my last remaining desire is to see again the fairy of Lake Creno. |
| ALL: | He set out and reached the place at nightfall. He waited and waited, but the fairy did not come. |
| [20] TWO WOMEN: | Instead here came Death down the road. In one hand she held a skull and in the other she held a scythe. |
| [21] DEATH: | Well, well old man, are you not yet weary of life? Isn't it time you did as everyone else and came along with me. |
| FRANCIS: | Oh, Death, bless you! Yes, I have had my fill of everything. But I must bid someone farewell. Allow me one more day. |
| DEATH: | Say your prayers or you'll die like a heathen, and hurry after me. |
| FRANCIS: | Wait until the cock crows in the morning. |
| DEATH: | No! |
| FRANCIS: | Just one more hour? |
| DEATH: | Not even one minute more. |
| FRANCIS: | Since you are so cruel, jump into my sack! |


| [22] FAIRY/DEVIL: | Death shuddered, all her bones rattled, but she had no choice! |
| :---: | :---: |
| FRANCIS: | Fairy, thank you! |
| FAIRY: | Francis, tell me what you would like. |
| FRANCIS: | I have no more desires. |
| FAIRY: | Would you like to be a chieftain? |
| FRANCIS: | No. |
| FAIRY: | Would you like to be king? |
| FRANCIS: | No. |
| FAIRY: | Old man, would you like your health and youth again? |
| FRANCIS: | I have seen you and I'm content to die. |
| FAIRY: | Farewell, Francis. First burn the sack and the stick. |
| ALL: | The fairy vanished. [23] Francis built a big fire, then he threw the sack and the stick into the flames. |
| DEVIL: | The Devil crowed from behind a bush. Cockadoodle doo! |
| FRANCIS: | Francis did not hear. Age had made him deaf. |
| DEVIL: | Cockadoodle doo! |
| DEATH: | There's the cock crowing. |
| ALL: | Death struck the old man with her scythe, then she vanished, bearing his mortal remains. |

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