

---

# Royalty Notice

---

**A royalty fee must be paid to Contemporary Drama Service, PO Box 7710, Colorado Springs, CO 80933-7710 in advance of any performance of this musical.** The applicable royalty fee for any amateur performance of this musical is listed in our catalog or may be determined by calling our customer service department at 719-594-4422.

**The royalty must be paid whether the musical is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.** A musical is considered performed each time it is acted before an audience, except for rehearsals when only cast and production crew are present.

**When this musical is performed, each cast member must have their own script copy purchased from us. It is a violation of copyright law to copy or reproduce any part of this musical in any manner.** The right of performance is not transferable, and performance without advance permission constitutes copyright infringement punishable by law.

All other rights, including professional, stock or equity performance, TV, radio, film, videotape and recording, are reserved. Fees for these rights will be quoted on request.

On any programs, playbills or advertising for productions of this play the following information must appear: 1. The full name of the play and the playwright. 2. This notice: "Produced by special arrangement with Contemporary Drama Service, Colorado Springs, Colorado."

---

*Copyright © MMV Meriwether Publishing Ltd.  
Printed in the United States of America  
All Rights Reserved*

**MURDER AT CROOKED HOUSE**

---

---

# Murder at Crooked House

A two-act musical comedy mystery

Book by Tim Kelly

Music and Lyrics by Bill Francoeur

---

---



Meriwether Publishing Ltd.

**Contemporary Drama Service**

PO Box 7710 • Colorado Springs, CO 80933-7710

### *ABOUT THE AUTHOR*

TIM KELLY, playwright, has won innumerable writing awards including grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. His work covers a wide range — everything from musicals to mystery thrillers. His plays have been produced off-Broadway and at regional theatres, winning considerable acclaim from both press and public. He particularly likes to write plays for youthful audiences that are imaginative and spirited: **Lucky, Lucky Hudson** and **Is There a Doctor in the House?** being prime examples. *Dramatist Guild Magazine* calls him “One of the most successful and most produced playwrights operating outside the New York area.” His complete writings are with the Special Collections Library at the University of Wyoming.

He is, very likely, the most-published playwright in America.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**  
*(In Order of Appearance)*

*(For a flexible cast of eighteen: 9 female, 6 male; or  
8 female, 7 male. Plus 3 characters who can be either.)*

**BUM\*** — An intruder

**REBECCA FITZWILLIAM** — Landlady of “Crooked House”

**JEEVES** — Old butler, totally confused

**SHIRLEY** — Teenage maid

**FAY STRANGE** — A strange young actress

**ANGUISH CRISPIE** — Writes mystery plays

**MARK PALEGRAVE** — Eccentric young man, interested in orchids  
and bugs

**PENNY RUSSELL** — Distraught young bride

**DELIVERY PERSON\*\*** — Anyone for pizza?

**HERCULES PORRIDGE** — The famous Hoboken detective — well,  
almost

**LEON RUSSELL\*** — Corpse

**BRIDGET MORIARTY** — Doomed visitor

**DETECTIVE BOBBY** — City police

**POLICEWOMAN MULLIGAN** — Bobby’s partner

**COLONEL CHUTNEY** — Bizarre neighbor

**STUDENT #1** — Aspiring gumshoe

**STUDENT #2** — Another

**STUDENT #3** — Another

**NURSE PAYNE** — Not what the doctor ordered

\*Role of BUM and LEON RUSSELL are played by the same actor.

\*\*Can be played Female or Male.

## ***PRODUCTION NOTES***

### ***SYNOPSIS***

The action of the play takes place in “Crooked House,” an old mansion converted into a boarding hotel. The time is the present.

#### **ACT I:**

Scene 1 — A dark and stormy night.

Scene 2 — The following morning.

#### **ACT II:**

Scene 1 — That afternoon.

Scene 2 — That night. It’s dark and stormy again.

### ***AUTHOR’S NOTE***

This show offers everyone involved a rare opportunity to produce a Broadway-type show in terms of variety, energy and pizzazz. It’s not only a suspenseful whodunit, but it’s a comedy show with bizarre characters and preposterous situations. The music is built into the flow of the show. This is why everyone in the production will be challenged to keep it moving on the beat. Unlike many musicals where the dialog and music are quite separate, in this production they are often married together. Background music cues are indicated in the playscript where the actors will speak and sing over the instrumental mood music. It may take many rehearsals to get the timing right, but the result will be well worth the effort.

When you cast the characters, consider comedy contrasts: silly voice, character voice, parody voice. Be aware this is a spoof of 30s and 40s private-eye shows, and the actors should create characterizations to fit that style. Most characterizations will be stereotypes — that’s all part of the fun. Every performer should exaggerate his or her character and their mannerisms. This applies to the spoken word as well as the singing. Let the audience feel they are part of the fun — they’re laughing at the spoof as much as the actors are inside their characters. The characters should all be exaggerated. Don’t try for subtlety. The dialogue should be spoken in a loud, direct fashion.

## *PROPS*

**ON STAGE:** Fireplace, vase. Ottoman or low bench. Floor lamp with large shade. Large potted fern or bush. Desk with chair, telephone. French doors with practical drapes or curtains (optional). Sofa, table with vase of flowers or ferns. Wastebasket, handsome chairs (2) with table. Additional stage dressing, as desired: rugs, more lamps, pictures, etc. Remember — everything at “Crooked House” is rather shabby.

### **BROUGHT ON, Act I, Scene 1:**

BUM — long loaf of bread, bottle of soda pop

REBECCA — lorgnette or monocle on chain

SHIRLEY — flowers or ferns

FAY — raincoat and hat, umbrella, hat with black veil, envelope with dollar bills, cigarette holder

MARK — orchid, magnifying glass, flashlight

PENNY — book

DELIVERY PERSON — pizza box

HERCULES — manila file folder, wastebasket

CORPSE — eyeglasses

**BROUGHT ON, Act I, Scene 2:** Wastebasket positioned prior to curtain

HERCULES — pad and pencil, wristwatch

MARK — magnifying glass, jar

DETECTIVE BOBBY — I.D., wallet, whistle

POLICEWOMAN MULLIGAN — revolver

COLONEL CHUTNEY — rifle, knapsack with rubber chicken

PENNY — handkerchief

ANGUISH — cup and saucer

DELIVERY PERSON — large candy box wrapped with colorful ribbon

### **BROUGHT ON, Act II, Scene 1:**

POLICEWOMAN MULLIGAN — handkerchief

STUDENTS — pads and pencils

FAY — envelope with dollar bills

SHIRLEY — towels

NURSE PAYNE — medical bag with hypo

HERCULES & STUDENTS — shrubbery

LEON — suitcases (2)

DETECTIVE BOBBY — whistle

COLONEL CHUTNEY — rifle with cartridge

**BROUGHT ON, Act II, Scene 2:**

SHIRLEY — vase with flower/fern arrangement

FAY — knitting bag with needles and 4' length of yarn

PENNY — book

MARK — magnifying glass

LEON — handcuffs

NURSE PAYNE — revolver

DELIVERY PERSON — pizza box containing revolver

DETECTIVE BOBBY — bandage, sling, crutch

***SOUND:***

Rain, slamming door, doorbell, telephone, gunfire (optional: supposedly from Colonel Chutney's rifle)

***COSTUMES***

Modern. Any special description is mentioned in text as character makes his or her appearance.

***MISCELLANEOUS***

Even though Bum and Leon Russell are played by the same actor, list two names in the program. Let the role of the Bum be played by a fictional George Spelvin. Use the actor's real name for Leon (corpse).

The ***SIMULTANEOUS ACTION*** scene that ends Scene 1 of Act II deserves special rehearsal attention. The hilarious action must go like clockwork. The blocking will require drilling, but the end result will prove well worth the extra attention.

If the director wishes, the role of Detective Bobby can be played as a female character.

Remember — there must be no dead spots, no pauses, no waits. Something is always happening on stage. As soon as one character exits, another character is making an entrance. Work on a brisk flow of action.

## MUSICAL NUMBERS

(In order of appearance. Listed with the cue number for recorded music and sound effects and the playbook page numbers.)

### Act I

1. “Murder at Crooked House” (Prologue) <i>(Ensemble)</i> . . . . .	1
2. “A Dilapidated Mess” ( <i>Rebecca, Jeeves</i> ) . . . . .	4
3. “Hoboken Private Eye” (Underscore) . . . . .	14
4. “Hoboken Private Eye” ( <i>Hercules, Penny</i> ) . . . . .	15
5. Sound Effect — Thunder/Rain . . . . .	19
6. “Whodunnit?” ( <i>Hercules, Guests</i> ) . . . . .	22
7. “Chutney’s Fighting Ragtime Band” ( <i>Chutney, Policewoman Mulligan, Rebecca, Detective Bobby, Hercules, Jeeves</i> ) . . . . .	32
8. “Bridget Moriarty’s Demise” (Instrumental) . . . . .	40
9. “Whodunit?” (Reprise) ( <i>Ensemble</i> ) . . . . .	41
10. Entr’acte . . . . .	42

### Act II

11. “On a Dark and Stormy Night” ( <i>Ensemble</i> ) . . . . .	43
12. “What Kind of Funny Farm Is This?” <i>(Detective Bobby, Policewoman Mulligan, Guests)</i> . . . . .	55
13. Chase Music (Instrumental) . . . . .	59
14. Sound Effect — Thunder/Rain . . . . .	61
15. “Hoboken Private Eye” (Reprise) <i>(Hercules, Guests)</i> . . . . .	66
16. “The Game’s Up” (Instrumental) . . . . .	72
17. “Murder at Crooked House” (Epilogue) <i>(Ensemble)</i> . . . . .	73
18. Curtain Call — “A Dilapidated Mess” (Instrumental) . . . . .	75
19. Sound Effect — Extra Rain	
20. Sound Effect — Extra Thunder	





1 Best not stray too far from the light.  
2 Mischief! Mischief! Who will misbehave?  
3 One wrong step could send you to the grave!

4  
5 Murder! Murder! What are we to do?  
6 Who will be next? Is it you or you?  
7 Mischief! Mischief! Everyone's a mark,  
8 Best not wander after dark.

9  
10 Scheming, plotting, sneaking all about.  
11 Lurking in the shadows, waiting to come out!  
12 Cunning as a leopard, quiet as a mouse.  
13 Sometime in the night there'll be a murder at  
14 Crooked House!

15  
16 Murder! Murder! Everyone is cursed!  
17 One more soul to quench its thirst.  
18 Mischief! Mischief! Who is on its plate?  
19 One wrong move could seal your fate!

20  
21 Murder! Murder! Who will be the next?  
22 Legend says this house is hexed  
23 Mischief! Mischief! Hiding in our midst!  
24 Who will turn up on its list?

25  
26 Creeping, crawling, when you are asleep,  
27 Roaming in the halls it never makes a peep.  
28 Villainous rascal, violent louse,  
29 Sometime in the night there'll be a murder at  
30 Crooked House!

31 *(Music under, ENSEMBLE exits left and right.)*

32  
33 **PRIOR TO CURTAIN:** We hear the *sound of heavy rain.*  
34 **AT RISE:** Curtains open slowly to reveal the room. *Sound of rain up.*  
35 The *stage lighting flickers, dims*, giving a shadowy look to

1 establish a “mysterious” mood. BUM sneaks in from Down Right.  
2 He looks about warily. He doesn’t wish to be seen. He wears a  
3 ragged topcoat. From one pocket protrudes a long loaf of French  
4 bread. He carries a bottle of soda pop. His face is hidden by a  
5 large floppy hat and dark sunglasses. He wears gloves with no  
6 fingers and overshoes that are plainly too large for his feet.  
7 Instead of trousers, he wears pajama bottoms. The French doors  
8 stand open. He crosses behind sofa and pauses to take a long  
9 thirsty swallow of soda pop. *Sound of rain fades.*

10

11 **REBECCA:** *(Off-stage from hallway, left)* **Do the best you can,**  
12 **Jeeves.**

13 **JEEVES:** *(Off-stage from hallway, left)* **You know I will, Madam.**

14 **REBECCA:** *(Off-stage)* **You’re a comfort.** *(BUM practically gags*  
15 *on the soda pop when he hears the voices. Shoots a furtive look*  
16 *Upstage and escapes out onto the grounds via the French doors.*  
17 *REBECCA FITZWILLIAM, the landlady of “Crooked House,”*  
18 *enters Up Center. She wears an out-of-style dress that*  
19 *practically touches the floor. Around her neck is looped a*  
20 *lengthy strand of pearls. To compliment her dated persona she*  
21 *uses a lorgnette or monocle, which is also draped around her*  
22 *neck. JEEVES, the aged butler, follows in. He wears either*  
23 *formal attire (swallowtail coat), or dark trousers with a white*  
24 *steward’s jacket. He’s very proper, very stuffy. Complete senility*  
25 *is near. The two look as if they were characters from a mystery*  
26 *or detective film from the 1930s.)*

27 **REBECCA:** *(Notices the dim lights.)* **Oh, dear. The lights again.**  
28 **Whenever there’s a storm or a hurricane they flicker**  
29 **and fade.**

30 **JEEVES:** **I’ll call the electrician in the morning.**

31 **REBECCA:** **Won’t do much good. Everything here in**  
32 **“Crooked House” is so old and worn. Even the wiring.**  
33 **Not to mention the plumbing.** *(Music segues into Music Cue*  
34 *#2, “A Dilapidated Mess.”)*

35

**Thank you for reading this  
copyrighted free sample.**

**You may order this play online  
or by phone or fax at:**

**Contemporary Drama Service  
PO Box 7710  
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80933-7710**

**Toll Free: 800-93PLAYS (937-5297)  
Toll Free Fax: 888-594-4436**

**[www.contemporarydrama.com](http://www.contemporarydrama.com)**