

Director's Overview

Grandma and Grandad are discussing Grandad's diet. Alice and Jack come into the house because it's raining. Stuck indoors, they quickly become bored, and squabble, knocking Grandma's Button Box onto the floor. They ask Grandma to tell them where all the buttons came from.

Rain (☉ Track 1) – incidental
The Button Box (☉ Track 2) – chorus (opt. solos)

The first button that they learn about came from a sailor's jacket that belonged to Uncle Jack, the children's great, great uncle (after whom Jack was named), who travelled all around the world.

[SAILOR SCENE] **Uncle Jack's Sailor Button** (☉ Track 3) – solo & chorus, or split chorus

Grandad shows the children an aboriginal painted stone that Uncle Jack brought back from Australia.

[ABORIGINE SCENE] **Before The Dreamtime** (☉ Track 4) – chorus

Grandma tells the children about the button mandarins in China, and recalls a Chinese tale that Uncle Jack told her in connection with a red silk button.

[CHINESE SCENE] **The Frog King** (☉ Track 5) – solo or chorus

The children find some sequins in the button box. Grandma tells them that these came from a costume that she made for a neighbour's son, who was in a pop group. Grandma has a go at Grandad about eating too many biscuits.

[POP MUSIC SCENE] **Button Your Lip** (☉ Track 6) – solo & chorus

Uncle Jack brought back pieces of scrimshaw (decorated coconut) from Jamaica to make into buttons.

[JAMAICAN SCENE] **The Paradise Island** (☉ Track 7) – chorus

The children find a button carved with the initials 'T' and 'E'. This belonged to another great, great Uncle – Uncle Tom, who fought and died in World War I. The 'E' represents his sweetheart, Emily.

[WORLD WAR I SCENE] **Uncle Tom's Button** (☉ Track 8) – duet, or split chorus

Jack is shocked to discover an ivory button in the box, as elephants are an endangered species. Grandma explains that a distant relative brought it back from Africa in Victorian times.

[AFRICAN SCENE] **Impuku Nekati** (☉ Track 9) – chorus

Grandad sneaks a biscuit, and gets into trouble with Grandma. The children are amused by a huge black button that belonged to their great grandfather, a music hall entertainer.

[MUSIC HALL SCENE] **The Crow's Button** (☉ Track 10) – solo & chorus, or split chorus

Alice finds a brass button that came from the East India Company, which Uncle Jack brought back from Bombay.

[INDIAN SCENE] **The Bombay Button** (☉ Track 11) – chorus

Grandad gets into trouble for eating sweets. Grandma goes off in a huff to make tea.

The Chocolate Button (☉ Track 12) – chorus (opt. solos)

Grandma says it's getting close to bedtime, but tells them about a couple more buttons.

[BOOGIE SCENE] **Belly Button Boogie** (☉ Track 13) – chorus (opt. solo)

Alice spots a button shaped like a shamrock. Grandma got this in Ireland when she was a little girl. Grandad makes Grandma cross again by implying that she's old!

[IRISH SCENE] **Irish Leprechaun Button** (☉ Track 14) – instrumental

Grandma and Grandad are reconciled. Grandma sews a pyjama button on Alice's pyjamas. The children try to persuade them to tell just one more story from the Button Box...

**The Pyjama Button /
Button Box reprise** (☉ Track 15) – chorus (opt. solos)

Director's Notes

Main speaking parts

GRANDMA	(soloist)	Kindly figure, but she nags her husband at every opportunity
GRANDAD		Kindly but mischievous, resists his wife's nagging, tries to get away with being naughty
ALICE	(soloist)	A bit of a know-all
JACK	(soloist)	Looks like trouble, but he's not really

Other Parts (not scripted, but may be developed through the songs)

UNCLE JACK	(soloist)	Sailor, rough and ready, twinkle in his eye
SAILORS		Unlimited number for 'Uncle Jack's Button' & 'Paradise Island'
ABORIGINES		Unlimited number of Australian Aborigines
BUTTON MANDARIN		(optional) Chinese aristocrat, very dignified
FROG & TURTLE		Characters from the Frog King story (dancers / mime for Frog King story)
PHATTY PHAT PHATMAN		(soloist) Pop singer for 'Button Your Lip' song (Dancers / mime / backing singers for 'Button Your Lip' scene)
JAMAICAN FISHERMEN		For the 'Paradise Island' scene
TOM & EMILY	(soloists)	World War I sweethearts
SERENGETI PEOPLE		Unlimited number of African drummers / dancers
CROW	(soloist)	Music Hall entertainer
LADY CROWS		Unlimited number to be a chorus line
INDIAN DANCERS		For the Bombay Button
AUNTY NELLIE		Belly Button boogie dancer
BOOGIE DANCERS		To dance along with Aunty Nellie
IRISH DANCERS		For the Irish leprechaun jig

Props

Button Box and buttons including buttons to represent:

Sailor button, Aboriginal painted stone, red silk button, sequins, coconut shell fragments, Tom & Emily's button, ivory button, huge black button, brass button, chocolate button, standard suit black button, belly button, shamrock button, teddy bear button.

Sewing things for Grandma

Small table for Grandma's sewing things, large enough to hold the Button Box.

Weight Watchers pamphlet entitled 'Is The Man In Your Life Overweight?'

Pipe for Uncle Jack.

Two postcards and a locket for Tom and Emily.

Sweets and biscuits for Grandad to eat.

Chocolate stained white sock.

Mug for Grandma's tea

Alice's pyjama top to be mended

Staging

To one side, sitting room scene – armchair each for Grandma and Grandad, TV in the corner. Small table on which the Button Box is placed. You may wish to conceal a list of the buttons in order somewhere on the table, so that the main characters know where they are as the show progresses. If you find that there are awkward silences during scene changes, you may find it helpful to use **Track 2 (backing version)** as link music to cover the gap as a new group of children move onto the stage, fading out as the scene is ready to begin.

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