Punch and Judy play

Punch and Judy Fancy-Dress Play: The Robber Wants to Come to the Party

The Robber grabs Grandma's jam tarts because nobody ever invites him to a party, and Punch finds a better answer with the help of a dressing-up box.

Age
from about 3 years

Time
about 6 minutes, about 15 minutes with the talk afterwards

Puppets
3 hand puppets: Punch, Grandma, Robber

Materials
a paper crown, a scarf or cloth as a cloak, a small basket of jam tarts made from paper or felt, an eye mask for the Robber, streamers if you like

Getting ready

1 person: Punch on your right hand, Grandma and the Robber one after the other on your left. With two people, the second person plays Grandma and the Robber.

Roles

Punch
cheerful and curious, hasn't got a costume yet

Grandma
has baked jam tarts and is throwing a fancy-dress party

Robber
always wears an eye mask, never gets invited anywhere and is secretly sad about it

What you need

- ✓ paper crown
- ✓ scarf or cloth as a cloak
- ✓ small basket of jam tarts made from paper or felt

- ✓ eye mask for the Robber
- ✓ streamers (if you like)

Getting ready

Put the eye mask on the Robber before the show starts. The crown and cloak lie behind the stage where Punch can reach them easily. Grandma brings the basket of tarts with her. If your children know a different party treat better, such as fairy cakes or pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, use that word instead of 'jam tarts'.

Tips for the performance

1. Punch speaks in a high, quick voice, the Robber in a low, slightly gruff one. As the Party King, Punch disguises his voice: deep, slow and very grand.
2. The hide-and-seek between Punch and the Robber works through repetition. Play it two or three times, as long as the children are enjoying shouting out.
3. The play fits any dress-up day, such as a fancy-dress party, a carnival day or World Book Day. If your setting already has its own party cheer, use that instead of 'Hip, hip, hooray!'.
4. Feel free to ask the children whether the Robber should be allowed to come to the party. A 'no' is fine: Punch then asks what else the Robber could do to put things right.
5. If the children are in costume that day, Punch can admire every costume before you start. That's the easiest way to get everyone talking.

Script

Stage directions are in grey. The children's calls are suggestions: every answer is welcome.

Punch pops up with a bounce.

Punch: Hip, hop, hooray, I've come to play! Is everybody here today?

Children: *Yeees!*

Punch: I can't hear you! Is everybody here today?

Children: *YEEES!*

Punch: That's more like it. Do you know what day it is? It's party day! Grandma is having a fancy-dress party, and everyone is coming dressed up. Are you dressed up too? What as?

Let the children tell him. Punch is amazed by every answer: 'A dragon! Help! Er, I mean: hello, dragon!'

Punch: *(scratches his head)* But I haven't got a costume yet. Whatever shall I do?

Grandma comes in with the basket.

Grandma: There you are, Punch! Look, I've baked some jam tarts. They're for the party this afternoon.

Punch: Mmm, jam tarts! Can I try one?

Grandma: Not until the party, Punch. I'm off to fetch the streamers. Will you keep an eye on the basket for me?

Punch: Leave it to me, Grandma! I'll guard it like a guard dog. Woof!

Grandma: And find yourself a costume. There's all sorts in the dressing-up box over there.

Grandma goes off. The basket stays at the edge of the stage.

Punch: A dressing-up box! Will you help me choose something?

Children: *Yeees!*

Punch ducks down and comes back up with the paper crown.

Punch: What's this, then?

Children: *A crown!*

Punch: *(puts it on crooked)* Am I a king now?

Let the children react.

Punch: King Punch the First! Hmm, it keeps slipping, though. I'll see what else is in the box.

Punch ducks down again. The Robber creeps in from the other side and looks around.

Robber: Hee hee. Nobody about. And what's that lovely smell?

The children usually call out on their own. If not, Punch asks from below: 'Is somebody there?'

Children: *Punch! Punch! There's a robber! He's behind you!*

Punch pops up. The Robber ducks out of sight in a flash.

Punch: A robber? Where?

Children: *There! He was there!*

Punch: *(looks left, looks right)* I can't see anyone. You're pulling my leg. I'll carry on looking.

Punch ducks down, the Robber pops up again. Repeat once or twice. The last time, the Robber grabs the basket.

Children: *Punch! The robber's taking the jam tarts!*

Punch pops up. This time the Robber stays where he is, holding the basket.

Punch: Hey! Those are Grandma's jam tarts! They're for the party!

Robber: Exactly. And I never get invited to parties. So I'll have my own party. With all the jam tarts!

Punch: A party all on your own? That sounds boring.

Robber: Pah! Who'd invite a robber? Bye!

The Robber disappears below with the basket but stays close by.

Punch: Oh dear, oh dear. What shall I do now? Run after him? He's bound to be faster than me.

Let the children make suggestions. If one fits, Punch takes it up. If not, he has the idea himself.

Punch: I've got it! The Robber really wants to go to a party. And today is party day. If I dress up, he won't recognise me!

Punch ducks down and comes back up wearing the crown and cloak. He now speaks in a deep, slow voice.

Punch: Hear ye, hear ye! I am the Party King! Today is my grand party! Everyone is welcome. Even robbers!

The Robber peeps out carefully, hiding the basket behind his back.

Robber: Even robbers? Really?

Punch: Really. But everyone who comes to the Party King's party brings something. What have you brought?

Robber: Er … *(looks at the basket)* … jam tarts!

Punch: Jam tarts! Splendid. Put the basket down here by me. And then give the party cheer. Nice and loud!

Robber: The party cheer? I don't know it.

Punch: The children know it. Everybody join in: Hip, hip …

Children: *Hooray!*

Robber: *(puts the basket down and shouts)* Hip, hip, hooray! Hee hee, that's fun!

Punch takes off the crown and speaks in his own voice again.

Punch: Hip, hop, hooray, Punch is back to play!

Robber: It's Punch! You tricked me!

Punch: Just a little bit. Those jam tarts belong to Grandma. You know what? You could just have asked.

Robber: Asked? If I could come to the party? *(quietly)* I never dared.

Punch: What do you think, everybody? Can the Robber come to the party if he brings the jam tarts back?

Let the children answer. If some say 'No', Punch asks what else the Robber could do: say sorry, help carry things.

Children: *Yeees!*

Robber: Thank you! And sorry, Punch. I'll carry the basket to Grandma. Very carefully.

Punch: And you've already got a mask on. So you're already in fancy dress!

Robber: No, no, I always wear this mask. Today I'm going to dress up as … as a baker! Because I'm bringing the jam tarts!

The Robber goes off with the basket. Grandma calls from offstage, without a puppet.

Grandma: *(offstage)* Oh, a baker with jam tarts! Come in, come in, the party's starting!

Punch: *(puts the crown back on)* And I'm King Punch! Are you coming to the party too? Then all together: Hip, hip …

Children: *Hooray!*

Punch waves. If you like, streamers can fly over the front of the stage now.

After the show: questions for the children

- ✓ What would you like to dress up as one day?
- ✓ Why did the Robber take the jam tarts?
- ✓ What could the Robber have done instead?
- ✓ How did the Robber feel when he was allowed to come to the party?

Suitable puppets: Punch, Grandma and the Robber from a set of traditional glove puppets; any other human hand puppet will do for Grandma. Traditional glove puppets at Daliono

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