

THE WORLD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF  
**CHRISTMAS**

GERRY BOWLER



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**Baba Noel** The name for Santa Claus or Father Christmas in much of the Middle East and among the Christians of Israel. In 1988, in protest over the Israeli occupation, Palestinians began a boycott of Christmas in Bethlehem, which disappointed children expecting the usual visit from Baba Noel. The boycott ended in 1993 and a spokesman for the Palestinian Fatah faction called Jesus the first Palestinian martyr.

**Babar and Father Christmas** Jean de Brunhoff's favourite animal king meets Father Christmas in this children's book from the 1930s. When Zéphir, Arthur, and the rest hear the story of what Father Christmas does for the children in Man's country, they decide to write him a letter asking him to come to Elephants' country too. After their letter receives no reply, Babar decides to pay a visit to Father Christmas, whom he tracks down after a series of adventures. A happy ending results and the gift-bringer vows to visit the land of the Elephants every year.

**Babar and Father Christmas** (1986) Fans of the original book may be startled to find that the nasty rhinoceros Rataxes has made his way into this 1986 children's video of de Brunhoff's gentle tale. It appears that Babar's arch-enemy wants all Christmas toys for himself.

**Babbo Natale** An Italian Santa Claus figure that in some areas has replaced the Befana as the principal gift-bringer.

**Babes in Toyland** (1934) The evil Barnaby (Henry Brandon) has designs on blonde beauty Little Bo Peep (Charlotte Henry) and threatens to foreclose on the mortgage he holds on Mother Peep's Shoe, but his evil plans are thwarted by Ollie Dee and Stanley Dum (Laurel and Hardy). The outraged villain unleashes his army of bogeymen on Toyland and an epic battle results. This film, directed by Gus Meins and Charlie Rogers, from the Hal Roach studio, is still the most enjoyable of the three versions made and is favourite holiday movie fare on television.

Based on Victor Herbert's 1903 operetta, much of the original music, including "The March of the Wooden Soldiers," is woven into the score, along with a Walt Disney ditty "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf." Also known as *March of the Wooden Soldiers*, *Laurel and Hardy in Toyland*, *Toyland*, *March of the Toys*, and *Revenge Is Sweet*, recent releases of the film have been colourized.

**Babes in Toyland** (1961) The Disney studios and director Jack Donohue remade the 1934 Laurel and Hardy masterpiece with Annette Funicello and Tommy Sands as the young lovers and Ray Bolger as the villain. They needn't have bothered.

**Babes in Toyland** (TV) (1986) Richard Mulligan's scenery-chewing portrayal of the villainous Barnaby provides an interesting contrast to the wooden minimalism of Keanu Reeves as Jack-Be-Nimble in this Clive Donner remake of the 1934 classic. Drew Barrymore plays the lovely Lisa, and Pat Morita is the Toymaster. Leslie Bricusse provided a new score but retained the old favourites "Toyland" and "March of the Wooden Soldiers."

**Baboushka** A Russian gift-bringer and the equivalent of Italy's BEFANA. Like the Befana she is an old woman who refused to go with the Magi to visit the baby Jesus (and according to some variations even gave the Wise Men the wrong directions). She later repented, and to this day seeks the baby. Every Epiphany Eve she enters the rooms of sleeping children and leaves them gifts.

**The Baddeley Bequest** Echoes of the BEAN KING and TWELFTH NIGHT celebrations of old England still linger. Robert Baddeley, an English actor who died in 1794, left £100 in his will for the provision of a Twelfth Night cake for his fellow actors. It is served to this day in the green room of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, after the evening performance on Twelfth Day. His legacy also provides wine with which the performers drink to his memory.

**Badnjak** The Yule log in Serbo-Croatia, usually oak and brought into the home on Christmas Eve with great ceremony.



**Baboushka** The Russian gift-bringer, depicted on a Guernsey Christmas stamp.