

# "How the Gimquat Found Her Song"

A Theatrical Symphony Concert

Study Guide



Study guide written by Michael Duschenes and Peter Duschenes

© Platypus Theatre, 1996, Last revised 2011

## **Introduction**

Welcome to the Platypus Theatre study guide for "How the Gimquat Found Her Song". This guide has been created to help you prepare your students for the concert you will be attending and also to stimulate creativity in your music classes at school. The guide is in two parts; a section for the students, written as an adventure led by *Griffle the Great*, a magician who is also one of the characters in the story, and a section for teachers containing exercises to be done with your students both before and after the concert.

If you are not a music teacher, don't get overwhelmed by the material! Select from the exercises and information the items that best suit the learning needs of the students in your class. If nothing else, simply learning the Bach "Chorale" will greatly enhance your students' enjoyment of the concert.

I hope this material is helpful to you. If you have any comments about the guide or the concert, please let me know. I can be reached at the address below:

### **Peter Duschenes**

Platypus Theatre  
36 Julian Avenue  
Ottawa, ON K1Y 3L3  
Tel: (613) 792-1250  
Fax: (613) 792-4671

Email: [peter@platypustheatre.com](mailto:peter@platypustheatre.com)

Website: [www.platypustheatre.com](http://www.platypustheatre.com)

## Section 1 - Student Study Guide

# The Mystery of How the Gimquat Found Her Song

### **Congratulations for choosing to embark on this adventure!**

But perhaps I should begin by introducing myself: My name is Griffle the Great, Master Magician and I will be your fearless leader on this journey.

What is this mysterious adventure you may ask? Soon you will know.

But before we meet at the concert hall, here is some information that will help you prepare for the journey you will be taking with Gimquat as she searches for her song.

### The Magic Chant

(This chant is the key to opening the door to the magical world of How The Gimquat Found Her Song. Please learn the chant before you come to the concert hall.)

Jiminy Cricket, Raggedy Ann

Winnie the Pooh, Yosemite Sam

Up in the air, through space and through time,

A new place in history, not yours and not mine

### The People we will meet

#### **Benedictine Monks**

If you had lived in Europe in the year 1000 and had been walking by a monastery, you might have heard, floating over the high walls of the great stone building, a prayer being sung in what we now call plainsong or Gregorian chant. With the rise of Christianity, monasteries became the main centres of music in Europe. In

these monasteries men called monks who had decided to devote their lives to God sang out their prayers several times a day. They would sing all together, in unison as it is called, all on one note, perhaps dropping the note to a lower note at the end of a line of prayer. This gave the prayers a solemn and meditative quality and helped the monks to concentrate on God. It is called "Gregorian" chant because the rules for how it was to be sung were set down by Pope Gregory. This is perhaps the simplest form of music we know and it is the basis for all western music that has been developed since.

### **Medieval Troubadours and Minstrels**

Between the years 1000 and 1600 music began to come out of the monasteries and to develop into more complex forms, no longer used just for praying nor sung on just one or two notes. If you had been a young man or woman in the medieval ages and you had needed to earn a living, perhaps you would have become a minstrel or a troubadour traveling around the various countries of Europe. You would have entertained crowds of people in every small town by singing pretty melodies, accompanying yourself with a small drum called a tambor or with a simple wooden flute called a recorder, and dancing a lively dance.

### **Johann Sebastian Bach**

A musical genius from a family of many generations of musical geniuses, Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Germany in 1685. His era was called the Baroque period and by this time music had developed greatly. Vocal music had become much more dramatic and the first operas were written. Instrumental music became much more complex with the first orchestras being formed made up mostly of string instruments and the occasional flute, oboe, bassoon or trumpet. Bach wrote lots and lots of music; music for kings and princes, for dukes and

emperors. But he didn't have an easy life: his mother died when he was only nine and a year later his father also died. He was married twice and had many children, 20 altogether, but 11 died while they were still very young. Bach's music was known for its long graceful melodies which he weaved in and out and around like an endless flowing river. Some of Bach's most beautiful works are his Orchestral suites which are collections of dances.

Bach was the greatest composer of the Baroque era and his music plays an important part in our story.

### **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

Perhaps the most famous composer in the world, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was a child prodigy, giving concerts all over Europe when he was only six years old. He played the piano and the violin for the kings and queens of England and France. He played for the Emperor and the Empress in Austria and even for the Pope in Rome. And even as a child he wasn't only playing other people's music: he wrote his first minuets when he was six, his first symphonies before he was nine, his first opera at twelve. By the time he was 33 years old he had written over 600 pieces of music. People say that he was such a genius that he didn't even have to think about his music: it just came into his head and he wrote it down as he heard it playing in his mind. But he too had a sad life. Although he was very famous and people all over the world loved his music and begged him to write more of it, he never had enough money. He died sad and very poor at the early age of 35 and was buried in an unmarked grave.

Mozart was born in 1755 and his time was called the Classical era. As opposed to Bach with his long flowing melodies, Mozart used short simple phrases which he then developed in all sorts of ways. Because of this when you listen to a piece by

Mozart you may notice that you hear the same short phrase played over and over again but played by different instruments in different and original ways.

## Ludwig Van Beethoven

It's late at night in the year 1778 in the town of Bonn in Germany. All the houses are dark, every one is asleep but through the attic window of one small house the light from a candle shines into the night. We hear the faint tinkle of piano keys as someone attempts to play an "A" major scale. And then suddenly SLAM! a hand smashes down onto the piano, the scale stops dead and a deep voice bellows: "No, that's not right. Start again! You will not go to bed, you will not, do you hear me, until you've played that scale right ten times in a row!" Then footsteps and a door slams and the footsteps grow softer as the soft notes of the scale begin once again. And if we peeked in that window we'd see a young boy, only 8, looking sad but determined, sitting at the piano, perched on a bench, his feet dangling loosely not reaching the ground. This is Ludwig Van Beethoven, poor Ludwig Van Beethoven. He grew up in poverty with a very mean father who'd wanted to be a great musician himself but had failed to do so and so pushed his son to become the great man he wasn't.

And indeed Beethoven did become a great musician, considered to be one of the greatest composers ever! But unlike Mozart his music never came easily to him. He worked and worked at all of his pieces, writing and rewriting them until he thought they were just right.

No part of his life was easy: he was a loner, he never got married, he always had trouble finding enough money, he constantly moved from one house to the next and he made very good friends but then fought furiously with them so he'd move on somewhere else and start over again. Perhaps the saddest part of his life was

that he slowly became deaf until at the height of his greatness as a composer he couldn't hear anything at all. Can you imagine writing some of the world's greatest music and not being able to hear what you have written? When his Symphony #9 was performed for the first time, Beethoven conducted the orchestra himself and at the end of the concert there was wild applause as the audience jumped to their feet to salute the great master. But Beethoven couldn't hear anything at all and one of the singers had to turn him around so that he could see how his music affected the people.

Beethoven who died at the age of 56 in 1827, was a student of Mozart's, and also lived in the Classical period but at the end of that era. His music launched the next great period of classical music - the Romantic Era.

### **Peter Illyich Tchaikovsky**

Unlike Beethoven Peter Illyich Tchaikovsky, who was born in Russia in 1840, didn't start off his life as a musician. As a boy he loved music and would dance whenever his mother played the piano and he even taught himself to play but although his father encouraged his playing he had other ideas for a career for his son and pushed him to become a lawyer. For several years Tchaikovsky worked for the government, sitting in an office all day filing papers, filling out forms and setting up meetings with other government officials. But his true passion for music still raged inside of him and soon, even though he knew it meant he would live in poverty, he gave up his official position and devoted himself full-time to composing music. This was the Romantic era where music was being used more and more to express big emotions in very dramatic style and this suited Tchaikovsky's passion and intensity perfectly.

With the quality of musical instruments improving substantially, the orchestras sounded better than ever and were bigger too. They included more brass and percussion instruments and Tchaikovsky was able to use this to full advantage with his highly emotional, dramatic and colourful symphonies and his famous ballets such as "Swan Lake" and "Sleeping Beauty" One of his ballets which you may have seen is "The Nutcracker".

Tchaikovsky's music, however, consumed him and he didn't pay much attention to anything else. His one marriage lasted only 11 weeks and when the cholera epidemic hit, even though he had been warned not to, he drank unboiled water, became sick and died a week later at the early age of 53.

## Claude Debussy

If we had jumped in time to the year 1873 to a small village outside of Paris we might have found another poor family where another father was pushing his son to do something the son didn't want to do. Except Claude Debussy's father *wanted* him to be a musician and when he was only 11 Claude was forced to practice 4 hours a day so that he would become a famous pianist. Debussy wasn't a particularly good piano student; he had a terrible temper, hated to be criticized and had his own ideas about the way that music should sound. This was perhaps not the best attitude for someone hoping to become a great concert pianist but his independent spirit worked wonderfully for him as a composer. The end of the 1800's and the beginning of the 1900's were the start of the Impressionist period where artists, rather than trying to create an exact rendition of a scene or an emotion, used sound and colour to create an "impression". Perhaps you have seen paintings from this period by Claude Monet - who was also from France - of water lilies where it is hard to tell whether one is looking at the water lily or the reflection of the water lily. The music of that

time and Claude Debussy's music in particular has the same feeling... A bit like listening to a dream.

## **Buddy Bolden and the Great Musicians of Jazz**

While Claude Debussy and the other impressionists were reshaping the way classical music was being played in Europe, something quite different was happening in the southern United States. At that time an African-American musician, no matter how good he was, was never allowed to play in a symphony orchestra. So what could they do? They could invent their own music based on the music they heard around them, the music their ancestors had brought with them from Africa, the music they sang in church and the French songs and dances brought down to the states by the Acadians when they were forced to leave Canada. This was the beginning of the great music of Jazz.

In the town of New Orleans in Louisiana a young man named Buddy Bolden worked as a barber but he also played a mean trumpet. People asked him to play at all occasions; picnics, funerals, dances and later, when Jazz became more popular, in nightclubs. Buddy Bolden was the first Jazz musician and his music and inventiveness influenced all the great jazz players who came after him. Jazz music, unlike classical music, was not written down - it was an aural tradition. The musicians listened to each other, played what they had heard and then added their own style and personality to the music so that jazz was constantly changing and evolving: Buddy Bolden's music led to Louis Armstrong's music which led to Dizzy Gillespie's music which influenced Miles Davis' music and so on up to the great jazz players of today.

## The Rappers

Of course we all know Rap music, but do you know where it comes from? In Jamaica disc jockeys at parties and dances would play records and talk in rhythm over the music creating the first forms of rap. Eventually they became more inventive sometimes switching back and forth between two different records with different rhythms as they spoke to create interesting rhythmical combinations or using special sound effects for even more startling results. DJ Kool was born in Jamaica but then moved to New York City where he introduced rap music to North America. At first it was just good party and dance music but then groups such as *Groundwater Flash* and the *Furious Five* saw rap as a way to comment on things that were going on in the world, especially their lives in the poor black neighborhoods of big American cities.

Rap music continues to be used as a way to make people think about the state of the world today. Some people think that some rappers go too far, using their music to promote violence and racial intolerance. What do you think?

## The Storytellers

### Platypus Theatre

On January 28 1990 a 40 foot monster interrupted a concert of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony in

Kitchener, Ontario. In a battle that involved puppets, masks, actor, 45 musicians and some of the world's most beautiful symphonic music, the *Monster* and the audience "duked" it out



Study Guide - How The Gimquat Found Her Song - Platypus Theatre- p.9  
*Emily saves the orchestra (1990)*

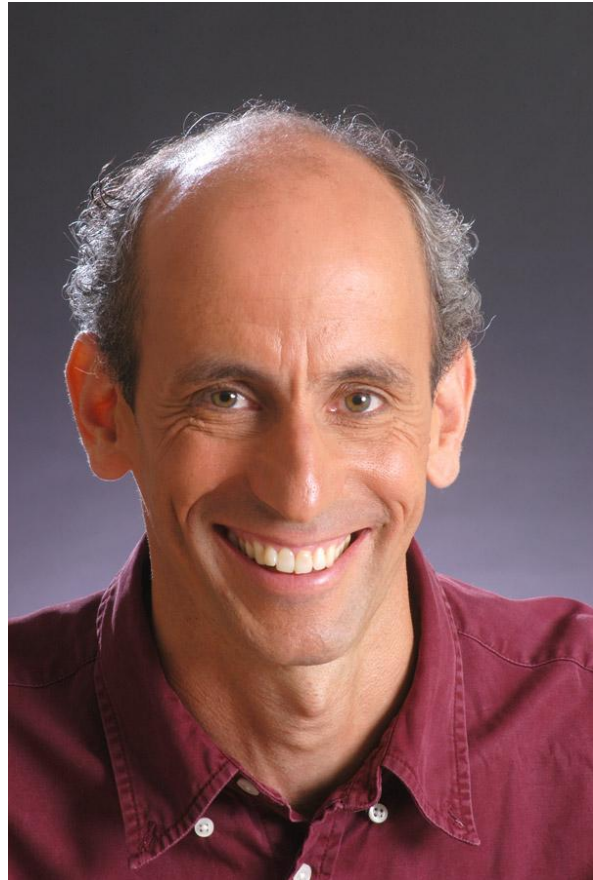
to see who would triumph - noise or music. Of course music won and the evil monster *Cacopholous* was destroyed. That was the beginning of Platypus Theatre, a company that has dedicated itself to presenting classical music to young audiences through theatrical performances in an intelligent, entertaining and participatory way. Since that first performance Platypus Theatre has been receiving rave reviews from orchestra managers, critics, educators, musicians, parents and children from coast to coast. The company has performed nearly 500 times with over 65 orchestras in Canada, the United States, Australia and Asia including some of the world's finest such as the National Arts Centre Orchestra, Montreal Symphony, Toronto Symphony and Vancouver Symphony in Canada, the Houston Symphony, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Seattle Symphony and the Atlanta Symphony in the United States, the Adelaide Symphony and Western Australian Symphony in Australia and the Hong Kong and Malaysian Philharmonics in Asia.

In 2006, in collaboration with TV Ontario, Trace Pictures and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Platypus Theatre created a television adaptation of their ever-popular, "*How the Gimquat Found Her Song*". The film was broadcast six times on TVO and won an Award of Excellence at the 2007 Accolade Television Awards and Best Children's Program at the prestigious 2008 Banff World Television Festival.

The name Platypus came about because like the animal that lives partly on land and partly in the water, Platypus Theatre lives partly in the world of music and partly in the world of theatre. Platypus has seven theatrical symphony concerts to its credit: ", "*Rhythm in Your Rubbish*", "*How the Gimquat Found Her Song*", "*Emily Saves the Orchestra*", "*Bach to the Future*", "*Song of the Forest*", "*Charlotte and the Music-Maker*" and "*A Flicker of Light on a Christmas Night*."

## Peter Duschenes - Artistic director, writer and actor

When Peter Duschenes was 13 his brothers were putting on a marionette production of Igor Stravinsky's "The Soldier's Tale". They didn't really want their little brother involved but at the last minute they needed someone to do the voice of the Soldier: Peter to the rescue! That was his first taste of doing theatre and also of combining theatre with music. 16 years later, after earning a Masters degree in Theatre from the California Institute of the Arts, Peter and his brother, Michael, founded Platypus theatre to once again combine theatre with classical music. As the Artistic Director of Platypus, Peter has been widely praised for his innovation in presenting symphonic music to young audiences. His ability to bring the



*Peter Duschenes*

concert stage to life by combining theatre and music has led to numerous commissions with orchestras from coast to coast. An award winning playwright, Peter's writing credits include all seven of Platypus' symphony plays as well as the one-act play, "Lost River", which was the 1991 winner of the Theatre BC's Canadian National Playwriting competition. As an actor Peter has performed with companies across Canada and the United States appearing most recently as Richard in Shakespeare's "Richard II" at Quantum Theatre in Pittsburgh, PA and

as Louis Ironson in "Angels In America" at the Centaur in Montreal. Peter lives in Ottawa with his wife Sarah and their children, Magda and Theo.

## The Orchestra

A symphony orchestra is the largest group of musicians that performs classical music. An orchestra plays a wide variety of music written by composers over the past 400 years. Two hundred years ago, orchestras were made up of approximately 30 musicians. Today, orchestras sometimes have over 100 members. An orchestra is divided into 4 sections: The **String section** is made up of violins, violas, cellos, basses and the harp. The **Woodwind section** is made up of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons. French horns, trumpets, trombones and tubas are the instruments of the **Brass section** while the **Percussion section** includes the piano, drums, cymbals, triangles, gongs, xylophones, glockenspiels and many more.

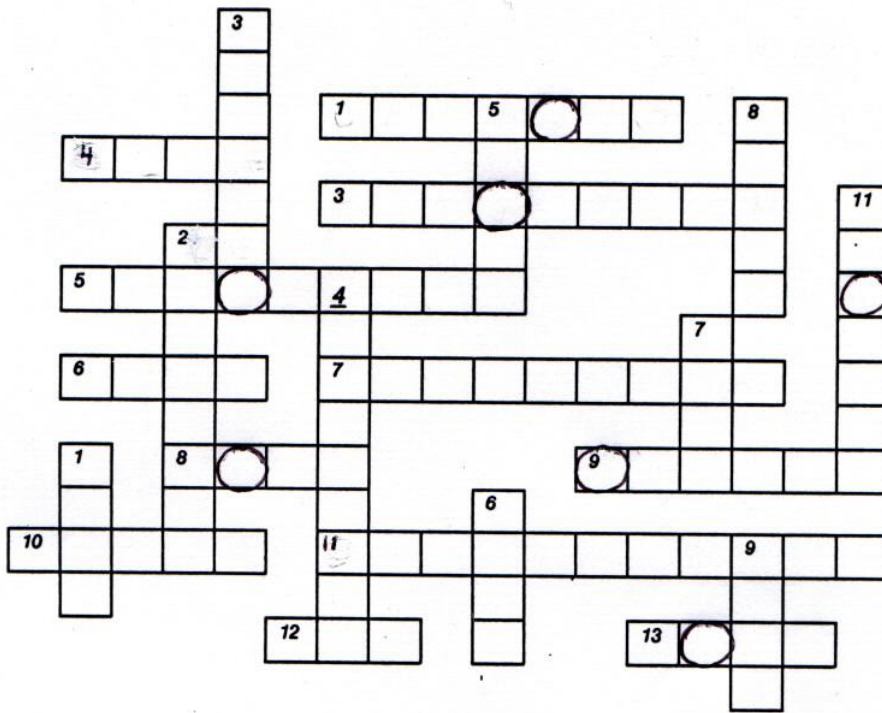
## The Conductor

The conductor 's job is to direct all the people involved in the performance. He or she stands on a podium so that all the musicians can see him/her and uses hand, arm and body motions to draw as powerful a performance from the musicians as possible. Great performances result when the musical feelings that the composer puts into a piece are expressed as strongly as possible.

The conductor rehearses the orchestra before performances, explains how the music is to be performed, makes sure all the sections are well blended together and stops to practice tricky passages.

## The Final Test

See how much you remember from our musical journey. Complete the crossword puzzle and find the secret word by rearranging the circled letters.



### ACROSS

- 1 Bach lived in the \_\_\_\_\_ period.
- 2 Do, \_\_\_\_\_, Mi, Fa.
- 3 A chant sung by monks.
- 4 Troubadours often accompanied themselves with a \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 He was deaf at the end of his life.
- 6 Even though he was very famous, when Mozart died he was \_\_\_\_\_.
- 7 Mozart and Beethoven lived in this era.
- 8 Nickname of a jazz legend.
- 9 He gave concerts all over Europe when he was only 6 years old.
- 10 The "Marriage of Figaro" is a famous \_\_\_\_\_ by Mozart.
- 11 His father wanted him to be a lawyer.
- 12 This music originated in Jamaica
- 13 Ellington wrote a lot of music for big \_\_\_\_\_.

DOWN

- 1 Mozart played for the \_\_\_\_\_ in Rome.
- 2 A Tordion is a Medieval piece for drum and \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3 An instrument in the brass section.
- 4 This group sometimes has as many as 100 members.
- 5 A large instrument found in a church.
- 6 He had twenty children.
- 7 Swing music is a type of \_\_\_\_\_.
- 8 Their singing became the basis for all western music.
- 9 At the concert, the audience will be asked to \_\_\_\_\_ a chorale.
- 11 Jimminy \_\_\_\_\_.

ANSWER: \_\_\_\_\_.

And..That's it!

So there you have it! All the information you need to help Gimquat in the search for her song. How will she find it? What will she chose? We'll all find out together when you come to see, to hear and to participate in the adventure of How The Gimquat Found Her Song.

See you then.

Magically yours,

Griffle the Great

## Section 2 - Teacher's Supplement

### The Story

What is a bird if she has no song? So ashamed by her silence is the rare and awkward Gimquat bird that she has taken refuge in a hollow tree where she pines and bemoans her woeful state. One day, however, she meets a magician who opens a whole new world to her, taking her on a fantastic journey through space and time in search of the perfect song. Starting in a monastery, then moving on to Leipzig (where the audience will become Johann Sebastian Bach's choir!) with stops in Vienna, Berlin and New Orleans among many more, Gimquat and the audience discover the music of the ages.

### The Music

(N.B. For reasons of copyright Platypus Theatre is unable to supply recordings of the music in the program but we encourage you to listen with your students to as many of the selections as possible.)

Bizet:	Carmen Suite ("Prelude" & "Les Toreadors")
Vivaldi:	The Four Seasons (Spring - 1 <sup>st</sup> Movement)
Bach:	Suite No. 2 (Badinerie)
Mozart:	Marriage of Figaro (Overture)
Beethoven:	Symphony No. 5 (1 <sup>st</sup> movement)
Tchaikovsky:	Symphony No. 4 (4 <sup>th</sup> movement)
Debussy:	Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune
Ravel:	Mother Goose Suite ("Pavane de la Belle")
Ravel:	Mother Goose Suite ("Le Jardin Féérique")
Lloyd Webber/Arr. Custer:	Phantom of the Opera
Ellington/Arr. Custer:	Sophisticated Lady

## The Song

Please learn this chorale from Bach's St Matthew Passion. We will sing it with the orchestra at the concert.

### **Chorale**

*J.S. Bach*

The image shows a musical score for a chorale by J.S. Bach. It consists of three staves of music, all in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first staff starts at measure 1 and ends at measure 5. The second staff starts at measure 6 and ends at measure 10. The third staff starts at measure 10 and ends at measure 14. The music is written in a simple, melodic style with a mix of quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, and rests.

N.B. We will sing the Chorale without words using the sounds “La-la-la”.

## Exercises For The Classroom

### The Music Machine

One student stands at the front of the class and begins a machine-like gesture accompanied by a sound. (e.g. bending and straightening the knees accompanied by the vocal sounds "Ha!...Peep!...Ha!...Peep!..."etc.) The student repeats the gesture and sound over and over. Another student joins the first and adds to the machine, creating a gesture of their own with an accompanying sound. (It adds to the fun and to the understanding of how different components of music work together if the gestures are related - like a conveyor belt. For example, if the first student creates a gesture that looks like a machine passing objects from one side of their body to the other, the second student could create a gesture with which they received the passed object and threw it up in the air, the third student could catch it and flatten it and so on...)

### Stories in Music

- 1) Listen to the one of the pieces of music from the program. Ask the students to write a story or draw a picture based on the music. What story is the music telling? What might have been going on in the composer's life when he wrote this piece?
- 2) Open a discussion about the mood of a piece of music. What is it that makes a piece of music sound sad or happy, frightening or triumphant? Do certain instruments create certain moods? Is it the tempo? The dynamics? The use of major or minor chords? Ask the students to think about music that they know, any kind of music. What is it, besides the words, that make us feel a certain way when listening? How does the music tell its story?

## Follow-up Activities

- 1) Ask the students to write a letter or draw a picture in response to "How the Gimquat Found Her Song". What did they like or dislike about the concert? What music did they like best? What questions do they have about the music or the production? An interesting twist on this exercise is to write a story or draw a picture about something that *didn't* happen on stage. What happened to the characters before or after the story? **(We are always happy to receive feedback whether written or drawn. You can send your responses to Platypus Theatre or respond to the show directly through the "Your comments" page on the Platypus website at [www.platypustheatre.com](http://www.platypustheatre.com). We will respond to any letters sent to us and post selected letters and drawings on the site.)**
- 2) Have the students create the story of "How the Gimquat Found Her Song" to be presented to the smaller children in the school – the kindergarten or grade one class. This can be done as a story-book with pictures or presented as a story-telling with sound effects using home-made instruments.