



**By Allison Gregory**

Music Composition by Hummie Mann  
Lyrics by Allison Gregory and Hummie Mann

Adapted from the story and music by  
Sergei Prokofiev

Directed by **David Saar**



## **Preview Guide for Parents and Teachers to Childsplay's Production of *Peter and the Wolf***

We hope you find this guide helpful in preparing your students for an enjoyable and educational theatrical experience. Included you'll find things to talk about before and after seeing the performance, classroom activities

that deal with curriculum connections and education standards, and resource materials.

### **The Story:**

The story of *Peter and the Wolf* explores the age-old struggle between man and animal, the value of friends, and finding bravery to overcome obstacles. It is the story of a boy named Peter, his Grandfather, a cat, a duck, a bird, some hunters and a wolf! The story takes place at Grandfather's house, behind which there is a beautiful lush meadow, a sparkling pond and beyond that a dense forest. Overlooking the meadow there is a large, sturdy tree and a high stonewall. Grandfather warns Peter not to go into the meadow, for even though it is tempting, it is dangerous. There is a wolf that prowls through the meadow and forest. However, Peter is a curious young man and goes into the meadow as soon as Grandfather's back is turned. The duck, who lives in their yard, is grateful to Peter for opening the gate to the meadow, for he loves to swim and flap his wings in the pond. Grandfather sees Peter in the meadow and quickly hauls him back to the yard closing the gate behind him. Meanwhile a little bird flies in to investigate the duck. While the two argue over the merits of swimming versus flying, they are oblivious to the cat creeping towards them. Not wanting the small feathered friend to become lunch for the cat, Peter advises the bird to fly into the tree. Distracted by the cat circling the tree, the bird flying frantically and the duck flapping around the pond, none of them notices the wolf slinking into the meadow. In a single moment, the wolf has swallowed the duck whole. Peter decides he must do something about the wolf! He quickly finds some rope, climbs the tree alongside the cat and bird and starts to tell them of his plan. Before Peter can finish, the hunters arrive, and a chase ensues. Finally the wolf hides from the hunters. Peter senses the still present danger and with the help of the bird distracting the wolf, Peter catches the wolf and ties him to the tree. The hunters return for their prey, but Peter talks them into not killing the wolf but taking him to a nearby zoo. A mini-parade

follows with Peter and the wolf, the hunters, the cat, the bird, the duck and a very proud Grandfather.

### **Things to Talk About Before Seeing the Performance...**

#### **Theater Etiquette:**

It's helpful to review the rules of theater etiquette before seeing a show especially since this may be the first live theater experience for some of your students. Please take a moment to discuss the following pointers prior to seeing the performance.

~Stay seated during the performance.

~ Be respectful to the performers and other people in the audience by not talking during the performance.

~ Appropriate responses such as applause or laughter are always welcome.

~Use of cell phones (including text messaging), cameras and any other recording device are not allowed in the theater at any time!



#### **About the Symphony and Prokofiev:**

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) was a Russian composer who mastered numerous musical genres and came to be admired as one of the greatest composers of the 20th century. Commissioned by the Moscow Central Children's Theater not long after Prokofiev returned to Russia after years of living and composing in America and Europe, *Peter and the Wolf* was written over four days in 1936 shortly after Stalin established a repressive "Composers Union" that determined

what kind of music was acceptable for the masses. The intent in writing *Peter and the Wolf* was to cultivate musical tastes in children from the first years of school and to introduce children to various



instruments in an orchestra. *Peter and the Wolf* is scored for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, 3 horns, trumpet, trombone, timpani, triangle, tambourine, cymbals, castanets, snare drum, bass drum and strings.

Each character in the story has a particular instrument and a musical theme, or leitmotif:

~Bird - Flute

~Duck - Oboe

~Cat - Clarinet

~Grandfather - Bassoon

~Wolf - 3 French Horns

~Hunters (gunshots) - Timpani and Bass Drum (The hunters' theme is actually introduced by the woodwinds)

~Peter - Strings

#### **About Wolves:**

Wolves are not the vicious creatures they are portrayed as in fairytales. They are actually smart and social beasts who live in packs and have quite the social hierarchy. Before the arrival of European settlers in North America, the land belonged to the wolves. Hundreds of thousands of the skilled predators roamed the continent, feeding primarily on such large wild animals as deer, moose, and elk. As the human population increased, however, numbers of the wolves' natural prey decreased, and many people



became convinced that their livestock was in danger from the carnivorous mammals.

Determined to eradicate wolves from the continent, people instituted legally sanctioned wolf hunts, and eventually the animals were hunted and poisoned nearly to extinction.

In recent years, however, a number of recovery plans have been developed, with the goal of returning wolves to their natural habitats and ultimately removing them from the endangered and threatened species lists.

~Linda Starr, Education World

**Wolves are very playful! Did you know that wolves actually play tag? One wolf will chase another and nip it in the behind and that wolf will in turn chase another wolf and "tag" it. Just like kids!**

## Things to Talk About and Do After the Performance:

- ❖ All plays have three P's: *People* in a *Place* with a *Problem*. Where does the play take place (setting)? Who are the people (or characters)? What are the problems (conflicts)? What happens at the beginning of the play? The middle? The end?
- ❖ If you got to play one of the characters in *Peter and the Wolf* which one would it be and why?
- ❖ Peter's Grandfather tells him to not go into the meadow or the forest because it is dangerous. The wolf is there. Grandpa is trying to keep Peter safe and out of harm's way. What kind of things do your parents do to keep you safe?
- ❖ All of the characters in Prokofiev's version of *Peter and the Wolf* have a theme instrument that lets the audience know which character is on stage and helps in defining the character's traits and movements. If you could have a theme instrument, what would it be and why?
- ❖ There are many design elements in the show (costumes, lights, scenery, etc) which ones did you like best and why?
- ❖ How was the music in the show *Peter and the Wolf* different from the Sergei Prokofiev version? Did you like it better or not as much? Why?
- ❖ Conflict between man and animal is one of the themes in the play. Do you ever have conflicts with the animals in your life? How about conflicts with other people (siblings, parents, friends)? How do you resolve your conflicts?

**What's YOUR interpretation?** Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* was originally written to tell a story using music. After listening to parts of the symphony, see what

other interpretations are possible. Discuss and then write down different story ideas that could evolve from the music. Try listening to other pieces of classical music written to tell a specific story, such as; *Firebird Suite*, *The Fairie's Kiss*, the *Nutcracker* or *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. Write stories or draw illustrations that could fit these pieces of music.

### **Puppet Peter and the Wolf:**

After seeing the show or listening to Sergei Prokofiev's composition, create character puppets. Use simple materials such as paper bags, paper plates or socks. Review the story, making sure to touch on the major plot points. Then, as a class or in small groups, re-create the story using your puppets. Use bits of Prokofiev's music or create your own. Rehearse your play and then share it with an audience. Creating a puppet production, from concept to performance, develops creative writing skills, constructive expression, cooperation, and builds self-esteem.

### **Building a Six Note Water Bottle Xylophone:**

Start by getting six glass bottles of the same size. Fill each bottle with different amounts of water. Mark your bottles carefully at the water level with a permanent marker. Number your bottles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6 and arrange them in the order above (1 on your left and 6 on your right). Gently tap the middle of the bottle with a metal spoon. You'll notice that more water produces a lower pitch, and less water produces a higher pitch. Can you play a song on the xylophone?

### **Storytelling:**

*Peter and the Wolf* is a Russian folk tale that tells the story of a brave little boy and his love for his grandfather. All cultures have stories, legends and myths that they share through the generations. Storytelling started as an oral tradition and eventually

stories were documented in various ways: drawings, signals and sign language, through music or dance, and, of course, written language. Stories are told for entertainment, to teach a lesson, to pass-along information and to help explain why things happen. Write, tell or draw a story about a difficult time in your life when you had to be very brave.

### **Animal Characters:**

Choose an animal that you would like to portray as a character. Research the animal and find out where it lives, what it eats, when and where it sleeps, what behaviors it has and if it is a predator. Now, use all of the information you've collected and create a human version of your animal. Choose a name, age, job, walk, posture and physical habit for your character. Rehearse your creation and share it with the rest of the class.

### **Safety Public Service Announcements:**

In the play, Peter's grandfather tells him not to go into the meadow. What sorts of dangers do your parents and grandparents warn you about? Come up with a short commercial (sixty seconds or less) that teaches about an element of safety. Write your ideas down, rehearse the commercial and then share it with your class. If you can, record them with a camcorder and then watch them all.

### **Wolf Stories:**

As a class, read other stories that have wolves in them (*Red Riding Hood* and *The Three Little Pigs* for example). Talk about ways that you could turn those stories into plays. Talk about what styles of music you would add to the story. Try and add the convention of narrator to your project. Is there a way you could combine two or three wolf stories into one? Write down and rehearse your piece and then share it with an audience.

## Move Like...

Think about adjectives that describe the characters in the play. Move around the room in a way that suggests the following:

- ~Free and easy spirit of Peter
- ~Fluttering bird
- ~Swimming and waddling duck
- ~Creeping hunters
- ~Slinky cat
- ~Sly, trickster, wolf
- ~Gentle, old grandfather

## To the Zoo, or To the Wild:

The Wolf is put on trial to decide what his punishment should be. Divide into two groups, one in favor of sending him to the zoo and one in favor of releasing him to the wild, and have a debate to decide the fate of the wolf. After the two sides are presented, have a vote to decide the outcome.

## Peter and the Wolf Booklist

Prepared with the help of Tim Wadham,  
Youth Services Coordinator for the  
Maricopa County Library District

There are a number of different illustrated books that retell the story of *Peter and the Wolf*. A couple of good versions are:  
*Peter and the Wolf* illustrated by Vladimir Vagin  
*Peter and the Wolf* illustrated by Selina Hastings

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:

### Orchestral Music

*The Story of the Orchestra* by Robert Levine  
*Meet the Orchestra* by Ann Hayes  
*The Philharmonic Gets Dressed* by Karla Kuskin  
*The Story of the Incredible Orchestra* by Bruce Koscielniak

### Animal Characteristics

*Why Am I A Bird?* By Greg Pyers  
*Make Way For Ducklings* by Robert McCloskey  
*Across the Stream* by Mirra Ginsburg  
*Three Stories You Can Read to Your Cat* by Sara Swan Miller

### Predators

*Beware of the Storybook Wolves* by Lauren Child  
*Little Wolf's Book of Badness* by Ian Whybrow  
*Predator!* By Bruce Brooks  
*Wolves* by Jim Arnosky  
*Wolves* by Seymour Simon

### Safety

*Crinkleroot's Guide to Wading In Wild Places* by Jim Arnosky  
*Officer Buckle and Gloria* by Peggy Rathmann  
*I Can Be Safe: A First Look At Safety* by Pat Thomas

### Friendship

*Mis Amigos/My Friends* by George Ancona  
*Nice New Neighbors* by Franz Brandenburg  
*Baby Mouse: Queen of the World* by Jennifer L. Holm

## Interesting Web Sites:

### [www.peterwolf.org/home.html](http://www.peterwolf.org/home.html)

-*Peter & The Wolf* by Gavin Friday and the Friday-Seezer Ensemble and illustrated by Bono is a modern take on Prokofiev's children's tale

### <http://library.thinkquest.org/17321/data/esmusic.html>

-a great interactive site where you can read the story and hear the music at the same time

### [www.education-world.com/a\\_lesson/lesson110.shtml](http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/lesson110.shtml)

-activities that deal with wolves

### [www.prokofiev.org/index.cfm](http://www.prokofiev.org/index.cfm)

-a site FULL of information about Sergei Prokofiev complete with photos and interviews

### [www.classicsforkids.com](http://www.classicsforkids.com)

-a great interactive site on classical music, complete with interactive games

### [www.mudcat.org/kids](http://www.mudcat.org/kids)

-this site offers ideas for making your own musical instruments