

Window on the Work

McCallum Theatre's
Aesthetic Education Program
2017 | 2018



The Boy Who Could Sing Pictures

Performed by David Gonzalez with Daniel Kelly, Piano

What is a **Window on the Work** — and why have one? Well, like windows in general, it provides a look in (or out!) at something. That something, in this case, is a work of art. The work of art in question will be studied in the classroom and then viewed — live. Classroom teachers, students, and teaching artists will be engaged, together, in determining what that study will ultimately look like. A document like the **Window on the Work** you hold in your hand at this moment will help you play your part in that process. It gives you not just one view but many views into the work of art. It supplies you with answers to the questions you raise. It inspires new questions, suggests new avenues of inquiry. It rounds out the picture. It sparks new ideas. See if the ideas below make sense to you.

W
O
W

In the planning phase, Windows on the Work can help establish the most effective line of inquiry and richest unit of study

- answer questions about the work of art as they come up
- help you approach the work of art from various vantage points
- spark curricular connections

During the unit of study, Windows on the Work can

- help you expand the study in particular contextual areas
- become a reference for student use

After the unit of study, Windows on the Work can

- help keep the work of art alive in the classroom
- suggest pathways for further study
- help tie together strands of learning later in the year

The Boy Who Could Sing Pictures

TEXTS BY
MARK ALMY,
EXCEPT WHERE
OTHERWISE CREDITED

Performed by David Gonzalez
with Daniel Kelly, Piano

Table of Contents

The Work

- *The Boy Who Could Sing Pictures*
- The music

The Artists

- Storyteller David Gonzalez
- Musician Daniel Kelly
- David speaks: interview excerpts
- McCallum Theatre Education has a few additional questions

Craft

- David Gonzalez's thoughts on storytelling
- Storytelling: the art form

Roots

- A brief history of the modern rise of storytelling
- These particular stories
- Quadraphonic sound

Responses

- What teachers are saying

Sample Lessons

- Companion projects for the classroom

Resources

- Read it here!
- Hear it too!
- On the Web

Glossary

- Useful terms in studying this work of art

The Work



The houselights dim. Out strides Daniel Kelly. He takes his place at the Steinway and launches into the spicy score. A mix of Argentinian Astor Piazzolla – he of the re-imagined tango – and Heitor Villa-Lobos, the brilliant Brazilian

classical composer. The Latin rhythms and intriguing harmonies set the mood. On bops storyteller extraordinaire, David Gonzalez. Dressed simply, as if not to distract from the tale he will tell, he freezes. The music stops. And then – riding on the crest of that dramatic pause, he launches into the first of two stories – *The Boy Who Could Sing Pictures*.

Adapted from Seymour Leichman's well-loved book by the same title, first published in the sixties, the story grabs us at once. There was a jester. His name was Bustelo. Immediately we are thrust backward in time to medieval Italy, when strolling players traveled from hamlet to town to citadel. Through a series of unexpected developments, Bustelo's son, Luka, finds himself suddenly thrust into the limelight. Sing! comes his father's command. Sing? the boy asks, incredulous. No singer he, he hems and haws and finally gives in and begins to warble. And this is just when the strangest of developments takes place. As his thin, boyish voice wafts into the air above the stage; its tones are mysteriously transformed into images, pictures of extraordinary beauty which captivate the audience, holding it spellbound. (The sound of his achingly pure soprano seems to come from every corner of the theater, courtesy of quadrasonic technology.)

Buoyed aloft by this unexpected success, Luka is made a part of his father's act, and the miracle is repeated time and time again. Those in front of the footlights drink in the power and the healing of his music. Perhaps it is only inevitable that this strange turn of events excites the attention of the unhappy king and his jealous courtiers, the evil ministers Reducto and Canoli. Is the boy possessed by evil spirits? This notion is put forward by those same unfortunate folks who have the king's ear. Will Luka's finale be his last song? Will beauty and truth succumb to lies and corruption? Mr. Gonzalez' lively stage persona, elastic body, and spellbinding delivery hold us in thrall even as Luka keeps his own audience in a masterful grip.

In the second story, based on a Persian tale, a clever young girl challenges a wizard. Can she outwit the master himself? From the piano, Daniel Kelly's strains question, comment, accompany, while David Gonzalez, master storyteller whom we know from past appearances at the theater in such works as *The Frog Bride*, *Mytholo-JAZZ*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Aesop Bops*, and *Cuentos*, roars one moment, whispers the next, sends limbs flying this way and that or stops suddenly, enchanting the space with great stillness.

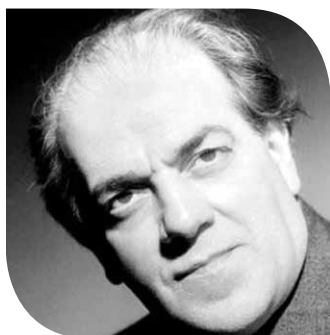
The music



Astor Piazzolla

Daniel Kelly has scored *The Boy Who Could Sing Pictures* with his own arrangements of selections from Heitor Villa-Lobos' *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5*, and Astor Piazzolla's *Milonga Picaresque*.

Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5 is part of a larger work written between 1938 and 1945 and is scored for soprano and an orchestra of cellos. Villa-Lobos' best-known work, this movement is also called *Ária (Cantilena)*. The text is by Ruth V. Corrêa, Brazilian anthropologist and philosopher.



Heitor Villa-Lobos

Tarde, uma nuve rósea lenta e transparente. / sobre o espaço, sonhadora e bela! / Surge no infinito a lua docemente, / enfeitando a tarde, qual meiga donzela / que se apresta e a linda sonhadamente, / em anseios d'alma para ficar bela / grita ao céu e a terra, toda a Natureza! / Cala a passarada aos seus tristes queixumes / e reflete o mar toda a Sua riqueza... / Suave a luz da lua desperta agora / a cruel saudade que ri e chora! / Tarde, uma nuvem rósea lenta e transparente / sobre o espaço, sonhadora e bela!

Eventide, a rosy cloud, slow and transparent / over the spot, dreamlike and beautiful! / The moon gently appearing beyond the horizon, / embellishing the eventide, like a sweet maid / preparing herself till she's dreamily gorgeous, / with her soul avid to become beautiful / crying to heaven and earth, to all of Nature! / Silent are the birds to her sad laments / and reflected on the sea all of Her richness... / Soft the light of the moon awakes already / a fierce desire that laughs and cries. / Eventide, a rosy cloud, slow and transparent / over the spot, dreamlike and beautiful!

Aria, though composed in the 20th century, is influenced by the much earlier Baroque era. There are strong connections to Bach. The piece has an A/B/A format, also called *da capo*, a cornerstone of the Baroque. The A section provides the first musical statement; the B section contrasts with that; and the second A section restates the first. Villa-Lobos uses the voice more as an instrument than an interpreter of text. In section A, the soprano soars over the cellos in a wordless musical line. Then, there's a short interlude in which a solo cello takes over the melody. The contrasting B section is more declamatory; lyrics are sung in a rapid, speech-like way on repeated notes. The text talks about being drawn to the beauty and mystery of the moon. The final A section then repeats more softly and with a rather more spiritual quality the earlier statement.



The Artists



David Gonzalez, Storyteller

There are two artists collaborating on *The Boy Who Could Sing Pictures*, David Gonzalez and pianist Daniel Kelly. David likes to say he was “made in Cuba” but born in the United States. His father is of Afro-Cuban descent; his mother, Puerto Rican. While David was still in swaddling clothes, the family departed for Cuba. Their story was not, however, as they say, storybook perfect. David’s father walked out, and his mother hauled her young brood back to New York City. It fell to his uncle to help shape young David’s experience and it appears that Tio Jose took up the task with relish. A carpenter by trade and a maker of guitars, Jose introduced his nephew to storytelling through the medium of puppet-theater – and to music via the guitar. Storytelling and music

are two strands which would continue to interweave throughout David’s life. Music was the first to emerge as a vocation, specifically that of music therapist. It was when he was twenty-four or so and attending a singers’ retreat, that he first encountered a storyteller per se. He had “never heard of storytelling as something you could do,” he says now of that experience which changed him.

Actually, though, he has been telling stories since the age of seven. What happened at seven? Well, you see, his Tio Jose made him a puppet theater, for which his abuela fashioned velvet curtains. Straightaway he began to perform. It seems reasonable to assume that both uncle and grandmother formed a part of the budding artist’s first audiences. Since those tender beginnings, he has racked up more than 2,500 performances at venues such as The Royal National Theatre of London, The Smithsonian, The Brooklyn Academy of Music and hundreds of schools throughout North America.



Daniel Kelly, Piano

If we had to nail down musician Daniel Kelly’s style to particular categories, we probably would want to say jazz on the one hand and Afro-Cuban on the other. Is it any wonder, when we know this that he and storyteller David Gonzalez have gravitated toward each other as artists? This extraordinary pianist has concertized all over creation. In addition, he has scored for film, participated in multi-media artworks, and composed music for the theater.

His CDs, *World and Duets with Ghosts*, testify to the diversity of his output. The latter title hints at his fecundity in creating ensembles. He has several going at the moment. One of these happens to be named

Duets with Ghosts. Another is *Liquid Ensemble*. Based in New York, Daniel Kelly has seen his work featured in music festivals that celebrate today’s composers by presenting their oeuvre.

Daniel is super-committed to arts education and young audiences. He performs in schools and in performances geared to family audiences. David Gonzalez has been his most frequent and notable partner in hundreds of school shows. He has been a Jazz Ambassador for the U.S. State Department, performing on a six-week tour to India, Thailand, Laos, Malaysia, Vietnam and Bangladesh.

Asked to share the musician's perspective on working with a storyteller, he says:

"Like pretty much everybody, I love listening to a great story. And I love to play piano. So working with David, I get to do both: be a part of the telling of a great story, but also listen to David tell these fun tales. What people may not know is that David and I have told these stories hundreds of times to kids and families all over the country. Yet each time we do it, it's a little different: David changes his delivery depending on who the audience is and how they react. And I always have some space to play different music for certain sections of the piece. This keeps it fresh for us and the audience too."

David Gonzalez speaks **Excerpts from an interview by Kate Buckley of palmsprings.com**

"I guess you could say we are all performers, as Shakespeare said "...all the world's a stage..." My performance career started at age seven when my uncle made me a puppet theater out of plywood, my grandmother supplied red velvet curtains, and I made characters out of paper bags and socks. Activating the imagination has been at the core of all I do, from my living room in the Bronx to Broadway.

"About 15 years ago I started receiving calls from colleges and corporations interested in two different subjects; creativity and cultural awareness. As a creative artist and educator I take the position that creativity is an inherent, though often atrophied, faculty in all people. As a contemporary bilingual Hispanic (my parents are from Puerto Rico and Cuba) I use poetry and stories to show how our biographies inform us, and how our shared humanity transcends the circumstances of our birth.

"As a therapist, the sole concern is the well-being of the client. All the choices, activities and interventions are focused on eliciting and encouraging the curative resources available to one particular person at one particular time. This work is potent because of the uniqueness of the relationship, and the uniqueness of the client. As a performing artist, I am concerned with creating aesthetic objects (plays, music, and poems) that satisfy my curiosity while serving a greater good for the community. I like to say that I create work that is intended to "function" in the world – that it does something, has an impact; makes a difference.

"Joseph Campbell saved me. In my twenties I was lost in the morass of psychological/spiritual questing. I was going to therapy, workshops, trying this and that, but when I read Campbell's brilliant *Hero with a Thousand Faces* everything changed. Through his profound understanding of world myth and religion he liberated within me a love of story, and ignited a curiosity about myth in my own life. This is a really big question, we'd need a lot of time and ink to cover it – suffice to say that the great boon of my professional life has been to trust the creative impulse, to listen deeply, and to leap, even if I don't yet see the ground in front of me.

"Under the stewardship of the McCallum's (President & CEO) Mitch Gershenfeld, the institution is seeking to broaden its reach beyond its glorious stages and lobbies, out to the community. McCallum Theater Education, under the direction of Kajsa Thuresson-Frary, has done a phenomenal job bringing arts experiences to valley kids, the Crisalida Community Arts Project intends to extend that success to the eastern part of the Coachella Valley to the cities of Indio, Coachella, Thermal, Mecca and the Salton Sea. We have received a two-year grant from the James Irvine Foundation to support the project. The first year is devoted to learning about the communities, building relationships, finding out what is already happening out there, and listening to how the communities want to develop their art-making. Then in the second year, we will start to enact the plan that emerges from this in-depth observation. I can say that we've already jump-started the process with lots of workshops, performances, collaborations and planning already happening.

"I've worked at the McCallum consistently for the past ten years, but always in the tremendously busy mindset of a performer putting on a show. This project has already allowed me to get to know the landscape and the people in a much better way. I rented a house in the hills above Palm Desert in September and each morning woke to the vast sky, and each evening I'd sit outside to contemplate the starry night. The days were spent meeting one fascinating person after the other. I've written a lot about it in the blog www.crisalida-arts.blogspot.com

"[There is] groove ... behind everything I do..."It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing." When I'm not telling stories or doing this arts activist work you will find me playing the guitar, original works for classical guitar in the concert hall, funk and rock on my Fender Telecaster at the club."

McCallum Theatre Education has a few additional questions

EDU: At this point in your career, after sharing many stories, what speaks to you about *The Boy Who Could Sing Pictures*?

DG: A few things...Luka's gift of magical song is a surprise to him. I remember being a child and feeling awe around accomplished artists ... where does that come from?! How do they do that?! Luka is born with talent that he doesn't know he had; something that wells up when there is a need. This also connects to my work as a music therapist ... how focused compassion calls us to draw on our best selves to serve the needs of others.

EDU: Can you share some thoughts about how you and Leonard Pettit are approaching this piece?

DG: We are working on clarity of character through entering into physical/psychological gesture. We are working on choreographing the space, assigning moments to places, and generally looking for ways to enchant the stage. Also, we are working on how to integrate the music and surround sound aspects.

EDU: Can you talk about how you are interacting with the music compared to the way you worked with music in *Mytholo-JAZZ* and *The Frog Bride*?

DG: Similar to *The Frog Bride* ... Daniel and I have mapped the music onto the drama beat-by-beat, we have deconstructed the narrative and matched up the Villa-Lobos and Piazzolla to reflect the movement of the story. We have had three terrific sessions devoted to this. Also we are trying something new ... I hired two world-class soloists to record the vocal and clarinet parts which I will arrange in surround sound. Finding the mix of live and recorded music is going to be fun, difficult and rewarding (I hope!) I want to bring something fresh to my work with the teachers and anything you can share about your preparation, your work on the different characters, how you may be blocking the piece with Leonard (enchanting the space?) will be helpful. I've been playing with conducting the sound in the air and combining that gestural vocabulary with a bit tango dance vocabulary. It might be useful to ask the teachers to imagine conducting the Villa-Lobos melody, then to bring a sense of tango movement, then to combine them. Also, how Luka might embody his discovery of his gift.



Craft

David Gonzalez's thoughts on storytelling

Quotations are from *Talking with David Gonzalez* an interview conducted by Andrea Masters, Lincoln Center Institute's, *Window on the Work: As If the Past Were Listening*, 2002.

Ask master storyteller David Gonzalez when he first got the idea to tell stories and he tells about a singing retreat he attended years ago in Maine:

One of the participants was a storyteller. I had never heard a storyteller, or heard of storytelling as something you could do.

David goes on to say, however, that it was more than a matter of making a conscious decision. He had always told stories. One of the ways in which he did so, involved a puppet theater that his uncle, Jose, constructed for him when he was seven:

I made little puppets and told stories at family parties.

Since those first early stirrings, he has made a mighty stir in the world of professional storytelling. Veteran of more than 2,500 performances, he has told stories at the Royal National Theatre in London, The Smithsonian Institution, and Lincoln Center, among the various and lofty venues. Many of these performances, happily enough, have been given on school campuses throughout North America.

Ask him about his art and you receive the following insights:

In storytelling, I connect to you, literally to you, personally ... As a storyteller, I'm willing to turn on a dime, forget the original text – change it, stop it, improvise, repeat.

He goes on to say that rapport is essential in order for what he calls –

... the essential architecture of a story to sing through me. While I'm telling a story, I reach my hands out, but they only complete half a circle. It's you, reaching out with your imagination, and grabbing ahold of my story, who complete the circle.

Spend any time with David Gonzalez, and you come away understanding that he sees himself as a musician first and a storyteller second. In fact, he has obtained his doctorate from New York University of Education in music therapy – that is, healing through music. And he plays a mean guitar besides!

Telling stories, however, is more than just earning his daily bread. He sees storytelling, listening to each other's stories, and sharing stories, as a powerful antidote to the fear and sadness which can afflict the human heart. In sharing stories, we see our lives in each other.

Storytelling: the art form

"Stories have been told as long as speech has existed, and sans stories the human race would have perished, as it would have perished sans water," wrote Isak Dinesen in 1957. Does this idea hold up? Certainly when people refer to storytelling as one of the oldest arts, we may be inclined to take that on faith. Homer and his contemporaries are early, shining examples of storytellers whose work has arrived at our era's doorstep in written form. But how countless must be the stories told prior to the glory days of Greece! And if the telling of stories isn't essential to the vitality of man, then why do they accompany the length of his days, persisting in so lively a fashion to our own times?

Ruth Sawyer posits in *The Way of the Storyteller*:

The first primitive efforts at conscious storytelling consisted of a simple chant, set to the rhythm of some tribal occupation such as grinding corn, paddling a canoe or kayak, sharpening weapons for hunting or war, or ceremonial dancing. They were in the first person, impromptu, giving expression to pride or exultation over some act of bravery or accomplishment that set the individual for the moment apart from the tribe.

This idea of the individual emerging from the crowd is surely a key point. It's worth thinking, too, about how naturally children seem to enter into telling stories. Experts suppose that, similarly, in early times any and all members of a community might have told stories with something of the simplicity and naturalness of a child. Later, as civilizations rose and tastes grew refined, personal qualities and ability made certain folks, more than others, effective tellers. First person narratives gave way to third person, as well. Was this apparent modesty a sign of social development? Some point to this shift as the birth of the hero tale, in which one's own exaggerated triumphs were ascribed to a hero figure.

Ellin Greene wrote in *The Oldest Art* from Lincoln Center Institute's, *Window on the Work: As If the Past Were Listening*, 2002: "Storytellers became the genealogists, historians, and keepers of the culture, as well as its entertainers."

What are some of the earliest exponents of storytelling? Well, the Egyptian Westcar Papyrus is the earliest extant written example of storytelling. In this document, Cheops, the builder of the pyramids, is regaled with stories by his sons. Somewhat later, the heroic epic Gilgamesh shows up courtesy of the Sumerians, inventors of written language. Folks who make it their business to study stories direct us to notice connections between the Gilgamesh and subsequent works from other cultures. We're probably all aware that flood stories, like that of Noah and his ark, span many civilizations. Consider, too the bull. In Gilgamesh one reads of the Bull Heaven. Elsewhere we encounter the king of Gods becoming a white bull to overwhelm Europa; cave paintings in which bulls figure prominently; and the Minotaur of ancient Greece. What conclusions can we draw from phenomena like this?

If storytelling is a means of expressing culture, it has also served to instruct. Aristotle sees stories as vehicles for teaching values and morals to children. Aesop, anyone?

Getting back to Homer for a minute, in *The Odyssey* we read about a blind bard who sings about key events. Song accompanied on the lute was used in these early days of professional storytelling to relate stories of accomplishment and bravery. Bards also appeared in other cultures across Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America.

Believe it or not, storytelling as a vocation reached such a pitch by the Middle Ages that guilds for storytellers sprang up. There were competitions for storytellers. Princes bestowed favors on storytellers. Storytellers traveled the highways and byways throughout the lands plying their trade. It was only in 1450 with the advent of the printing press that business began to taper off. Now stories could be printed and read. Not everyone, of course, could afford books, nor indeed could the lower classes read at all. Fortunately they, themselves, could tell the stories they knew and loved, which they frequently did while they worked at their looms and spinning needles. Could this be where the phrase “spinning a yarn” comes from?

Anne Pellowski writes in the *The World of Storytelling*, “the Grimm tales must be considered as the single most important group of folk stories that affected storytelling for children.” She notes that these works, while not popular with educational authorities, encouraged parents to keep storytelling alive. Not long after the brothers Grimm set their tales down, Friedrich Froebel, the German who founded kindergarten, made stories and their telling a part of his system of education, which as we know, traveled to the United States in the 1870s. Since then, texts such as *How to Tell Stories to Children* by Sara Cone Bryant have continued to promote the tradition.

Today, though, storytelling is not just for children. In that regard, we are full circle. As in the days of the Greeks, adults want to hear stories too. In part this can be ascribed to the storytelling festival that Jimmy Neil organized in Jonesborough Tennessee in 1973. Since that time, the festival has swelled to international stature and Mr. Neil has founded the National Storytelling Network, initially named the National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling.

Roots

A brief history of the modern rise of storytelling

A brief history of the rise of storytelling in modern times begins with the storytelling revival in the U.S. The revival began in the fall of 1973 with the first National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee. Its founder, Jimmy Neil Smith, was a high school journalism teacher who thought it would be a great thing for his students to be exposed to the traditional storytellers of the South that he had enjoyed since his youth. Thus the first wave in the storytelling renaissance tended to be rural, Southern, back porch or library storytellers. As the movement expanded and storytelling festivals sprang up in other parts of the country, urban storytellers became more prominent. Then there was a wave of tellers from backgrounds in arts disciplines such as theater, dance and music. The stories also changed with time. Early on a high percentage of stories told in festivals were folk and fairy tales. Later, as copyright became an issue, many storytellers confined themselves to personal stories only.

In the late 1980’s storytellers from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds were often featured on the festival circuit. David Gonzalez combines many of the qualities prized today in nationally respected storytellers. He comes from an urban setting, yet one with a rich Latino heritage and a home storytelling tradition. His work is enriched by his background in music and his study of various ethnic dance forms. He also exemplifies the theatrical tradition of storytellers who make use of directors, visual media, and live musicians onstage.

These particular stories

These two particular stories are *The Boy Who Could Sing Pictures* and *Nina Nails It*.

Seymour Leichman's *The Boy Who Could Sing Pictures* is the source for David's first – and longer – story in this storytelling piece.

A jester's son slowly steals the show with a miracle. When he sings for the peasants, overburdened with taxes, meaningless wars and oppression levied by the King's wicked advisers, his songs come to life visually in the air, beautiful pictures that inspire and soothe. But when the boy is brought before the King to perform his wonders, the pictures turn dark and sad; presenting the reality of the life in the kingdom, a reality the King has known nothing of and at first disbelieves. The boy's very life is in danger.

...read the book to know the rest!

The vast literature of the Persian folktale provides the basis for David's second – and shorter – story, *Nina Nails It*.

Dāstān is Persian for tale. Folklorists think this genre of folktale goes all the way back to ancient Iran, commonly also known as Persia in the Western world. It began as an oral tradition. Dāstān-Sarā I (storytelling) captivated listeners with tales of romance and adventure, heroic princes and their encounters with evil kings, powerful enemies, magicians and Jinns, as well as beautiful princesses who might either be human or Pari (fairy).

On the subject of theme, McCallum Theatre Education's own Teaching Artist and storyteller, Karen Rae Kraut, tells us:

There are a number of stories of clever young girls who outwit older men who think they are superior. I can think of one from China and one from Kazakhstan; these are probably [close] to David's theme. The Chinese story is called *The Clever Head of Household*, and the Kazak story is called *The Woodcutter's Daughter*. [The latter tells] how a clever daughter outwits the crafty rich man who has cheated her humble and hardworking father out of his beloved donkey. Powerfully moved by compassion for her simple dad's suffering and her anger against injustice, she bests the rich man in a storytelling competition in a truly spectacular and surprising way.

In *The Storyteller's Sourcebook*, a gigantic scholarly tome, [a tale of a similar] type – in which someone hides in the other person's heart – is *Tales from a Finnish Tupa*. The entry goes like this, "Hides in heart of hare, bear. She finds. Hides in her heart – succeeds. Old man aids. Lad had found princess inside of forbidden twenty-fourth door while serving old man."

I also remember another story from Russia, [in which a] young man who wants to win [a princess] hides as a pin in her magic book.

Quadraphonic sound

David came up with the inspired idea of having the boy's recorded voice piped into the theater using quadraphonic technology. What is quadraphonic sound exactly? Well, quadraphonic sound uses four channels whose recorded content is completely or partially independent of one another. Speakers, placed at the four corners of a given listening space, send out these sounds, giving the listener the sense that he or she sits in the center of the now-unified sound. This is why quadraphonic audio is sometimes referred to as surround sound. Thousands of recordings were made quadraphonically in the 1970s.

Unhappily, for the technicians who developed it – and the record companies who invested in it – quadraphonic recording was largely a commercial bust. There were technical issues and format problems. For example, quadraphonic audio formats were more expensive to produce than standard two-channel stereo. And playback required additional speakers and specially designed decoders and amplifiers.

As anyone who goes to the movies today knows, however, the basic concept of surround sound is an integral part of that experience. And we, too, as we sit in the McCallum Theatre enveloped by Luka's clear tones, benefit from this technology.

Responses

What teachers are saying about *The Boy Who Could Sing Pictures*

“Storytelling and friendship are universal themes. I look forward to exploring this idea and with the overarching theme of “what is it that makes us uniquely human” for our school year.”

— DR. ERIC STEIN-STEELE, LAS PALMITAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

“I love the art of music and storytelling together i.e. storytelling in different forms. I would have students compare and contrast of two pieces of literature to help guide them toward an understanding of the work and its meaning to them. I would also highlight stories and experiences that take place over time.”

— KATHY PUNT, SUNNY SANDS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

“I have gotten away from using music in my classroom and I would like to bring that back as a way to help set a tone in the room i.e. finding the meaning and stories in music, visualizing and imagery in music as well as the feelings that music can evoke.”

— ANGIE ROSS, FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

“I do a poetry unit with me class and I can see a connection between writing poetry and then putting it to music, or vice versa. The same with storytelling, we can take a poem and create a story out of it and have the students perform it to the class.”

— ANONYMOUS, EARHART ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Sample Lessons

Classroom teachers ask us: what can we do with our students to help get them ready for experiencing the performance? Check out these ideas:

Line of Inquiry*: How does David Gonzalez in selecting stories about young people standing up to people in power, put his own stamp on these stories, through the use of contemporary vocabulary, delivery, and physicality?

Lesson one

Ask: David Gonzalez will be telling us a couple of stories that take place in olden times. What are some of the ways that a storyteller can make old stories seem new – even hip? (Further questioning can steer students to consider use of language, updating of characters and situations, layering in contemporary music, employing gestures and movement we recognize as belonging to our own times, and so on.)

Challenge: Have students, working with table partners, select an old story – either from the curriculum or elsewhere – and brainstorm how to update it and make it relevant to modern young audiences.

Students share some of these ideas aloud with the whole class – to help spark ideas.

Art making (Language Arts): Again with their table partner, students now write out these stories as they have brainstormed them. Encourage them to keep imaginatively revising.

Reflect: Several of these are then shared aloud with the rest of the class. Based on your questions, the discussion following each reading explores:

- Story line?
- Contemporary language?
- Humor?
- Modern day characters and situations?
- How is the story more relevant to today's young audiences?

Lesson two

Reveal: David Gonzalez has selected two stories about young people – one features a boy and the other a girl – who stand up to people in power. What do we think that involves?

Ask: What are some stories we can think of in which young people dare to stand up to the older generation – those in power? (Carry the conversation forward by asking: what qualities and abilities are required of a young person who does that, do you think?)

Art making (Language Arts): Have students working together in table groups create a story about a young person or young people standing up to people in power. Best to have each group come up with a kernel of an idea; share these aloud; and then have them flesh out the whole story and write it down.

These are read aloud by each group in turn. Your great questioning can get the listeners to describe such details as language, plot points, and so on – as well as analyze how these details function.

Ask: Why tell stories about young people standing up to people in power?

Lesson three

Share: The original book by Seymour Leichman on which David Gonzalez bases his telling of *The Boy Who Could Sing Pictures* features some illustrations of this idea: when the boy Luka sings, pictures appear in the air above him, to the amazement of audiences. David had a choice to make. How would he deal with this phenomenon in his storytelling performance?

Ask: What do you predict the pictures in the storybook – showing this phenomenon – would look like? How about in David's performance? What are some ways a live storyteller might visually represent those times in the story when Luka sings – and pictures appear in the air?

Art making: Students individually choose: either make an illustration of Luka's song as it might appear in a book – or illustrate a storyteller on a stage making that moment in the story come to life. (Be sure you lead a little brainstorming beforehand – to help everyone consider some options.)

Reflect: Have students circulate through the room taking considered looks at their fellow students' work. You might like to draw attention to an example afterwards – and ask students to describe what they see.

Lesson four (post-performance)

Ask: What was the plot? How did David move? What did he communicate through actions, posture, gesture, facial expression, etc.? How did he use his voice? How did he make distinctions between characters? How did he use the stage space? What did you notice about his language choices? Which elements seemed to belong to earlier eras – and which ones seemed modern? How was humor used? What was going on with the music? What other elements helped tell the story onstage? How did David get you to use your imagination?

Art making: Students individually select a key moment in the performance – when David was doing something that awakened the audiences' imagination, for example – and illustrate that on paper.

Table partners share these images with each other. They describe each other's work.

Reflect: Students individually write paragraphs considering:

- Why is imagination important in storytelling?
- In what other endeavors is imagination key?



Resources

Read it here!

The Boy Who Could Sing Pictures

By: Seymour Leichman

Publisher: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1958

ASIN: B000GS84A4

Tío José and the Singing Trees

By: David Gonzalez and Stacey Schuett

Publisher: Doubleday, 2004

ISBN-10: 0385908644

Tell Me Another: Storytelling and Reading Aloud at Home, At School, and in the Community

By: Bob Barton

Publisher: Heinemann, 1986

ISBN-10: 0435082310

Tell Me Another... helps teachers make storytelling and reading aloud effective in their classes, both for themselves and their pupils.

Children Tell Stories: Teaching and Using Storytelling in the Classroom

By: Martha Hamilton

Publisher: Richard C. Owen Publishers; 2nd edition, 2005

ISBN-10: 1572746637

Full of practical tips, handouts, and resources.

The Storyteller's Sourcebook: A Subject, Title, and Motif Index to Folklore Collections for Children

By: Margaret Read MacDonald and Bryan W. Sturm

Publisher: Detroit Gale Research/Neal-Schuman, 1982

ISBN-10: 0810304716

The first edition provides descriptions of folktales and references to more than 700 published sources of folktales. The new edition covers folktales from 1983-1999. Both editions include thorough indexing by subject, motif, title, ethnic group and country of origin and a comprehensive bibliography.

Hear it too!

Rosso Tangos: Tangos Y Milongas

Label: Sony/BMG Italy, 2011

ASIN: B004Z5C9UK

Astor Piazzolla composer and bandoneón

Villa-Lobos: Bachianas Brasileiras (Complete)

Label: Naxos, 2005

ASIN: B000BK53DI

Rosana Lamosa, soprano and José Feghali, piano with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra conducted by Kenneth Schermerhorn

On the Web

The Kids' Storytelling Club

www.storycraft.com/

The only way to become a storyteller is to tell stories. The way to become a better storyteller is to learn new storytelling skills. And the way to become the best storyteller is to develop your own storytelling techniques. The best way to do all this is to explore many different kinds of storytelling. Find which things are easiest for you.

Mensa for Kids – The Art of Storytelling

www.mensaforkids.org/teach/lesson-plans/the-art-of-storytelling/

Site helps students give the rationale for the telling of stories, evaluate a story for its storytelling potential, outline a story in preparation for storytelling, and present a story before an audience.

David Gonzalez

www.davidgonzalez.com

Daniel Kelly – Composer and Pianist

www.danielkellymusic.com

Encyclopedia Britannica - Heitor Villa-Lobos

www.britannica.com/biography/Heitor-Villa-Lobos

NOVJARO Quintet plays Milonga Picaresque by A. Piazzolla (2007)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=llqbjTuWKzo

Glossary

Accompaniment — a musical part that supports or partners another performer's work.

Argentina — a federal republic in the southern portion of South America.

Aria — generally a song in an opera sung by one person.

Brazil — the largest country in both South America and Latin America; the world's fifth-largest country.

Dramatic pause — a break, stop, or rest, often for a calculated purpose or effect.

Dynamics — volume levels.

Jester — a professional joker or "fool" at a medieval court, typically wearing a cap with bells on it and carrying a mock scepter.

Psychological gesture — A movement expressive of thought or feeling.

Quadraphonic/Surround sound — sound reproduction transmitted through four channels..

Score — a musical component that carries through a performance, accompanying, commenting on, taking an active role in, that performance.

Setting/Location — the place or type of surroundings where something is positioned or where an event takes place.

Stage Whisper — a loud whisper uttered by an actor on stage, intended to be heard by the audience but supposedly unheard by other characters in the play.

Tango — a partner dance that originated in the 1880s along the River Plata, the natural border between Argentina and Uruguay – and the musical form which accompanies it.

Tempo — the speed at which a passage of music is or should be played.