

Little Stories of Great Composers

A DELICIOUS TASTE OF MOZZARELLA!

PYOTR ILYITCH TCHAIKOVSKY

Story Ana Gerhard Illustrations Marie Lafrance
Musical Recordings I Musici de Montréal
Narration Colm Feore



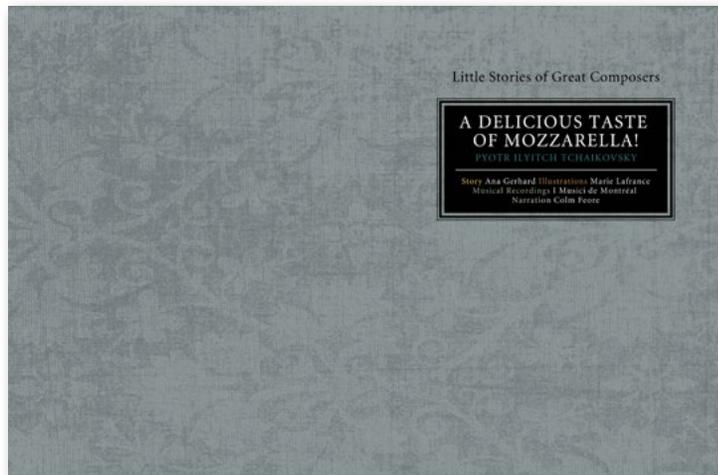
the secret
mountain

www.thesectionmountain.com

TEACHING GUIDE

Grades 1 & 2

Themes: Classical music, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, mouse, history, travel, port, Europe, piano, violin, power of music.



PEDAGOGICAL INTERESTS

- *A Delicious Taste of Mozzarella* is part of the Little Stories of Great Composers series, a collection of musical books that allow students to discover the great names of classical music, including Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Vivaldi, Schubert, Paganini, and Hadyn.
- In *A Delicious Taste of Mozzarella* readers travel back in time and meet Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky as they follow a charming little mouse named Minim, who is fond of cheese and music.
- Marie Lafrance's illustrations help readers identify elements of time and place. In addition, Lafrance uses concrete places (such as rooms in a house) and mental spaces (Minim's dream and the children's imagination), which engages inferential comprehension skills.
- The various topics covered in the story can be applied in several school disciplines, including French, music, social studies, drama, and history.
- The simple and accessible story is written by Ana Gerhard, a concert pianist. She received the prestigious Parents' Choice Gold Award in the United States for a collection of musical books that introduce children to classical music.
- Narrated by renowned actor Colm Feore, the audio version of the story adds an oral and theatrical element to the reading experience.
- Accompanying music performed by the I Musici de Montréal orchestra allows readers to discover a classical composition from the 19th-century.



BEFORE READING

With your students, read the title and study the front-cover illustration. Then make predictions about the story.

What is the book about?

Who are the main characters?

When does the story take place?

Explain to students that they will be traveling back in time to meet Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, then give them the following reading intention:

Read this story to learn more about this great composer.

The book and companion album include:

- An illustrated story followed by explanatory notes on Tchaikovsky and his work
- The audio version of the tale narrated by Colm Feore and compositions of *German Song*, *March of the Wooden Soldiers*, *The Witch Baba Yaga*, and *Kamarinskaya* from *Album for the Young*, performed by the I Musici de Montréal orchestra.

DURING THE READING

Ask your students the following questions to support their understanding of the story.



Pages 1-2	Who is telling the story? The story is told by a mouse named Minim.
Pages 3-4	Where do you think the cheese is located? Explain your answer. Open to the students. For example: "I think the cheese is in the kitchen because that's where food is usually stored."
Pages 5-6	Where was the cheese located after all? The cheese was in Minim's dreams. It doesn't really exist. Who says the following phrase: "Bobik!!! Wake up! It's morning... Come on, sleepyhead!"? It's Sacha, Bobik's sister. How does Sacha feel? Explain your answer. Open to the students. For example: "Sacha is anxious to see her uncle, Petya. She wakes up her brother with an insistent voice and asks him to hurry."



<p>Pages 7-8</p>	<p>What do we find out about Uncle Petya?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncle Petya has traveled to many European countries, including Italy. • He loves his niece and nephew very much. He promised to spend the summer with them. • He is a musician. • He is not like other adults. He has all the time in the world to have fun. For example, he makes puppets and puts on plays for which he composes the music. • He is generous. He gives gifts to his niece and nephew.
<p>Pages 9-10</p>	<p>Why does Minim “stealthily” follow the children to their uncle’s bedroom?</p> <p>He needs to be careful around people in the house because they might chase him away if they discover his existence.</p>
<p>Pages 11-12</p>	<p>What do you think is the gift that Uncle Petya brought Sasha and Bobik? Explain your answer.</p> <p>Open to the students. For example: “I think it’s a puppet. It can fit in a small package. Also, we learned that Uncle Petya likes to put on plays with his niece and nephew.”</p>
<p>Pages 13-14</p>	<p>What was Uncle Petya’s gift after all?</p> <p>It’s a musical score written on staff paper with notes jotted all over it.</p> <p>What do you think of Sasha and Bobik’s reaction? Explain your answer.</p> <p>Open to the students. For example: “I understand their reaction. I’ve been disappointed when I unwrapped a gift before, and even though I wanted to hide my disappointment to be polite, I couldn’t.”</p>



<p>Pages 15-16</p>	<p>Would you like to receive this gift? Explain your answer.</p> <p>Open to the students. For example: “Yes, I would like to receive this gift, because it’s unique. I would be happy to receive music composed just for me.”</p>
<p>Pages 17-18</p>	<p>Did Uncle Petya manage to share his enthusiasm with Bobik? Explain your answer.</p> <p>No, not yet. Bobik protests that he can hardly play the piano and tries hard to hold back his tears.</p>
<p>Pages 19-20</p>	<p>Why is a route in full daylight very dangerous for Minim?</p> <p>There are fewer places to hide in the house during the day. He can easily be spotted by someone.</p>
<p>Pages 21-22</p>	<p>In your opinion, why did the illustrator draw the landscape in the piano? Explain your response.</p> <p>Open to the students. For example: “In my opinion, she wanted to show that Uncle Petya’s music inspires the children to imagine the city he visited. I don’t think there really is a city in the piano. It’s more about what children imagine with their eyes closed.”</p>
<p>Pages 23-24</p>	<p>How does the illustrator depict Minim as he listens to the melody?</p> <p>His head is tilted down and his eyes are closed. His hands are crossed and the tip of his tail forms a treble clef.</p>



**Pages
25-26**

Could Minim have stayed in the music room to see if Bobik and Sasha appreciated their uncle's gift more? Explain your answer.

No, he couldn't. The children's mother spotted him. He had to return to his hole behind Bobik's dresser.

Who is Uncle Petya?

He is the composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky.

In your opinion, why did Minim say that Tchaikovsky's gift brings happiness to children all over the world?

Open to students. For example: "Tchaikovsky is a famous composer. I think the compositions he created for his niece and nephew have been listened to by many children around the world. They have also been able to travel thanks to the power of their imagination and the musician's music."

Now that students have discovered Uncle Petya's identity, as a group, discuss all the details that the story shared about him. Reread the previous pages if necessary.

Responses may include:

- Tchaikovsky traveled to several European countries, including Italy.
- He loves children, especially his niece and nephew.
- He is a musician and composes music based on his travels.
- Etc.



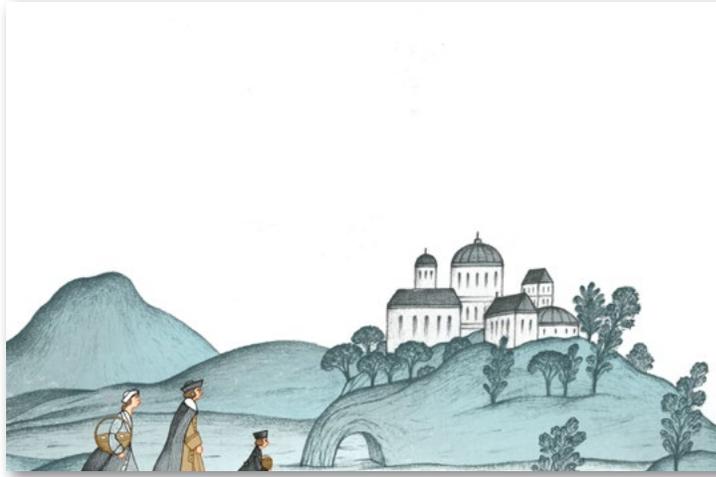
**Pages
27-28**

Read “A Few Morsels of History” and continue to describe Tchaikovsky’s character.

Next, invite the students to share their thoughts on the story.

Do you think the author did a good job of telling us about Tchaikovsky?

Open to the students. For example: “Yes, she did a great job. She showed that the composer loved children and that his music was creative.”



AFTER READING

Start a discussion with the students about the story.

Would you have been friends with Tchaikovsky?

Explain your response by describing yourself and referring to the story.

Open to the students. For example: “I would have liked to meet him because he loves children. He is also very creative like me. I would have liked to create a musical puppet show with him.”

Invite students to interpret the text.

Why do you think the author gave the story the title *A Delicious Taste of Mozzarella!*?

Explain your answer.

Open to the students. For example: “In my opinion, she chose this title to show that music can stimulate our imagination. In the story, Minim explains that the delicious taste of a fresh mozzarella overwhelms his palate while he listens to Uncle Petya’s music.”

Invite students to appreciate the story.

This story is told by a mouse. What do you think of this choice? Explain your answer.

Open to the students. For example: “I think it’s a good choice because a little mouse can observe things without being noticed—for the most part! I also like that Minim doesn’t find out who Uncle Petya is until the very end. It piques our curiosity. Also, Minim’s search for cheese adds a touch of humor to the story.”



THE NARRATED STORY

Listen to the audio version of the story, narrated by Colm Feore (Duration: 8 minutes). The audio version is available on the accompanying CD, or can be downloaded as an MP3 with the unique digital code. Afterward, ask the students about the narration and musical score.

What do you think about the actor's narration?

How did you distinguish the voices of the different characters?

At what points in the story was music added?

What effect did the sounds have on the story?

The album includes recordings of the compositions *German Song*, *March of the Wooden Soldiers*, *The Witch Baba Yaga*, and *Kamarinskaya* by Tchaikovsky.

After listening to each piece, ask your students which one they prefer.

What instruments do you hear? What families do they belong to? (e.g. wind, string, brass, percussion)

If you were a journalist writing an article about this music, how would you describe it?

When you listen to this composition, what emotions do you feel?

Using musical terms, can you describe some of the characteristics of this composition?

What composition do you like best? Justify your answer using elements you identified earlier.



SPOTLIGHT ON THE MUSIC

Explore musical terms with your students by asking the following questions:

Tchaikovsky is a Russian composer. What is the difference between a musician, a composer, and a conductor?

- 1) A composer writes music by creating a succession of musical notes and chords (e.g. do, mi, sol played simultaneously).
- 2) A musician plays the music on an instrument.
- 3) A conductor leads several musicians in an orchestra.

Tchaikovsky is a composer of the Romantic era. What characterizes the music of this period?

The expression of emotions is of utmost importance. Also, the piano is one of the most popular instruments of this time.

Tchaikovsky's most famous works are Swan Lake and The Nutcracker. What do they have in common?

They are music for ballets.



THE ILLUSTRATIONS

Explore Marie Lafrance's illustrations with your students to identify the elements of time and place.

Describe the house Tchaikovsky and his niece and nephew are staying in.

What kind of furnishings are there?

How are the characters dressed?

Identify the similarities and differences between the architecture, clothing, and accessories of the 19th century and those of our time.



TCHAIKOVSKY'S TRAVELS

Tchaikovsky is recognized worldwide as a musical genius. He lived in Russia, but he often travelled abroad to create his compositions. He was particularly fond of Italy. The piece he shares with his nephew and niece was composed in Naples, Italy. Ask the students to identify this city on the map of Europe and color in Italy.

THE PRESENTS

In the story, Tchaikovsky gives sheet music to his niece and nephew. At first they are disappointed, but eventually they appreciate their uncle's gift. Reflect on this with your students.

Examples of discussion prompts include:

Are gifts important?

Why do we give gifts?

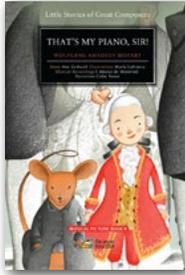
Does a gift always make people happy?

Do all gifts have the same value?

Can a gift increase in value over time?



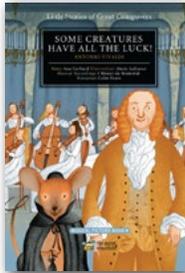
MORE LITTLE STORIES OF GREAT COMPOSERS



That's My Piano, Sir!

Meet Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in 18th-century Vienna as he arrives by boat to play a concert in the city, and bumps into Minim along the way.

<https://www.theseclretmountain.com/portfolio/thats-my-piano-sir-march-2021wolfgang-amadeus-mozart/>



Some Creatures Have All the Luck!

Meet Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi as Minim braves a cold Venetian winter night to visit an orphanage where he encounters a musical rehearsal.

<https://www.theseclretmountain.com/portfolio/some-creatures-have-all-the-luck-may-2021antonio-vivaldi/>



Curiosity Killed the Cat!

Meet Austrian composer Franz Schubert at an open-air café on a beautiful spring day where he saves Minim from a Gruyere-topped mouse trap.

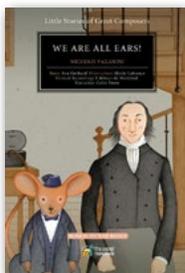
<https://www.theseclretmountain.com/portfolio/curiosity-killed-the-cat-september-2021franz-schubert/>



A Brilliant Plan!

Meet Austrian composer Joseph Haydn in Eisenstadt at the summer residence of Prince Nikolaus, where members of the orchestra begin to feel homesick.

<https://www.theseclretmountain.com/portfolio/a-brilliant-plan-october-2021franz-joseph-haydn/>

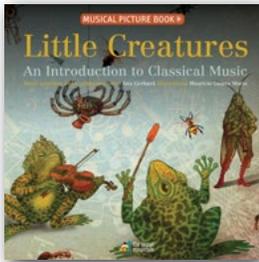


We Are All Ears!

Meet Italian composer Niccolò Paganini at a luthier's workshop just as his most cherished instrument, the violin, is miraculously saved from destruction.

<https://www.theseclretmountain.com/portfolio/we-are-all-ears-november-2021niccolo-paganini/>

INTRODUCTIONS TO CLASSICAL MUSIC



Little Creatures

Works by Beethoven, Bartók, Ravel and other composers introduce children to classical music through this animal-inspired repertoire.

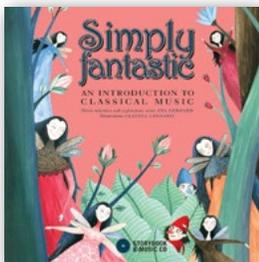
<https://www.thesectionmountain.com/portfolio/little-creatures-an-introduction-to-classical-music/>



Amazing Water

In this compilation, Beethoven, Bach, Schubert, and others bring classical music to young ears with works that evoke the fluidity, dynamism, and rhythmic diversity of water.

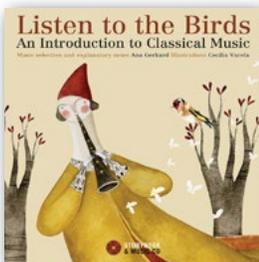
<https://www.thesectionmountain.com/portfolio/amazing-water/>



Simply Fantastic

In this collection, discover works by Tchaikovsky, Verdi, and others inspired by ancient legends and fantastical creatures (gnomes, fairies, witches).

<https://www.thesectionmountain.com/portfolio/simply-fantastic/>



Listen to the Birds

Birds have always stimulated the imagination of composers. In this compilation, little ears will discover the melodic similarities between the sounds produced by instruments and the song of swans, nightingales, and larks.

<https://www.thesectionmountain.com/portfolio/listen-to-the-birds/>

For more musical picture books and teachings guides, visit www.thesectionmountain.com

