



THE STORY OF **BABAR** *the Little Elephant*

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THE STORY OF **BABAR** *the Little Elephant*

Jeunesses Musicales Canada (JMC) is one of Canada's foremost classical music presenters. Each year, hundreds of concerts are developed especially for young audiences on a variety of exciting themes. The organization also presents concerts for the general public, helping Canada's best young musicians to develop their careers. Supporting the JMC in this mission is a wonderful artistic team, backed by over 300 volunteers. Since its inception in 1949, JMC has presented tens of thousands of concerts to young audiences, families and the general public in Québec, the Maritimes and Ontario, and even in Western Canada.

This is the Teaching Guide for the concert *The Story of Babar*. It contains a lot of information and different activities ranging in difficulty from which educators and teachers can draw based on the age of the children. The guide may be used to prepare young audiences for the concert, as well as to review and build on the learning initiated at the event.

The purpose of *The Story of Babar*, which has been available to young audiences since March 2014, is to allow children to rediscover a literary classic while showcasing the piano as an ideal instrument to illustrate a story. The production is built around the use of colourful scarves that evoke characters in the story, allowing the audience to picture the scenes in their minds as they listen to the music.

Enjoy the concert!



ARTISTS:

Élisabeth Payeur, narration

Laurence Lambert-Chan, piano

STAGE DIRECTION:

Judith Pelletier

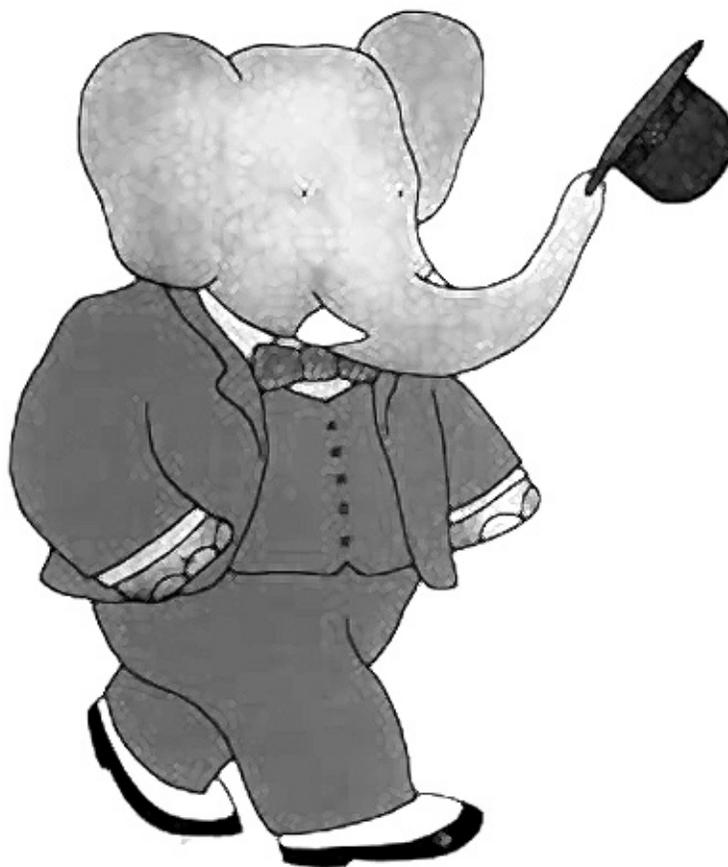


➔ **WHAT IS THE STORY OF BABAR?**

One day, a cute baby elephant is born in the forest. His mother names him Babar, and they live happily together. Sadly, one day as they are out for a stroll, Babar's mother is killed by a hunter. The young elephant manages to escape to the city, where he is taken in by a friendly Old Lady. She helps him adapt to city life, buying him clothes and even a car. One day in the city, he runs into his cousins, Arthur and Celeste. That's when he realizes how much he misses the elephant kingdom. He bids farewell to the Old Lady, vowing never to forget her. On his return to the forest, tragedy strikes: the King of the Elephants dies from eating a bad mushroom. The council of elephants appoints Babar as their new king! Babar accepts, on the condition that Celeste will be his queen. The two are crowned and married. Long live King Babar! Long live Queen Celeste!

Perhaps you are already familiar with the character of Babar, whose adventures are found in some 40 albums, animated films and televised series. In this concert, you will learn to see... and hear him differently!

BABAR





→ THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY OF BABAR

FIRST, A STORY...



Cécile, Jean, Laurent and Mathieu de Brunhoff, around 1931 ©Van Hamel Family Archives, Amsterdam

The character of Babar was born because of two children: Mathieu and Laurent de Brunhoff. Like you probably, they loved to have a bedtime story. One night their mother, Céline Sabouraud, invented the story of a little elephant who runs away from a hunter and ends up in a city. The children loved the story so much that they told it to their father, Jean de Brunhoff. To please his children, the master painter wrote and illustrated the story.

At Jean's death, his son Laurent wanted the story of Babar to continue. So he took up his brushes and in turn invented all kinds of adventures for the beloved elephant. And that's why today millions of children know Babar.

WHERE DOES MUSIC COME INTO ALL THIS?

While Jean de Brunhoff was thinking up elephant stories, a pianist by the name of Francis Poulenc was composing music, very often for voice and piano. He sometimes took inspiration from works by his poet friends, or he wrote tunes for his musician friends. With so many friends, he wrote a lot of pretty melodies!

One day, when Francis was improvising tunes on the piano at a friend's house, the daughter of one of his cousins came to him with a book in her hands: it was *The Story of Babar, the Little Elephant!* She put the book on the piano and asked Francis to play... the story of her favourite elephant! The musician illustrated the album, not with paint brushes as Jean had done, but with notes.

To recreate the different parts of the story, Francis strung together different musical styles: a soothing lullaby to rock Babar to sleep, a scrumptious waltz at the bakery shop, a stately march to celebrate the wedding, a polka for the party, and a nocturne to sweeten the dreams.

It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Jean de Brunhoff's illustrations are proof of this. But music also speaks very eloquently, as evidenced by the melodies created by Francis Poulenc for *The Story of Babar*.



Francis Poulenc, French composer and pianist (in 1946). Ph. P. Vals / Coll. Archives Larousse



→ THE MUSICAL TALE

WHAT IS A MUSICAL TALE?

It's a story that is illustrated with music... instead of pictures! Thanks to our imagination, and especially a composer's imagination, the characters are brought to life using different instruments and musical styles.

Sometimes a composer decides to put an existing story to music. This was the case when Francis Poulenc "illustrated" *Babar* with notes. Other times, an author invents a story based on an already existing musical work. For example, Lucien Adès chose to write a story while listening to Antonio Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. And sometimes, a composer writes both the story and the music. That's what Sergueï Prokofiev did when he created *Peter and the Wolf*.

MUSIC CAN REPRODUCE EVENTS

In *Babar*, Poulenc composed a soothing lullaby. What do you think of when you hear a melody like that? Of a mother putting her baby to sleep, right? And that's exactly what the mother elephant is doing now: she is rocking little Babar to sleep! Later, the piano plays a polka, which is a dance tune. Do you think something happy or something sad is happening at this time? Happy, of course! The elephants are celebrating the coronation and wedding of Babar and Celeste!



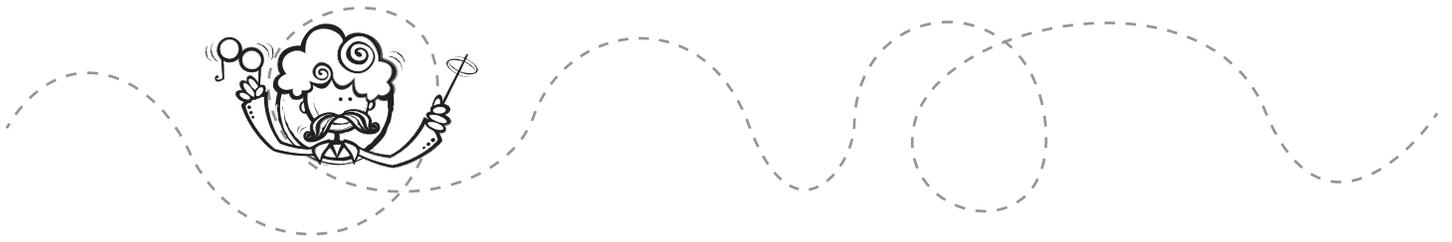
To learn more about the musical styles used by Poulenc in *Babar*, you can listen to the different excerpts and participate in Activity 2.

MUSIC CAN IMITATE CHARACTERS IN A STORY

Poulenc chose to use the piano throughout his musical tale. Prokofiev did things differently: in *Peter and the Wolf*, he uses several instruments to imitate the various characters. The bird, for example, is represented by the flute. Have you ever heard the sound of the flute? It is very light... just like a bird! Prokofiev chose the bassoon, which sounds very low and kind of severe, to play the role of the grandfather. What animal do you think the oboe personifies? This instrument, which sounds a little bit nasal, is used to imitate the sound of... the duck!

Another composer had fun using musical instruments to imitate animals. His name was Camille Saint-Saëns and he wrote the *Carnival of Animals*. What animal does very, very slow music remind you of? A turtle! Saint-Saëns chose an instrument other than the piano to imitate the elephant. Can you guess which one? Here's a little hint: it's the biggest and lowest sounding of all the string instruments... the double bass!

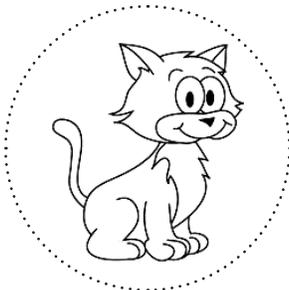
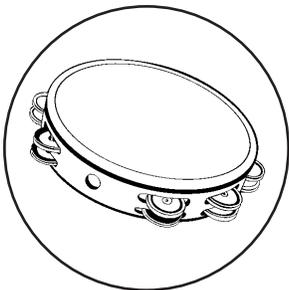
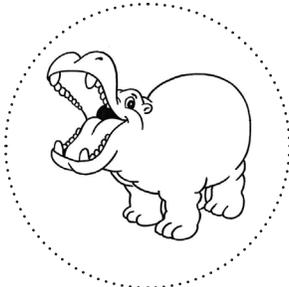
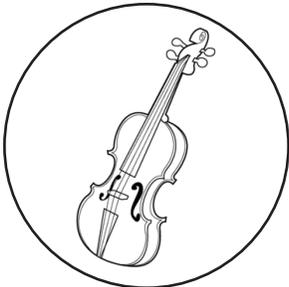
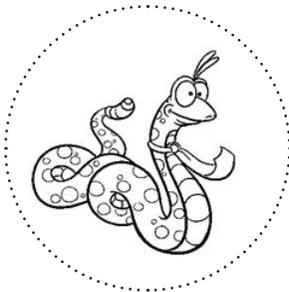
The magic of music makes everything possible.



YOUR TURN TO PLAY!

ACTIVITY 1

Choose the instrument on the left that would best imitate each of the animals on the right:



**How about you?
What instrument would
you choose to portray a
big dog? Would it be an
instrument with a low tone
or a high tone?**

**What about for a very small
dog? Would you use the
same instrument?
Why?**

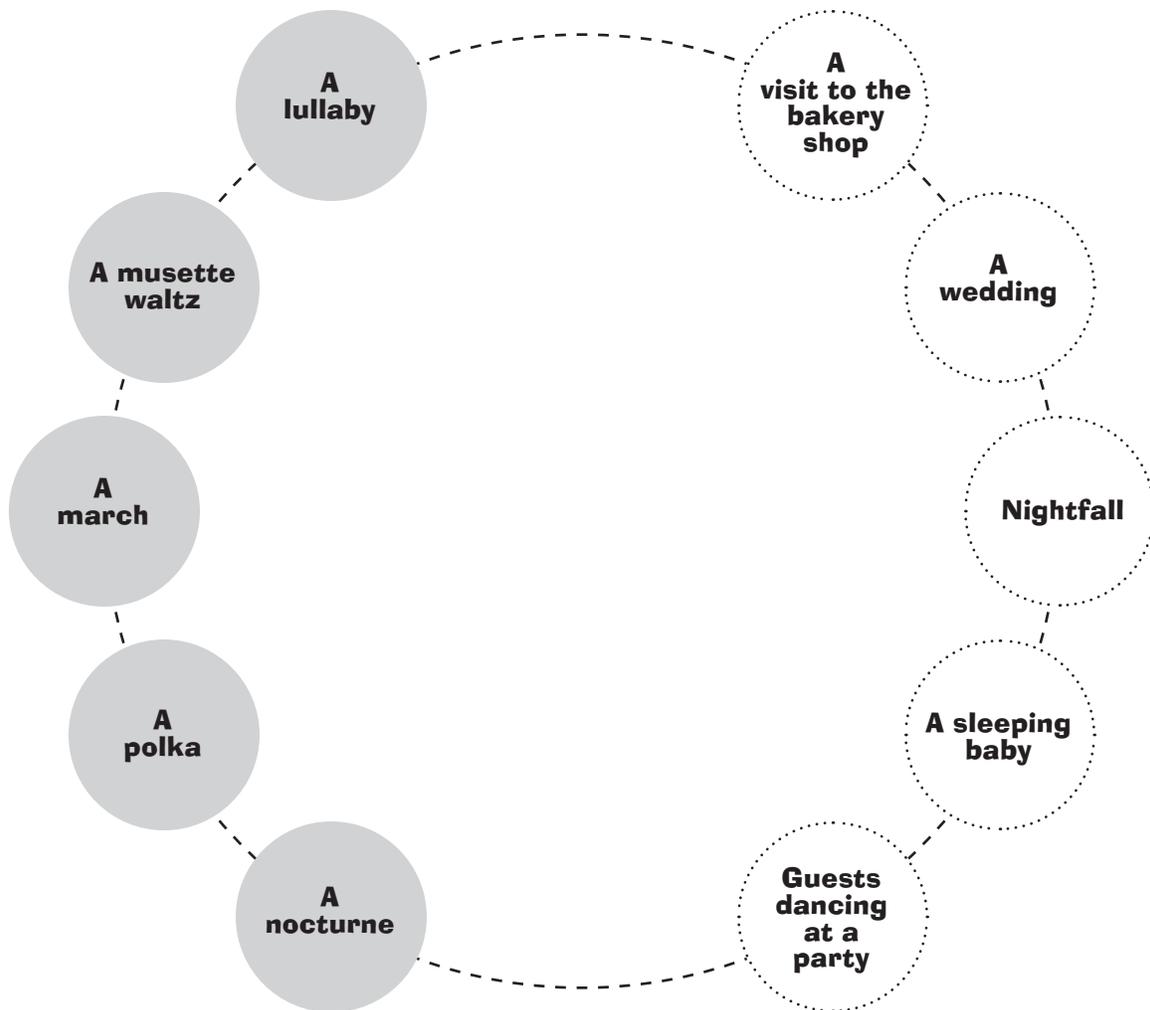
**With your friends, gather all the
percussion instruments you can
(drum, tambourine, xylophone,
cymbals, triangle, maracas... you
can even use empty pots, wooden
blocks, snapping fingers or
stomping feet!), and use them to
imitate all the animals you can
think of!**



YOUR TURN TO PLAY!

ACTIVITY 2

Choose the musical style on the left of the circle that would best suit each of the scenes in *The Story of Babar*.



To help you, listen to excerpts from each of these musical styles from *The Story of Babar*.



→ HOW TO DO THEATER USING OBJECTS

THE THEATER OF OBJECTS IS ABSOLUTELY... MAGICAL!

YES, MAGICAL! THANKS TO THE ARTISTS' IMAGINATION, FAMILIAR OBJECTS CAN TURN

INTO ALL SORTS OF CHARACTERS OR BE USED IN WHIMSICAL WAYS

ON THE STAGE.

In this musical tale, the piano is of course a musical instrument, but it also becomes a bakery shop! The grey, green, blue and pink scarves turn into a baby elephant, then young Babar's ears, then clothes for Babar, Arthur and Celeste. The chair is also involved in this little game, changing into a bathtub, then into a car!

Let's have some fun with the theater of objects!

ACTIVITY 1

With your friends, imagine everything that a piano could become. How would you like to have a piano house?

Like in the concert, have fun thinking up more roles for a scarf.

Invent new ways to use a chair.

Using your imagination, you can turn every object around you into something else!

ACTIVITY 2

With your friends, use everyday objects to create a puppet theatre. For example, you can present *The Little Red Riding Hood* using cutlery. The Big Bad Wolf could be a fork, and the Grandma a soup spoon... Why not?

All these objects could also dance to your favourite music!



→ THE PIANO: THE SINGER'S FRIEND

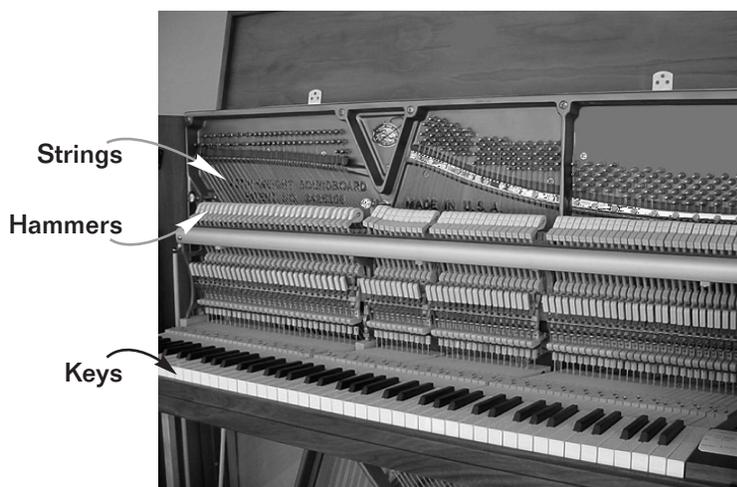
DID YOU KNOW THAT THE PIANO IS A STRING INSTRUMENT, LIKE THE GUITAR AND THE VIOLIN?

SURPRISING, ISN'T IT?

TO PLAY GUITAR, YOU HAVE TO PLUCK THE STRINGS.

TO PLAY VIOLIN, YOU HAVE TO RUB THE STRINGS.

TO PLAY PIANO, YOU HAVE TO STRIKE THE STRINGS.



The piano's strings are inside the instrument, hidden by the soundboard.



Keyboard :
Set of keys

When you press on the keyboard's black and white **keys**, little felt-covered **hammers** strike the **strings**. The vibration of the **strings** is what produces the sound of the piano.

For each **key**, there is a **hammer** and a **string**. Each string is a different length and size, which is why each **key** produces a very specific sound.

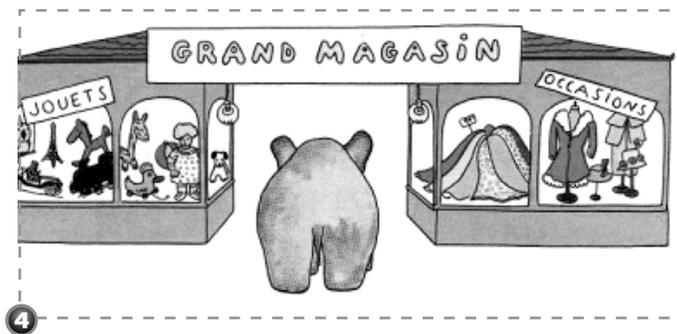
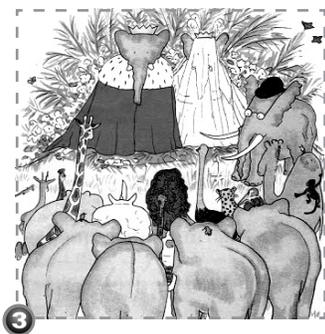
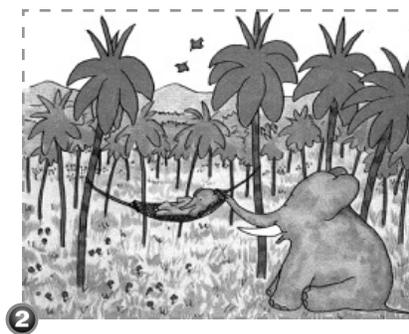
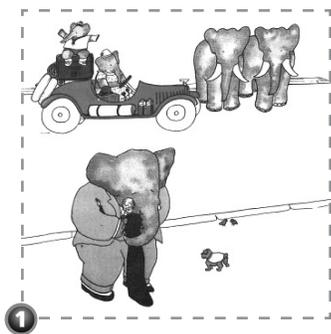


→ LET'S TALK ABOUT THE CONCERT

THROUGHOUT THE STORY, BABAR EXPERIENCES MANY DIFFERENT EMOTIONS,

INCLUDING SADNESS, FEAR, HAPPINESS, AND EVEN LOVE!

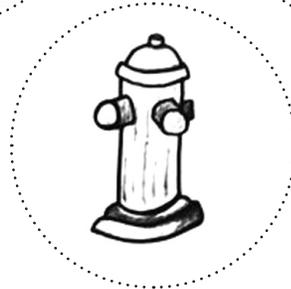
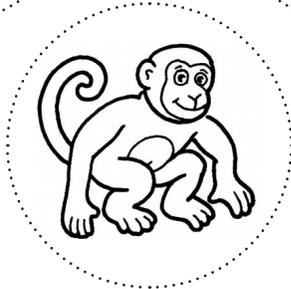
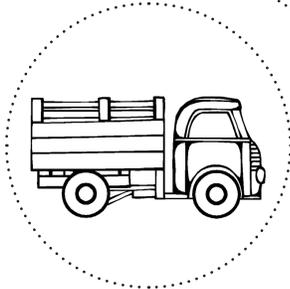
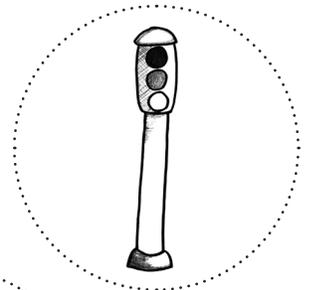
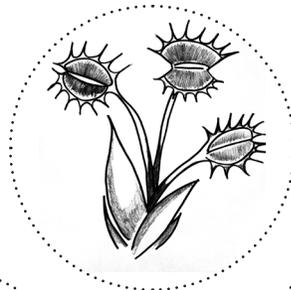
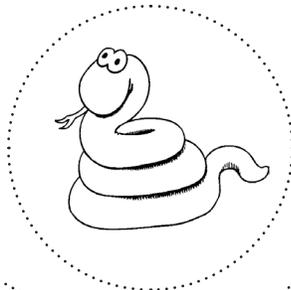
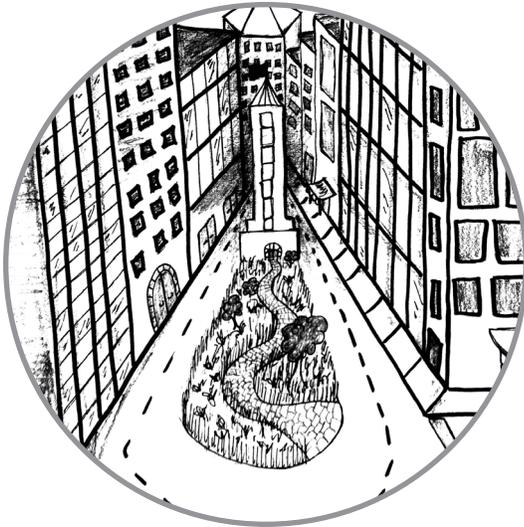
- o Do you remember when Babar was sad? When he was afraid? What do you think was his happiest moment in the entire story?
- o Do you think the music expressed these emotions well?
- o Do you know another instrument that would have been good to imitate an elephant?
- o How did you feel during the concert? Were you afraid? Did you laugh? Were you sad? When did you experience these emotions?
- o What was your favourite moment in the concert? What did you like about that part of the concert?
- o Did you feel like dancing at times? When? Was the music slow or fast?
- o How would you have danced to this music?
- o Can you name the "roles" played by the piano during the concert?
- o Do you remember that the piano served as a hiding place for Babar, as the front of a car, as a burial place for the King of the Elephants, and as the coronation site for Babar and Celeste?
- o Here are a few pictures from *The Story of Babar*. Can you put them back in order?





→ EACH THING IN ITS PLACE...

Here is a forest like the one where Babar was born, and a city similar to the one where some of Babar's adventures take place. Which of the animals and objects below are usually found in the forest? Which belong in a city?



Can you name other animals or objects that are found in the forest or in the city?

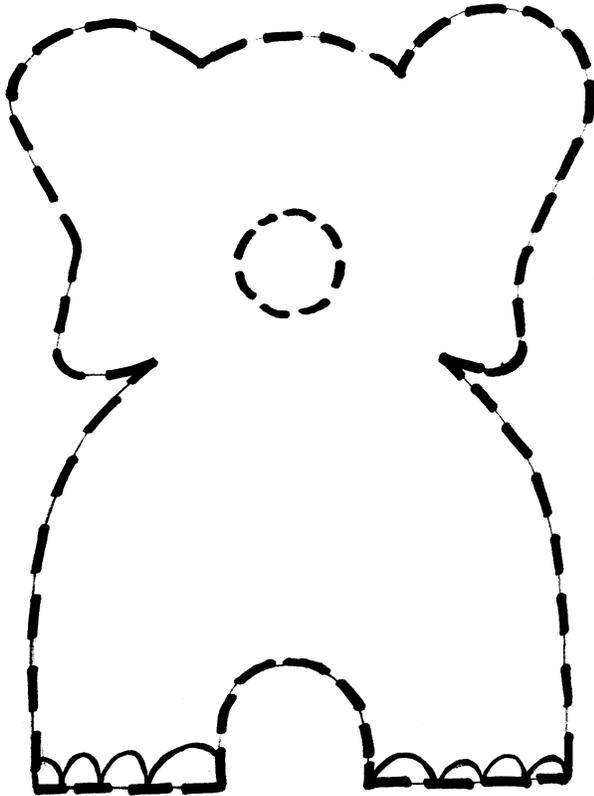
Do you know animals that are more often found in cities than in forests?

Can you make some of the sounds that are heard in a forest? How about in a city?

LET'S HAVE **SOME FUN**

→ **CRAFT TIME!**

Here is a fun elephant puppet that you can make!



1
Cut out the shape on the left.

2
Ask an adult to help you cut out the hole in the middle.

3
Decorate your elephant as you please. You can even add a crown or a bowler hat!

4
Insert your index finger in the hole - your finger is the trunk!

You can create elephant puppets of Babar, Celeste, Arthur, Cornelius, elephant mothers, the King of the Elephants, etc. Then with your friends, recreate scenes from the story!

GET READY FOR THE CONCERT



YOU CAN KEEP THIS GUIDE AND REFER TO IT EVERY TIME YOU GO TO AN OPERA OR CONCERT.

It sets out various rules that you must follow before, during and after the concert, and information about applause, an ancient custom that has continued to this day.

Read the guide carefully to become an experienced concertgoer!

CLAP YOUR HANDS

To show your appreciation during a concert, you can clap your hands.

In a concert, it is customary to applaud the performers at the end of each piece. If the piece is in several movements, you should wait for the end of the last movement and leave a moment of silence, just as the musicians leave a moment of silence between movements.

At the opera, a different system applies. The audience often applauds the singers at the end of a well-known or difficult aria, as well as applauding at the end of each Act. At jazz concerts, the audience often applauds the players after each solo improvisation.



1

BEFORE THE CONCERT

To make sure you don't distract the artists and audience, turn off any electronic device (watch, cell phone, etc.)

Make sure you don't arrive late for the concert. It is preferable to arrive 10 to 15 minutes before the concert is scheduled to begin. This will give you time to read the program!



2

DURING THE CONCERT

To show your respect for the musicians and the audience, don't talk to the people next to you. Silence is essential to allow the musicians and everybody at the concert to concentrate.

Candies and sweets should only be eaten outside the concert hall. They can make a lot of noise and disturb your neighbours if you unwrap them during the concert.

Unless there's an emergency, never leave the concert hall during the performance. If possible, wait for the intermission.

The musicians on the stage are aware of everything going on in the hall and hear all the sounds made by the members of the audience. By keeping a respectful silence, you will allow the performers to give the best concert possible.

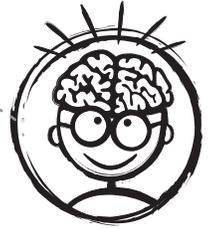
3

AFTER THE CONCERT

Make sure you haven't forgotten anything on or under your seat. Leave the concert hall calmly, without pushing or shoving. Take the time to discuss the concert with your friends.

It is often possible to meet the performers after a concert to congratulate them or ask them questions. Sometimes, the musicians come back on stage to meet the audience members. If this is the case, you just have to go up to them and speak to them. If the musicians do not come back on stage, ask one of the ushers where to go to meet them backstage or in their dressing room.

EXPAND YOUR MUSICAL KNOWLEDGE



IF YOU LIKE BABAR THE LITTLE ELEPHANT, YOU WILL ENJOY DISCOVERING THE ENTIRE SERIES OF ALBUMS! HERE ARE A FEW SUGGESTIONS TO LEARN ABOUT OTHER ELEPHANTS WHO APPRECIATE MUSIC:

- *Le concert de la savane : à la découverte des animaux et des instruments de musique !*, Saint-Val, Florie, Paris, Le Baron perché, 2012
- *Au secours, mon tuba*, Brochu, Yvon, Québec, FouLire, 2011
- *Cacophonie à Fabémol*, Simon, Laurent, Champigny-sur-Marne, Lito, 2011
- *Le concert des animaux*, Boucher, Michel, Paris, Belin, 2010 (Avec CD)
- *Musique, coco, Monfreid, Dorothee*, Paris, École des loisirs, 2009

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO DISCOVER MORE MELODIES FEATURING ANIMALS:

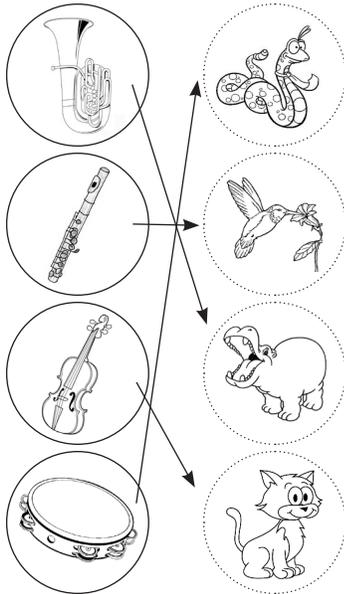
- *Peter and the Wolf*, by Sergueï Prokofiev
- *The Carnival of Animals*, by Camille Saint-Saëns

HERE ARE A FEW MORE CLASSIC TALES PUT TO MUSIC:

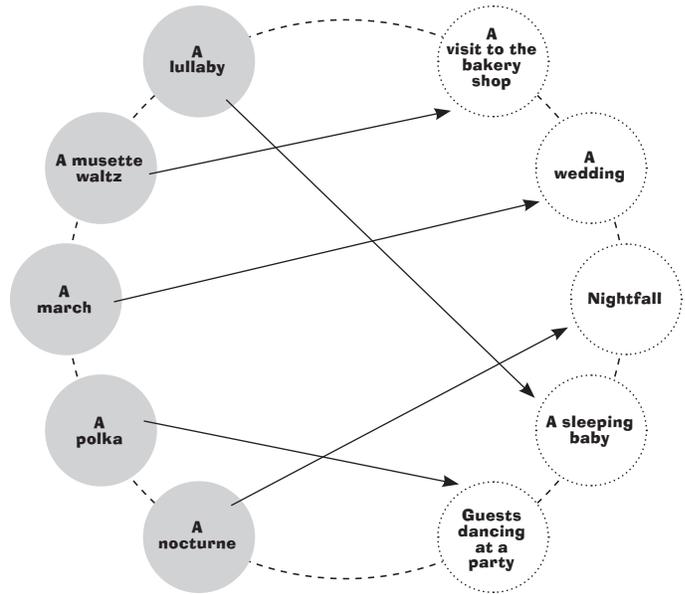
- *The opera Hänsel and Gretel*, by Engelbert Humperdinck
- *The ballet Sleeping Beauty*, by Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
- *The ballet Swan Lake*, by Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
- *The opera La Cenerentola (Cinderella)*, by Gioachino Rossini

YOUR TURN TO PLAY!

ACTIVITY 1



ACTIVITY 2



LET'S TALK ABOUT THE CONCERT

The proper order for the pictures is: 2, 4, 1 and 3

EACH THINGS IN ITS PLACE...

The snake, the monkey and carnivorous plants prefer the forest, whereas the truck, the fire hydrant and the lamppost are found in the city.