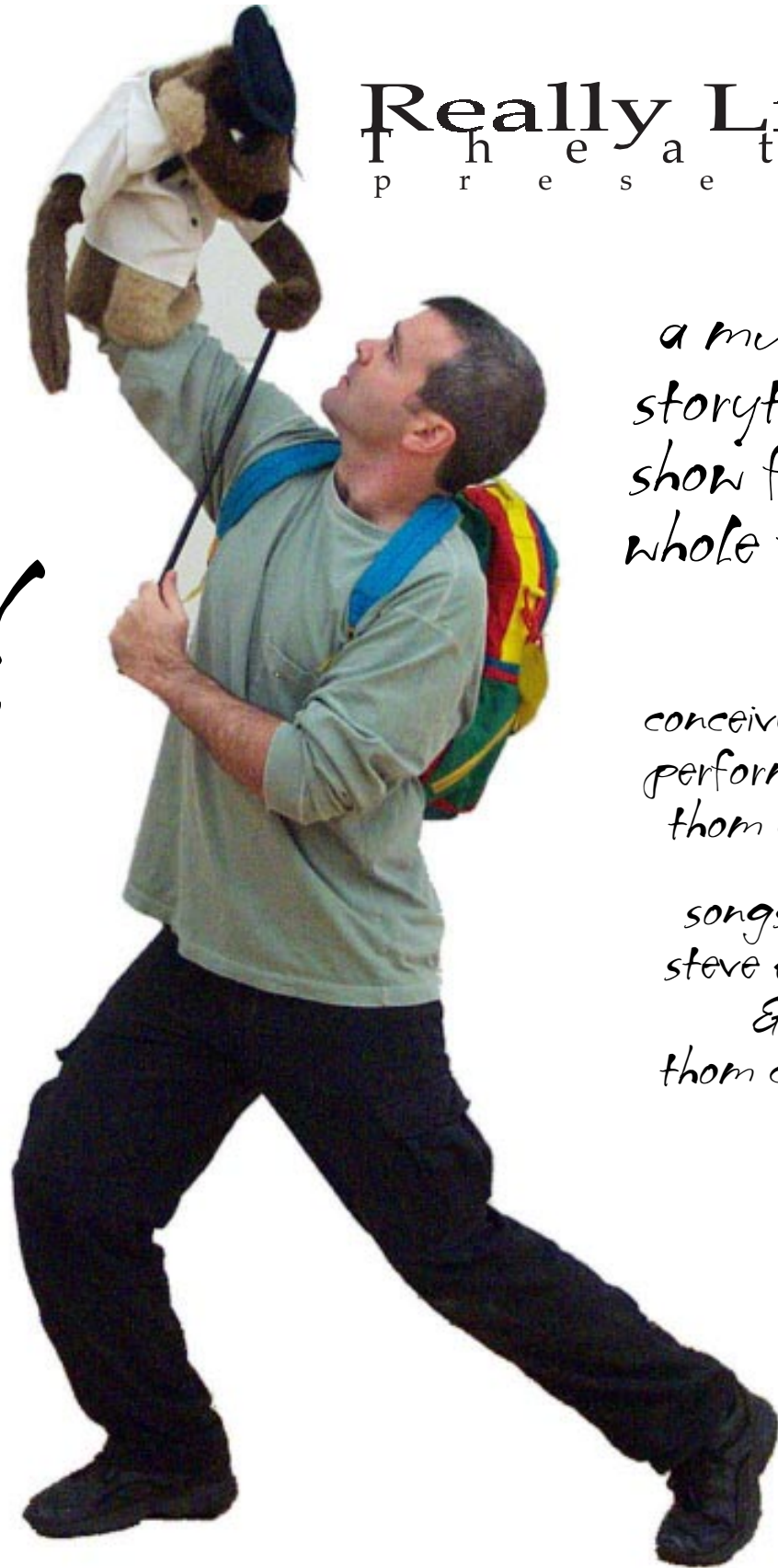


Really Little
Theatre
presentations

I
heard
a
story



*a musical
storytelling
show for the
whole family*

*conceived and
performed by
thom currie*

*songs by
steve bloom
&
thom currie*

Study Guide



I heard a story



Conceived and Performed By Thom Currie

Directed By Warden Bémont

Songs By Steve Bloom & Thom Currie

Musical Arrangements By Steve Bloom & Craig Wingrove

Puppets

“Uncle” and “Ti-Jean’s Wife”
courtesy of
WaterWood Theatre Projects

“Weasel”, “Baker” and “TomCat”
by Barbara Cassidy and
Ted Heeley

Really Little Theatre is a professional touring theatre company that was formed in 1991, devoted to producing high quality musical theatre for young children. Working with only professional playwrights, composers, lyricists, choreographers, actors, designers and technicians, Really Little Theatre is committed to keeping its standards top-notch. It is this commitment that ensures that our audiences are on the receiving end of a magical experience.

This Study Guide was developed to enhance a live performance for Junior Kindergarten through Grade 3. While every attempt was made to create a broad scoped guide, every activity will not be suitable for each grade level.

About The Show

I Heard A Story is best described as a storytelling show with puppets and music. A single performer tells three stories from around the world, using multiple puppets, songs and mime to get the tales across. Peppered with audience participation, songs and comedy ***I Heard A Story*** is recommended for Junior Kindergarten to Grade 3, and has been performed at theatres and festivals across Canada.

Before The Performance

I Heard A Story is designed to take place in a clear, open area, either on the floor with the audience or on a clear stage. The students should be seated with the youngest closest to the performance area. If the performance is taking place on the gymnasium floor, masking tape will be used to mark off the performance area and the front row of the audience. Once all the classes have arrived, a teacher/supervisor should settle them, reminding them of “good audience behaviour.” Once the audience is quiet, the performance will begin.

The Performance

The storyteller will enter from behind the audience, and make his way to the front. He will establish himself at the front, coach the audience in some of the upcoming participation and lead them in a song. At the end of the song, he will begin telling stories.

The Stories

The Truthful Peasant

A folktale from Italy. A young man who is well known for always telling the truth comes to the attention of the King, who hires him to be his shepherd. A jealous member of the Kings' Court makes a bet with the King that the young peasant will eventually tell a lie. The jealous man goes to great lengths to make the young man lie to the King, but when it comes right down to it, the young man tells the truth. This simple story explores themes of trust and honesty, greed and retribution.

Do You Want To Buy A Cow?

A Canadian folktale that explores themes of trust and equity, honesty and need. Ti-Jean, a poor and simple farmer, must sell his cow in order to make ends meet. On his way to town, he runs into the local mayor, to whom he sells the cow. He then runs into the baker, who, after some confusion, also gives Ti-Jean money for the cow. Upon realising his mistake, Ti-Jean and his wife determine that if Ti-Jean is able to convince the townspeople that he is not in his right mind, he might be able to keep all the money he has received, and incur no punishment for selling his cow to more than one person. With the audiences' help, Ti-Jean convinces everyone, including his wife, that he is not to blame if others talk and think faster than he does.

Tom-Cat Purraway

A Russian story, versions of which turn up in many different cultures. A poor wood cutter discovers a magical cat living in a tree. The cat grants him wishes in exchange for sparing his home. The wood cutter's sister makes outlandish and extravagant demands on the cat, until he finally punishes her by taking away everything she has wished for. This version of *The Fisherman & His Wife* explores themes of greed and equity.

After The Show

At the end of the performance, the storyteller will be happy to lead a brief question and answer period.

Pre-Program Preparation

Music In Theatre

I Heard A Story is a storytelling play with music. The songs in a musical are used to express emotion, further the plot, and add a little pizzazz to the show. Some of the following suggestions will help prepare the students for the performance by making them aware of the role of music in storytelling and theatre.

Discussion

Ask the students to think about their favourite television shows. Do these shows use music? How is background music used to illustrate or punctuate the story? Ask the students to consider any music videos that they might have seen. Does the video tell a story? How does the music determine the kind of story the video is telling?

Ask them to think of or sing some songs they might know. What is the song saying? Is it a sad or a happy song?

Ask the students if they have ever seen a musical play. Or can they name a movie or a play in which songs are used to tell the story or express emotion? (*Beauty And The Beast, Aladdin, The Little Mermaid, Pocahontas, Phantom Of The Opera, Les Miserables, Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* are some of the answers to look for)

Fairytales, Folktales

Read some different folk-tales from different parts of the world. There are many different versions of the same stories found all over the world, sometimes under different titles or with slight alterations to suit locale and culture. Have the students try to point out differences among the different versions.

Discussion

Ask the students what are some common objects that often appear in fairytales/ folktales? Who are some familiar characters in folk/fairytales? (king/queen, prince/princess, peasant boy/girl, man and wife, magical characters.) What are common settings for some familiar tales? (forest, poor cottage, castle, mountain, town square, etc.) What are some common endings? (a marriage, a wish coming true, finding home, finding true happiness, etc.)

Post Program Enrichment

I Heard A Story presents some folk-tales from around the world. The students may know some of these stories while others may be less familiar. Some of the themes presented over the course of the play are: friendship, sharing, deceit, honesty, prejudice, equity, and self-examination. The following are some discussions and activities that might be used after the performance.

Discussions

Folk Tales

Ask the students if they know any stories that have several different versions, based on cultures and geography. What stories can be found in many different cultures under different names? (*TomCat Purraway* is the Russian version of *The Fisherman & his Wife*, *Mollyndroat* is the Welsh version of *Rumpelstiltskin*, *Nail Soup* is the Swedish version of *Stone Soup*, etc.) What elements in the stories are familiar from other stories? (Ti-Jean must sell his cow, like Jack & The Beanstalk; the cottager meets TomCat Purraway in a magical forest, etc.)

Setting

Where did these stories take place? How did they show the different locations? Did the storyteller “paint a picture” in your mind of how it looked? What descriptions were given?

Props & Costumes

What are some of the objects that were used in the play to help create a character or an action? In the first tale, the storyteller used a hat to illustrate both the King and the Truthful Peasant. How did you know what the hat was supposed to be? (When he wore the hat upside-down, he was the King. What do you think is the hardest part about using props in this way?)

Puppets

Lots of puppets were used in the show, portraying different characters. Which was your favourite, and why?

Activities

Storytelling

Have the students individually relate a story that they know off by heart (The Three Little Pigs, Jack And The Beanstalk, Cinderella, etc.). Allow them to put their own little twists on the tales, without altering the basic structure of the original story. In a big circle, have the entire class relate one story that they all know. Each person in the group is to add one sentence or one element to the tale, building onto the story. This activity stimulates the students to work as a group toward one common goal: the completion of the story.

Tableau Stories

The students decide on a sequence of four tableaux that would tell a well-known story. They practice performing these tableaux in sequence, so that they tell the story. They may add some dialogue by having a narrator or by having one character speak during each tableau. The groups perform the tableau stories for each other.

Pass The Object

The class sits in a circle. The Teacher begins by using an object, such as a marker, as something completely different. (e.g. uses it as if it is a toothbrush.) The class guesses what the teacher is miming. The teacher then passes the marker to the student on the left, who uses the marker as if it is something else. Each time the class guesses what it is. (**Hint:** Tell children that it is okay to mime the same object as someone else, since they might do it differently. Also tell them it is okay to pass if they are stuck for an idea. This way the game doesn't get bogged down and the shy or reluctant child doesn't get discouraged)

Draw A Picture

Students draw one of the illustrations for the story and print the narration that accompanies it. Put the pictures together to create a class book.

Colouring Page, Crossword Puzzle, Word Search & Word Match

Puppetry

All of the puppets used in *I Heard A Story* were hand-made. Have the students create their own puppets. The simplest puppets may be created using paper bags and by having the students draw and paste features onto them. Once made, have the students create their own stories using their puppets.

Letter Writing

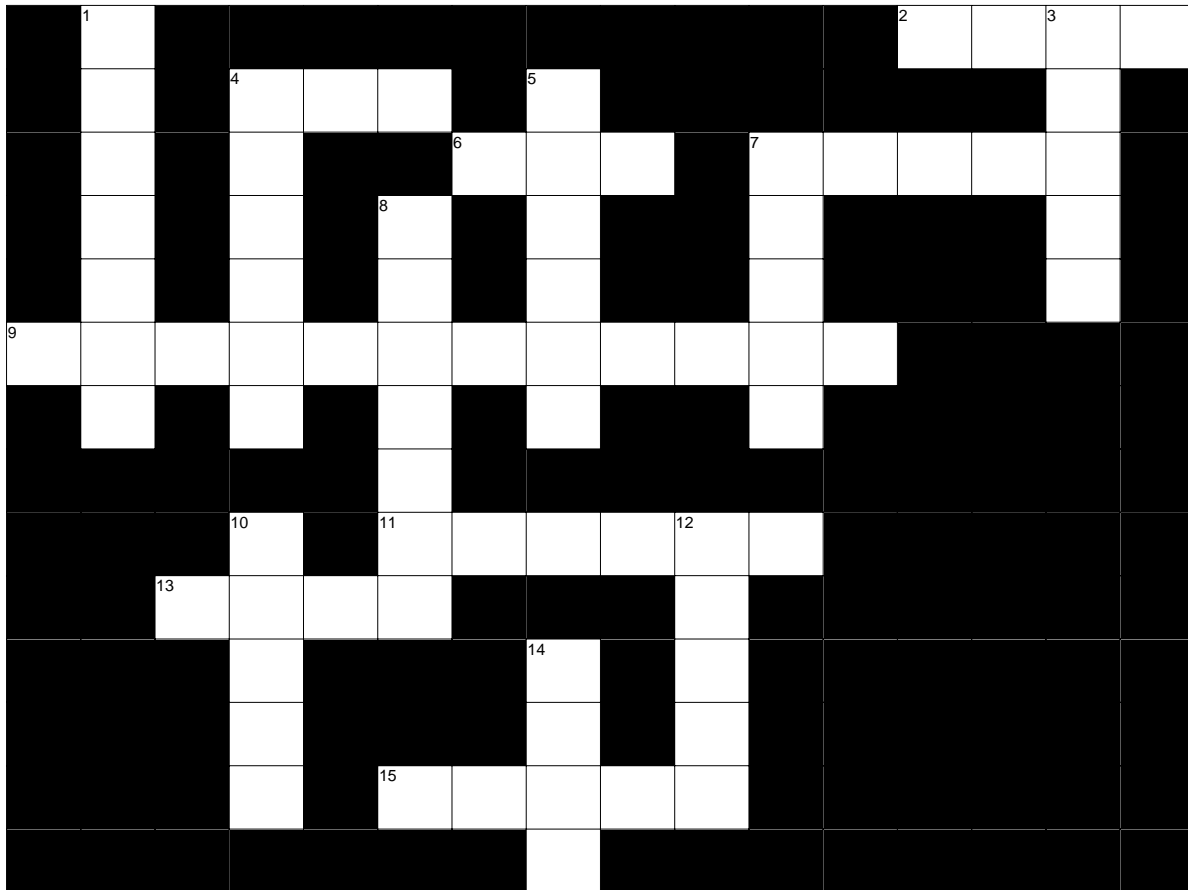
Write and mail a class letter to the acting company c/o Really Little Theatre, 1180 Victoria Park Avenue, # 83009, Toronto, Ontario, M4B 3N2. Higher grades may send individual letters.

Really Little T h e a t r e



Colouring Page

I Heard A Story



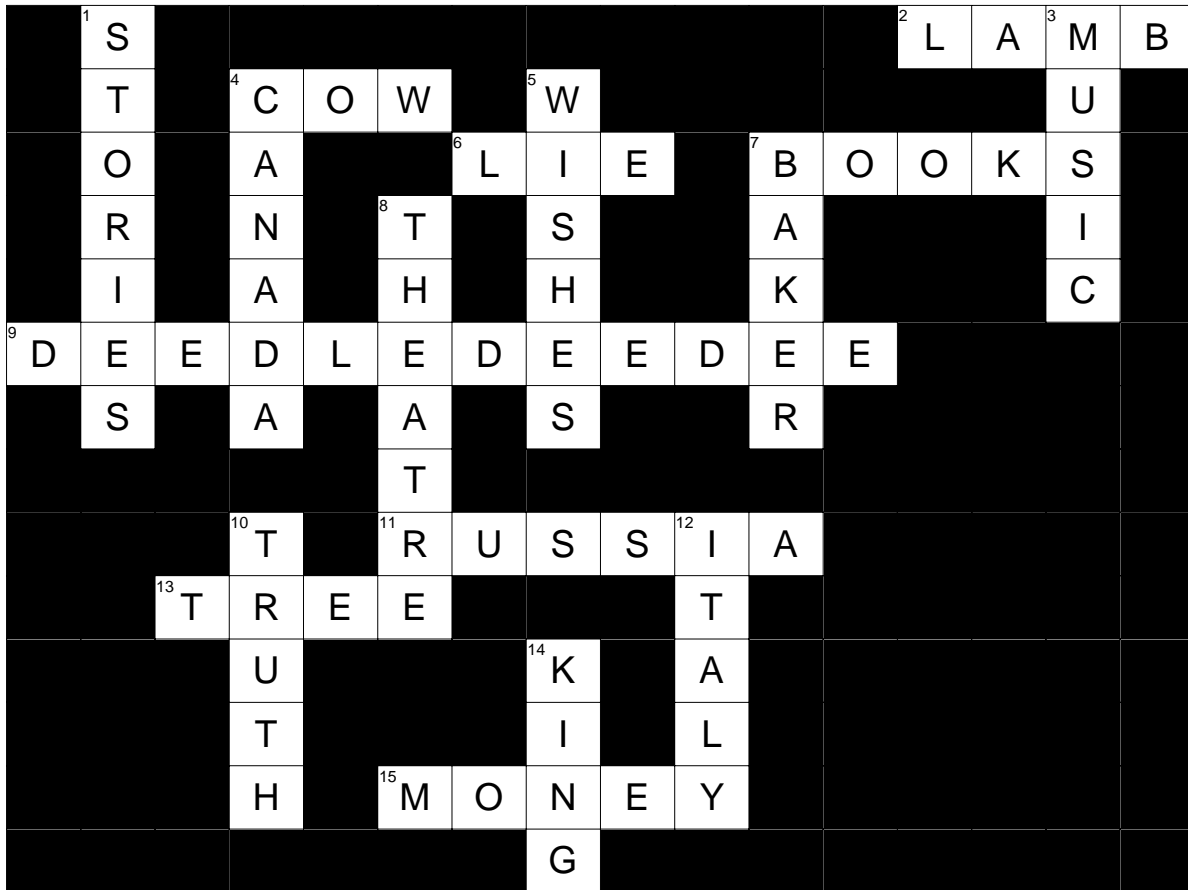
ACROSS

2. A baby sheep.
 4. Ti-Jean wanted to sell his _____.
 She goes "moo".
 6. The Weasel tried to make the peasant tell a _____; Fib
 7. You can read stories in these. They have pages.
 9. The song that Ti-Jean heard
 11. TomCat Purraway is a story from this nation.
 13. TomCat Purraway lived in one of these. It has leaves and bark.
15. The Uncle wished he had lots of this. Cash.

DOWN

1. Tales and fables told around the world. You read them in books.
 3. Ti-Jean pretended to hear _____ . A tune.
 4. Ti-Jean is a tale from _____; You live in this country.
 5. TomCat Purraway granted these. Genies grant them, too.
 7. He or she bakes bread and cakes.
 8. Where you go to see a play or a movie.
10. The Peasant always told the _____ . Not a lie.
 12. The Truthful Peasant is told in this country. Pizza comes from here.
 14. The Truthful Peasant worked for the _____;

I Heard A Story



ACROSS

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 She goes "moo".
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I Heard A Story

T O M C A T P U R R A W A Y V
D E E D L E D E E D E E M W V
H A P P I N E S S T O R I E S
C O T T A G E R H O N E S T Y
P U P P E T S G R E E D Y H A
B A K E R U S S I A L M J E D
I T A L Y D Y Z C A N A D A V
M U S I C W I S H E S Y T T Q
I N U E O T I J E A N O E R S
H C E S W W E A S E L R Z E X
C L K I N G X A F T A V Y E R
D E L U F R P E B G M G O E I
T Y X V A K U G J M B R X C R
T R U T H F U L P E A S A N T
R G F G U V J U W M L F O X I

Baker
Canada
Cottager
Cow
Deedledee
Greedy
Happiness
Honesty
Italy

King
Lamb
Lies
Mayor
Music
Puppets
Riches
Russia
Stories

Theatre
TiJean
TomCatPurraway
Tree
TruthfulPeasant
Uncle
Weasel
Wishes

I Heard A Story

T O M C A T P U R R A W A Y V
 D E E D L E D E E D E E M W V
 H A P P I N E S S T O R I E S
 C O T T A G E R H O N E S T Y
 P U P P E T S G R E E D Y H A
 B A K E R U S S I A L M J E D
 I T A L Y D Y Z C A N A D A V
 M U S I C W I S H E S Y T T Q
 I N U E O T I J E A N O E R S
 H C E S W W E A S E L R Z E X
 C L K I N G X A F T A V Y E R
 D E L U F R P E B G M G O E I
 T Y X V A K U G J M B R X C R
 T R U T H F U L P E A S A N T
 R G F G U V J U W M L F O X I

Baker

Canada

Cottager

Cow

Deedledee

Greedy

Happiness

Honesty

Italy

King

Lamb

Lies

Mayor

Music

Puppets

Riches

Russia

Stories

Theatre

TiJean

TomCatPurraway

Tree

TruthfulPeasant

Uncle

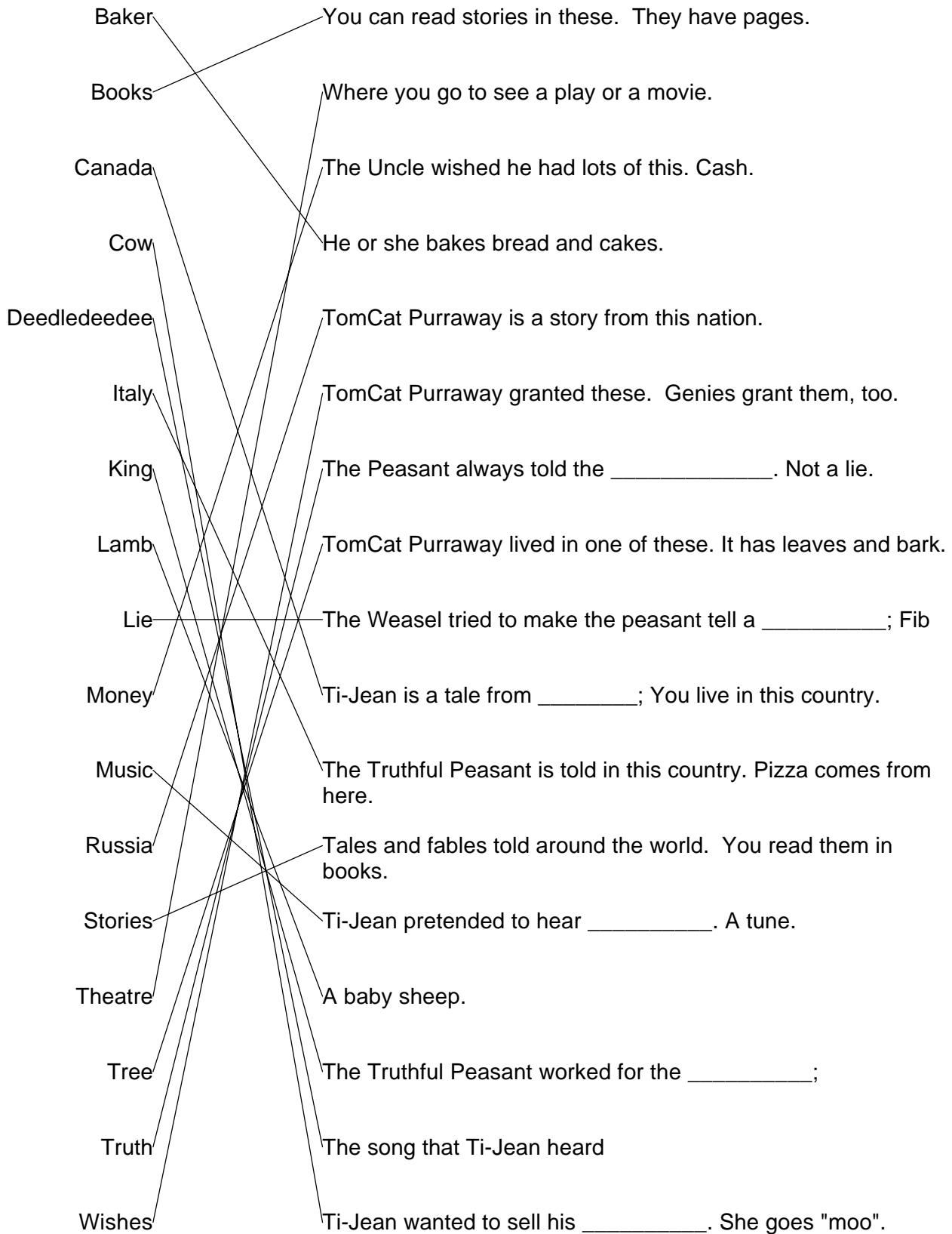
Weasel

Wishes

I Heard A Story

Baker	You can read stories in these. They have pages.
Books	Where you go to see a play or a movie.
Canada	The Uncle wished he had lots of this. Cash.
Cow	He or she bakes bread and cakes.
Deedledeedee	TomCat Purraway is a story from this nation.
Italy	TomCat Purraway granted these. Genies grant them, too.
King	The Peasant always told the _____. Not a lie.
Lamb	TomCat Purraway lived in one of these. It has leaves and bark.
Lie	The Weasel tried to make the peasant tell a _____; Fib
Money	Ti-Jean is a tale from _____; You live in this country.
Music	The Truthful Peasant is told in this country. Pizza comes from here.
Russia	Tales and fables told around the world. You read them in books.
Stories	Ti-Jean pretended to hear _____. A tune.
Theatre	A baby sheep.
Tree	The Truthful Peasant worked for the _____;
Truth	The song that Ti-Jean heard
Wishes	Ti-Jean wanted to sell his _____. She goes "moo".

I Heard A Story



About Really Little Theatre



Rock 'N' Fables

Really Little Theatre is a professional theatre for young audiences which has been thrilling young audiences and their families since 1991. It is their unique blend of theatre, music, storytelling, dance, puppetry, mime and comedy that has made them a very popular choice for schools and theatres not only in Canada, but abroad as well.

Under the Artistic Directorship of Thom Currie, Really Little Theatre has emerged as one of the most popular touring theatres in Ontario, their performances thrilling student and family audiences from Cornwall to Kenora and from Ottawa to Windsor. Represented in Ontario schools by the prestigious Prologue To The Performing Arts, Really Little Theatre is one of the busiest touring theatres in the province, routinely doing over two hundred and fifty shows in a school year.



I Heard A Story

Their hit shows over the years have included "Best", *Tall Tales*, *The Wish*, *Travellin' The World*, *Charlie's Friends*, *MORE!*, *World Travellin'*, *The Holiday Dream*, *Tales of Ti-Jean*, *Travellin' Stories*, *I Heard A Story* and the pop-opera *Rock 'N' Fables*. In addition to touring across Canada, Really Little Theatre has done three international tours of

Travellin' The World, performing in theatres and schools in France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg and Germany. Their musical recording, *Show (And Tell) Tunes* was such a hit that it led to the forming of the Show & Tell Band, touring Ontario from 1995-1998.



Tales of Ti-Jean



Tall Tales



Rock 'N' Fables

In 1995, Really Little Theatre moved into television with TV versions of *Charlie's Friends* and *The Wish*, the latter of which was picked up and broadcast nationally by Vision TV. *Charlie's Friends* is currently in development as a live action series for children.

I heard a story the storyteller with the puppets

Thom Currie



Thom Currie has enjoyed a varied career as an actor, director, playwright and producer. Born in New York, he has appeared on stage on both sides of the Atlantic, performing in cities such as Paris, London, Amsterdam, Frankfurt and Brussels. Since settling in Toronto, Thom has worked steadily in theatre, film and television, both in English and in French. Since 1991, Thom has toiled as Artistic Director for Really Little Theatre, serving as playwright and lyricist for several works for young audiences, including *Tall Tales*, *The Wish*, *MORE!*, *The Holiday Dream*, and *Charlie's Friends*. He also wrote the libretto for the children's pop opera, *Rock 'N' Fables*, and television adaptations of *The Wish* and *Charlie's Friends*. Thom collaborated on the acclaimed trio of storytelling musicals, *Travellin' The World*, *World Travellin'* and

Travellin' Stories, which have enjoyed several successful European tours. In the spring of 1995, Thom co-produced an album of children's music, *Show (And Tell) Tunes: A Celebration of the Music of The Really Little Theatre Co.*, and is currently working on a solo album, as well as a recorded version of *Rock 'N' Fables*.

Thom also enjoys performing for adult audiences, having worked as an actor in theatres across Canada, including Victoria Playhouse Petrolia, Georgian Theatre Festival, Stage West (Calgary and Mississauga), Theatre In The Park and The Showboat Festival Theatre, among many others.

Really Little Theatre

I heard a story

TECHNICAL INFORMATION SHEET

please read carefully!

NUMBER IN COMPANY: 1

Company Manager: Thom Currie

ARRIVAL & SET UP

- ✓ The company will arrive **1 hour** prior to the performance time to set up.
- ✓ Please assign a staff member to greet the performer(s) when they arrive, to direct them to the nearest loading area, to answer any questions they may have and to inform them when all the audience is seated and the performance may begin.

FACILITIES & REQUIREMENTS

- ✓ The performance is designed to take place in a **clear, clean area on the floor.**
- ✓ One electrical outlet close to the performance area is required.
- ✓ All lights in the performance area should remain on for the entire performance, as no theatrical lighting will be used.
- ✓ Please have bells, P.A. systems and noisy ventilation systems that will disrupt the performance turned off during the show and discussion period.
- ✓ Due to copyright regulations, photographs, audio or video recording devices are not permitted.

SEATING

- ✓ The audience should be seated on the floor and should not exceed 200.

PROGRAM LENGTH

- ✓ The performance is approximately 45 minutes in length, followed by a short question and answer period.

AFTER THE SHOW

- ✓ The company will require **½-hour** following the show to strike the set and load out. Please ensure that no activities are scheduled for the performance area during this time.

QUESTIONS

- ✓ If you have any questions regarding the technical requirements or program, please call the **Really Little Theatre Office** at 416 423 9389.