

IDEAS FOR PREPARATION AND CURRICULUM LINKS

Here are some ideas for activities you might like to explore with your class before the performance. They can be adapted according to the age and interests of the children, and are intended as starting points for discussion and creativity.

1. The Emperor's Nightingale: The Story

What can you find out about the story and its author, Hans Christian Andersen?

Where and when did he live? What do we know about him, what other well-known stories has he written?

2. Creative Work and Curriculum Links

English • Art • Geography • Music • Drama

Choose a scene from *The Emperor's Nightingale* and explore it together.

What happens in the story? Who are the characters? How do you think they are feeling?

- Write your own story for the nightingale to tell the Emperor. It could be about another country, another time or an imaginary world.
- Draw or paint your own magical bird. What would it look like? What would its special song sound like?
- Act out a scene from the story. What would the Emperor, the nightingale and the mechanical bird say and do?
- Create music or sounds to accompany the story. What might a bird sound like? How could music create a particular mood or represent different characters?

You could even make your own bird from card and bring it along to the performance to become one of the nightingale's friends!

3. Meet the Composers

The performance features music by a number of great composers, including Astor Piazzolla, Camille Saint-Saëns, J. S. Bach, Francis Poulenc and Olivier Messiaen.

What can you find out about them?

- When and where were they born?
- What was life like when they were growing up?

- Can you name any of their works?
- What instruments did they write for?
- Can you find and listen to one of their pieces?
- How would you describe the music? Is it fast or slow, loud or quiet, playful, dramatic, mysterious or peaceful?
- Olivier Messiaen was fascinated by birds and used birdsong as inspiration for his music. Can you find out more about this?
- Astor Piazzolla was from Argentina. Where is Argentina, and what can you discover about its music and traditions?
- What can you discover about traditional Chinese music and instruments? Where is China on the map, and what can you find out about its history and culture?
- The performance also explores music from Japan and the story of Syrinx from Greek mythology. What can you find out about these different musical and cultural traditions?

4. Material for class discussion

Why do you think the Emperor is so fascinated by the mechanical nightingale? What is special about the real nightingale?

Explore some of the messages in the story. What does it tell us about nature, beauty and the things that cannot easily be replaced by technology?