

The First Music

based on the story by Dylan Pritchett

set to music by Sheena Phillips

for treble voice chorus (SSA divisi), narrators, flute, and percussion
(maracas, castanets, wood block, congas, djembe or bass drum,
xylophone, and optional slide whistle)

commissioned by the Wellington School, Columbus, Ohio,
for the 6th grade chorus, director Lisa Springer

duration c. 6:00

perusal score
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The First Music

In the beginning, the African forest had many sounds.

Hyena yelped.

Owl hooted.

Buffalo groaned.

Parrot screeched.

Monkey chattered.

Crocodile snorted.

pa da da pa da pa da

Only the frogs were silent.

Suddenly, a noise like thunder rolled through the air.

BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM pa da da BOOM

The animals stopped talking.

Hyena peered over the grass.

Buffalo raised his head from the stream.

Parrot looked from side to side.

Monkey leapt from tree to tree.

Monkey: *Who made that loud noise?*

Elephant: *Me! I stubbed my foot on this hollow log.*

BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM pa da da BOOM

I like that sound!

Monkey: *It makes me feel like moving!*

Monkey began to sway back and forth.

The leaves rustled as they rubbed together.

Shh ka shh! Shh ka shh! Shh ka shh! Shh ka shh!

Elephant pounded while monkey danced.

Crocodile now got out of the water.

Crane flew down and perched on his back.

Crocodile and crane: *This looks like fun, and it sounds like fun!*

Crane danced, crocodile rocked.

Crane lost her balance and slid!

Her claws tinkled on Crocodile's scales!

Skee de lee kee key key!

Crocodile: *Hey, that tickles!*

Elephant beat. Monkey danced. Crane played. Hyena yelped.

ooh-woh ooh-woh ooh-woh ooh-woh

Owl whooed. Buffalo bellowed. Parrot screeched.

But the frogs kept silent.

King Frog: *We have short legs and cannot dance.
We have short hands and cannot play
All we can do is watch and listen.*

For six days of dancing and prancing, the frogs remained silent.
They watched. They listened. They pondered.
At dawn on the seventh day, all was quiet. The animals rested in their homes.

Suddenly, from the pond, a new sound echoed through the forest.

reep reep ree, reep reep ree, reep-reep, reep-reep, ree

Crocodile: *What is that?*

On a stage of lily-pads, the frogs were singing!

Monkey: *We thought frogs could only watch and listen! Keep up that beat!*

King Frog: *I guess everyone has something to add when it comes to making music.*

*ooh-woh shh ka shh reep reep ree skee de lee kee key key
BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM pa da da BOOM*

Based on the story *The First Music* by Dylan Pritchett (adaptations by the composer)

Notes for Performers

The chorus plays the part of the forest animals. At the beginning, different animal sounds are gradually introduced, but everyone has their own rhythm and pitch. You will create a “forest soundscape” – but it won’t yet sound very much like music because there will be no steady beat, and no clear center of pitch or melody.

In the second section, starting at bar 24, the animals gradually discover rhythm and melody. You will build up a piece of music, with eight (!) different ostinatos combining together (4 percussion ostinatos, 1 vocal percussion, and 3 sung).

I hope you will also be able to persuade the audience to join in the final section with clapping and stamping, to make a total of 10 different strands in the music.

Animal sounds

The animal sounds in the piece are based on real recordings. Listen and see if you can create some good imitations, especially for the opening section of the piece. Remember, though, frogs are silent at the start of the story!

Hyena

<http://www.honolulu zoo.org/sounds/hyena.aiff>

Buffalo

Sound like very low pitch cow moos

http://www.soundboard.com/sb/ Buffalo_Bison_Sounds.aspx

For a “buffalo groan”, listen to the longer sounds of number 2, African Buffalo

African Eagle-Owl

<http://www.owlpages.com/sounds/Bubo-africanus-1.mp3>

African Grey Parrot

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Grey_Parrot#Noises

Monkeys (various)

<http://www.junglewalk.com/popup.asp?type=a&AnimalAudioID=10324>

Listen to the female chirps and male hacks (links about half way down the page)

<http://www.indiana.edu/~primate/stuff/audio/chirp.aif>

<http://www.indiana.edu/~primate/stuff/audio/whoop.aif>

http://www.honolulu zoo.org/sounds/colobus_roar.aiff

Crocodile

http://www.soundboard.com/sb/Crocodile_sounds_audio.aspx

Listen to recording number 4

African Frogs (various)

http://amphibiaweb.org/sounds/Phrynomantis_microps.mp3

http://amphibiaweb.org/sounds/Kassina_cassinoides.mp3

Percussion parts

The drum and xylophone parts give voice to the “pa da da” and “BOOM” sounds in the story.

- the bass drum or djembe plays the part of the BOOM.
- the low conga plays both “pa” and “BOOM”, and the high conga plays “da”. Anything that falls on the beat is a “BOOM”.

So for example, in bar 35, the congas are saying:

BOOM pa da da BOOM pa da BOOM pa da da BOOM pa da

- the xylophone introduces the idea of the musical crocodile scales (bar 46), and then plays the same high-low patterns as the congas. As it's a pitched instrument, it helps the singers stay in tune.
- the other percussion plays the part of rustling leaves (maracas), monkey chitters (castanets), general monkey excitement (wood block), and slipping crane (slide whistle).

Narrators

The narrators are very important, and should be strong, clear, speakers. If possible, they should use microphones, so they can be heard over the music. If you use just one narrator, then you will need to add phrases such as “said Monkey”, or “Elephant said...”, to make clear who is speaking at any time.

The narrator parts are written down in chunks of one or two measures at a time. Use a free spoken rhythm, with lots of expression, and finish each group of words within the measure (or two measures) that they are attached to.

The number of noteheads for each chunk of narration is roughly equal to the number of beats of music for that chunk.

Fermata indicate places where a pause is effective, and/or where the narrator may take a little longer than the number of beats indicated to finish that section.

mp3 files

I have made mp3 files of the narration, and of some of the animal sounds, to give you an idea of how I imagined them. You can of course do things differently in your own performance.

I hope you enjoy both the story and the music!

Sheena Phillips
December 2011

The First Music

based on the story by Dylan Pritchett

Sheena Phillips

For the beginning, divide the singers into five groups (hyenas, owls, buffalo, parrots, crocodiles). You also need maracas, castanets (monkey), woodblock, and congas.

♩ = 90

Principal narrator

Narrators

In the beginning, the African forest had many sounds.

flute

hyenas

parrots

owls

crocodiles

buffalo

percussion

maracas

congas

high

low

bass drum / djembe

xylophone

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of 90 beats per minute. It consists of ten staves. The top staff is for the Principal Narrator, with lyrics: "In the beginning, the African forest had many sounds." Below this are staves for flute, hyenas, parrots, owls, crocodiles, and buffalo, each with a whole rest in every measure. The percussion section includes maracas (with a wavy line indicating a tremolo), congas (with high and low notes and a wavy line), bass drum / djembe (with a whole rest in every measure), and xylophone (with a whole rest in every measure).

This section thru bar 23 is not in strict time. Dotted lines indicate things that cue off each other. Note that buffalo, parrot, monkey and crocodile start making noises as soon as they are mentioned.

narr. Hyena yelped. Owl hooted.

hyenas ooh - woh (pitches are approximate) keep repeating this, or other hyena calls, in your own time

parrots

owls ooh ooh .oo.oo ooh (slanted lines mean end the hoot with a falling pitch)

crocodiles

buffalo

perc. keep repeating bursts of maraca shakes to mimic cicadas and small creatures rustling in the forest

congas p keep repeating these distant footstep patterns, some longer, some shorter, in your own time

The musical score consists of seven staves. The top staff is for the narrator, with two cues: 'Hyena yelped.' and 'Owl hooted.'. The hyenas staff shows a call 'ooh - woh' with a glissando line and a note that 'pitches are approximate'. A box instructs to 'keep repeating this, or other hyena calls, in your own time'. The owls staff shows two 'ooh' calls followed by a hoot pattern '.oo.oo ooh', with a note that 'slanted lines mean end the hoot with a falling pitch'. The percussion section includes maraca shakes for 'perc.' and a conga pattern for 'congas' marked with a piano 'p' dynamic. A box instructs to 'keep repeating these distant footstep patterns, some longer, some shorter, in your own time'. A large 'sample' watermark is overlaid on the score.

narrator gets louder as the background noise increases

12

narr.

Buffalo groaned.

Parrot screeched.

Monkey chittered.

hyenas

ooh - woh

hyena calls continue

parrots

aw (pitches are approximate)

keep repeating this, or other parrot calls or squawks, in your own time

owls

ooh ooh .oo .oo ooh

keep repeating this, or other owl hoots, in your own time

crocodiles

buffalo

Glissando

keep repeating this, or other low nasal buffalo noises, in your own time

aaanngg....(any low pitches)

perc.

maraca shakes continue

monkey

add castanet roll "chitters", in your own time; keep the maracas going too

castanets

congas

p

conga footstep patterns continue, at random intervals

p

about 10 seconds of the full ensemble of sounds

18

narr. Crocodile snorted. Only the frogs were silent. *p*

hyenas ooh - woh hyena calls continue *all STOP (woodblock cue)*

parrots aw parrot calls and squawks continue *all STOP (woodblock cue)*

owls ooh ooh .oo .oo ooh etc. *all STOP (woodblock cue)*

crocodiles wraa keep making very low, raspy, snarly crocodile noises, in your own time *all STOP (woodblock cue)*

buffalo buffalo noises continue *all STOP (woodblock cue)*

perc. maraca shakes and castanet chitters continue woodblock *f*

congas conga footstep patterns continue *all STOP (woodblock cue)* *p*

the first music 5

In this second part of the piece, divide the singers into three groups: Group A (skee de lee), Group B (hyenas), Group C (shh ka shh). At bar 79, have most singers from Group C switch to become Group D (frogs) - just leave a few good vocal percussionists in Group C to continue the 'shh ka shh'.

You also need clear speaking voices for Monkey, Elephant, Crocodile, Crane, and King Frog (but these can optionally all be spoken by the Principal Narrator). And a solo Parrot squawk.

♩ = 72

24 *f*

narr. Suddenly, a noise like thunder rolled through the air. The animals stopped talking. Hyena peered over the grass. Buffalo raised his head from the stream.

A

B

C

D

congas

bass/djembe

29

narr. Parrot looked from side to side. Monkey leapt from tree to tree. Who made that loud noise? Me! I stubbed my foot on this hollow log.

Monkey narrator Elephant narrator

the first music 6

33

narr. Elephant narrator Monkey narrator

I like that sound! It makes me feel like moving!

start once narration is finished

mf

mp

congas

bass/djembe

37 Principal narrator

narr. Monkey began to sway back and forth. The leaves rustled as they rubbed together. Elephant pounded while Monkey danced.

mf

C shh ka shh shh ka shh

perc. maracas

congas

bass/djembe

41 Principal narrator with growing excitement Crocodile & Crane narrators Principal narrator

narr. Crocodile now got out of the water. Crane flew down and perched on his back. This looks like fun and it sounds like fun! Crane danced, crocodile rocked.

C shh ka shh shh ka shh etc.

perc.

congas

bass/djembe

mf

the first music 7

45

narr. *Crocodile narrator*

Crane lost her balance and slid! Her claws tinkled on Crocodile's scales! Hey, that tickles!

A *mf*

skee de leekee key key!

C

shh ka shh shhka shh etc.

perc.

congas

bass/djembe

xyl.

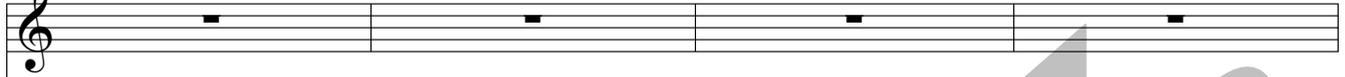
The musical score is arranged in five systems. The first system is for the narrator, with lyrics: 'Crane lost her balance and slid! Her claws tinkled on Crocodile's scales! Hey, that tickles!'. The second system is for vocalists A and C. Vocalist A has lyrics 'skee de leekee key key!' with a dynamic marking of *mf*. Vocalist C has lyrics 'shh ka shh shhka shh etc.'. The third system is for percussion, including perc., congas, bass/djembe, and xylophone. The xylophone part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. There are two callout boxes at the bottom of the page.

optional: add descending slide whistle sound here!

Note: the "skee de lee" line always comes in on a bar with a **single** bass drum note, not one with 4 bass drum notes.

49

narr.



A single staff with a treble clef and four measures, each containing a whole rest.

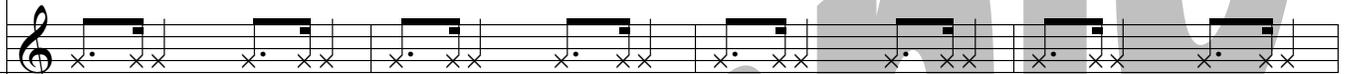
A



A single staff with a treble clef containing a melody of eighth and sixteenth notes. Below the staff are the lyrics: "ski de li ki k k ski de li ki k k ski de li ki k k ski de li ki k k".

ski de li ki k k
(short-hand spelling to save space!)

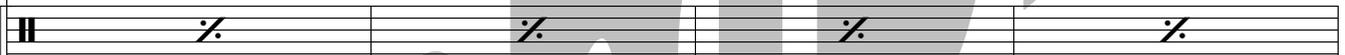
C



A single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains rhythmic notation for cymbals, consisting of eighth and sixteenth notes with 'x' marks above them.

shh ka shh shh ka shh etc.

perc.



A single staff with a percussion clef and four measures, each containing a slash mark indicating a percussive sound.

congas



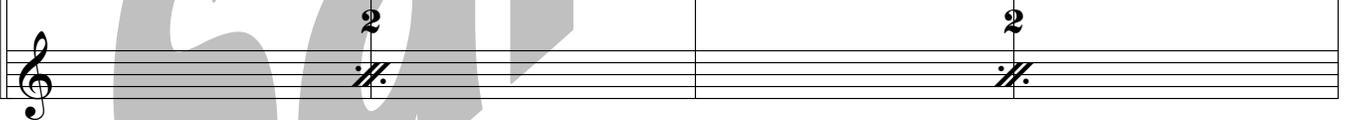
A single staff with a percussion clef and four measures, each containing a slash mark indicating a percussive sound.

bass/
djembe



A single staff with a percussion clef and four measures. The first and third measures have a slash mark with an accent above it. The second and fourth measures have a slash mark with a '2' above it and an accent above it.

xyl.



A single staff with a treble clef and four measures. The first and third measures have a slash mark with an accent above it. The second and fourth measures have a slash mark with a '2' above it and an accent above it.

53

narr.

A

ski de li ki k k ski de li ki k k ski de li ki k k ski de li ki k k

B

mf ooh - woh ooh - woh ooh - woh ooh - woh

C

shh ka shh shh ka shh etc.

(optional) have one or two people add some buffalo bellows and parrot screeches

perc.

congas

bass/
djembe

xyl.

57 Principal narrator (on repeat only)

narr. Elephant beat. Monkey danced. Crane played. Hyena yelped. Owl whooped. Buffalo bellowed.

fl. (owl theme)

A ski de li ki k k ski de li ki k k ski de li ki k k

B ooh - - - woh ooh - - - woh ooh - - - woh

C shh ka shh shh ka shh etc.

perc.

congas

bass/
djembe

xyl.

have one person do a parrot screech right here!

60

narr. *Glissando*
Parrot screeched. AWW! *p* But the frogs kept silent. Principal narrator

fl.

A
ski de li ki k k

B *Glissando*
ooh - - - woh

C *p*
shh ka shh shh ka shh etc.

perc. *p*

congas *tacet*

bass/djembe *tacet*

xyl. *tacet*

63 King Frog

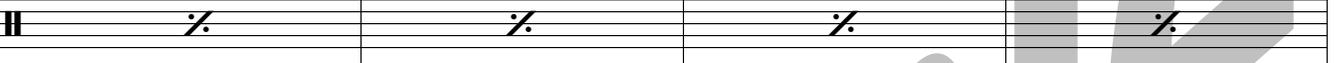
King Frog looks glum

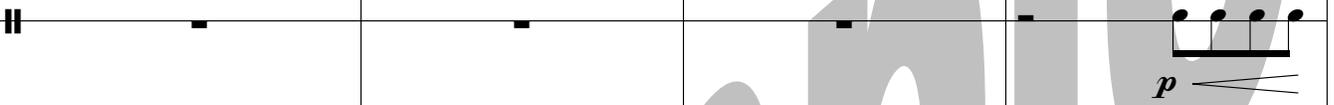
narr. 

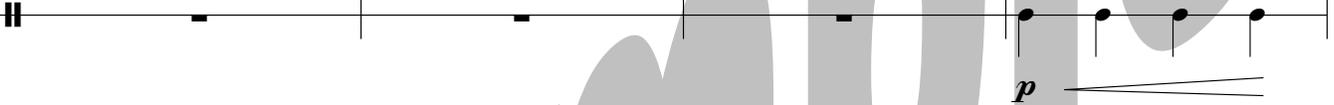
We have short legs and cannot dance. We have short hands and cannot play. All we can do is watch and listen *Everyone else jumps back into happily making music*

C 

shh ka shh shh ka shh etc.

perc. 

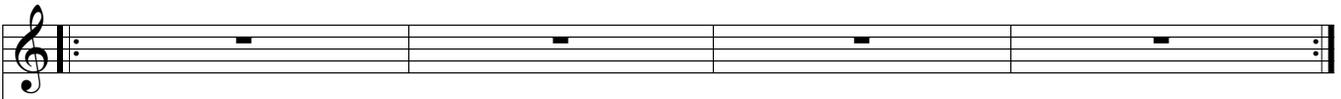
congas 

bass/djembe 

sample

67

narr.



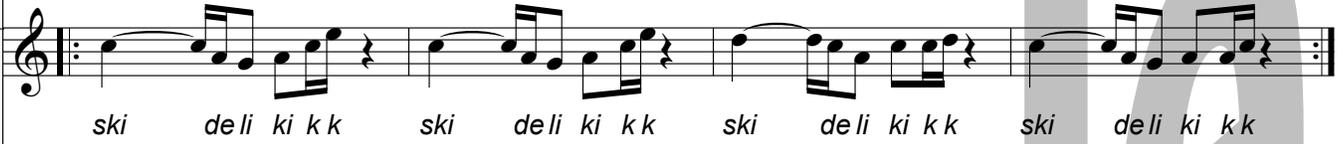
A musical staff for the narrator, containing four measures of whole rests.

fl.



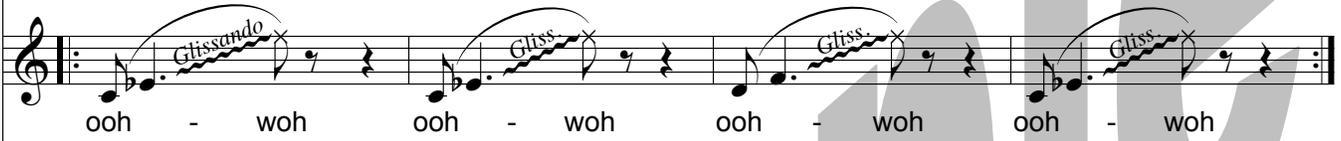
A musical staff for the flute, starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic. It features eighth-note patterns with accents and slurs. The instruction "repeat 8va ad lib" is written above the staff.

A



A vocal staff with lyrics: "ski deli ki k k ski deli ki k k ski deli ki k k ski deli ki k k". The notes are eighth notes with slurs.

B



A vocal staff with lyrics: "ooh - woh ooh - woh ooh - woh ooh - woh". The notes are eighth notes with slurs and "Glissando" markings above them.

C



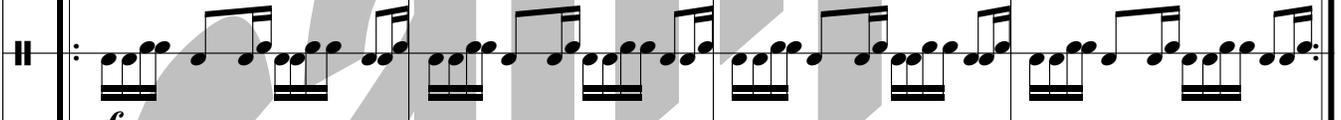
A vocal staff with lyrics: "shh ka shh shh ka shh". The notes are eighth notes with slurs.

perc.



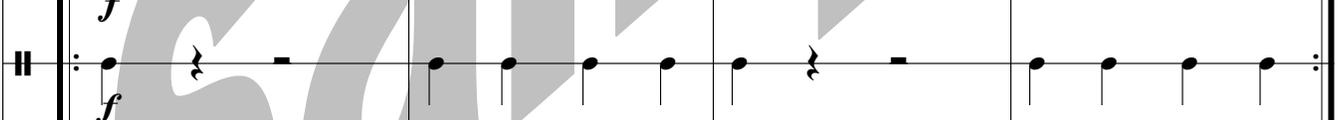
A percussion staff starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic, featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

congas



A congas staff starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic, featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

bass/
djembe



A bass/djembe staff starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic, featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

xyl.



A xylophone staff starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic, featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

71 Principal narrator

narr. For six days of dancing and prancing, the frogs remained silent. They watched. They listened. They pondered.

congas

bass/djembe

xyl.

This line cues pitch for the singers at bar 79.

76

narr. At dawn on the seventh day, all was quiet. The animals rested in their homes. Suddenly, from the pond, a new sound echoed through the forest.

D

mp

reep reep ree! reep reep ree!

if pitch help is needed here, double for 1 or 4 bars with a soprano recorder

At this point, most of Group C switches and becomes Group D. Leave some good 'shh'-ers in Group C, though!

81

narr. Crocodile narrator Principal narrator

What is that? On a stage of lily-pads, the frogs were singing!

(wait for narrator to finish)

mf more confidently and very rhythmically

reepreep reep - reep ree! reep reep ree! reep reep ree!

xyl.

p

the first music 15

86

Monkey narrator

King Frog - the punchline!

narr.

Musical staff for narrator, showing rhythmic accompaniment.

We thought frogs could only watch and listen!

Keep up that beat!

I guess everyone has something to add

D

Musical staff for D instrument.

reep - reep reep - reep ree!

reep reep ree!

reep reep ree!

reep - reep reep - reep

congas

Musical staff for congas, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic.

xyl.

Musical staff for xylophone.

91

the word "music" should fall on beat 3, and cues the transition to bar 92

narr.

Musical staff for narrator, starting with a new phrase.

when it comes to making music.

B

Musical staff for B instrument, featuring glissando markings.

mf ooh - woh

ooh - woh

ooh - woh

ooh - woh

C

Musical staff for C instrument, showing rhythmic patterns with 'x' marks.

shh kashh shhkashh etc.

D

Musical staff for D instrument.

ree!

reep reepree!

reep reep ree!

reep - reep reep - reep ree!

perc.

Musical staff for percussion, showing rhythmic patterns.

congas

Musical staff for congas, featuring a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic.

bass/
djembe

Musical staff for bass/djembe, featuring a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic.

xyl.

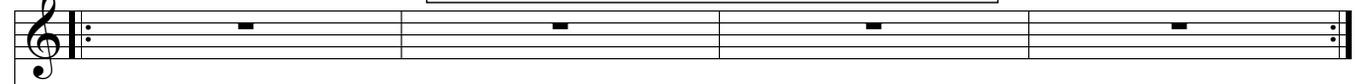
Musical staff for xylophone, featuring a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic.

mf

96

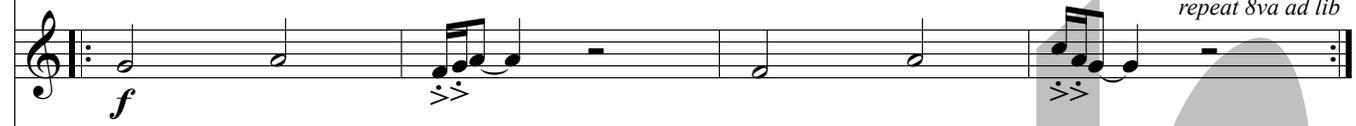
have one or two people add some random buffalo bellows and parrot screeches

narr.



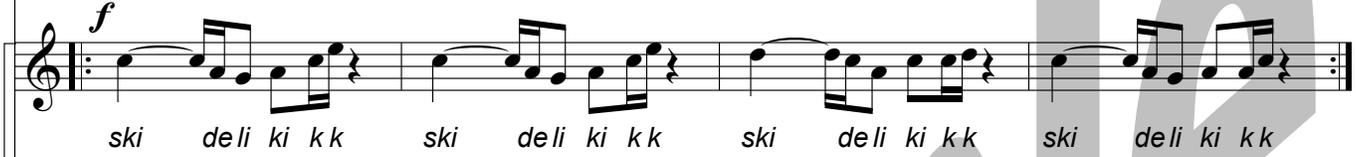
A musical staff for the narrator, containing four measures of whole rests.

fl.



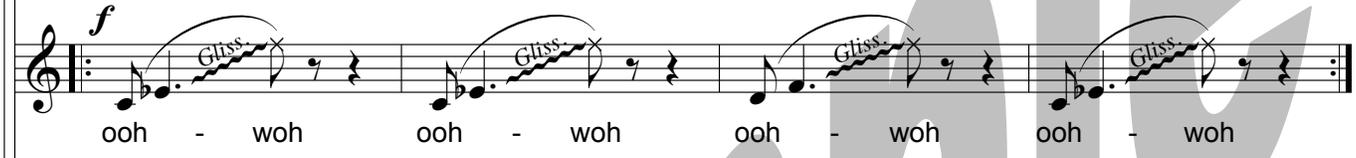
A musical staff for the flute, containing four measures of music. The first measure has a dynamic marking of *f*. The second and fourth measures have accents (>) and a breath mark (>). The instruction *repeat 8va ad lib* is written above the staff.

A



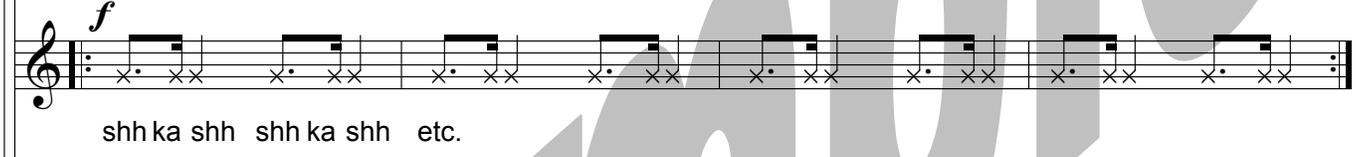
A musical staff for vocal part A, containing four measures of music. The lyrics are: *ski deli ki kk ski deli ki kk ski deli ki kk ski deli ki kk*.

B



A musical staff for vocal part B, containing four measures of music. The lyrics are: *ooh - woh ooh - woh ooh - woh ooh - woh*. Each measure has a glissando marking (*Gliss.*) over the notes.

C



A musical staff for vocal part C, containing four measures of music. The lyrics are: *shh ka shh shh ka shh etc.*. The notes are marked with 'x' symbols.

D



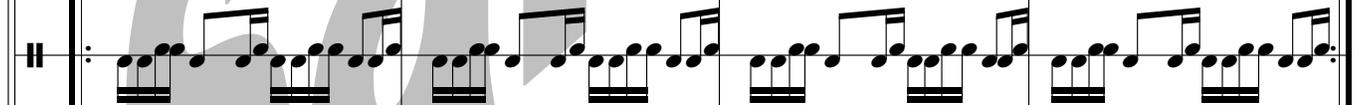
A musical staff for vocal part D, containing four measures of music. The lyrics are: *reep reep ree! reep reep ree! reep-reep reep-reep ree!*.

perc.



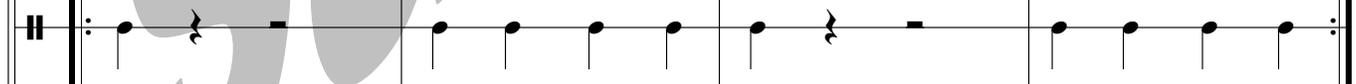
A musical staff for percussion, containing four measures of music with rhythmic patterns.

congas



A musical staff for congas, containing four measures of music with rhythmic patterns.

bass/
djembe



A musical staff for bass/djembe, containing four measures of music with rhythmic patterns.

xyl.



A musical staff for xylophone, containing four measures of music with rhythmic patterns.

100

invite audience to join in with hand-clapping and stamping

(repeat 100 - 103 ad lib)

narr. *claps*

fl. *stamps*

A
ski de li ki k k ski de li ki k k ski de li ki k k ski de li ki k k

B
ooh - woh ooh - woh ooh - woh ooh - woh

C
mf
shh ka shh shh ka shh etc.

D
reep reep ree! reep reep ree! reep-reep reep-reep ree!

perc. *woodblock castanets*

congas *maracas*

bass/djembe

xyl.

continuous xylophone from here to the end

LAST TIME - the signal for the last 4 bars is when the woodblock starts playing every single eighth note!

104

narr.

Staff with rhythmic notation and lyrics: *ski de li ki k k ski de li ki k k ski de li ki k k ki k k*

fl.

Staff with musical notation for flute.

A

Staff with lyrics: *ski de li ki k k ski de li ki k k ski de li ki k k ki k k*

B

Staff with lyrics: *ooh - woh ooh - woh ooh - woh woh!* Includes *Gliss.* markings.

C

Staff with lyrics: *shh ka shh shh ka shh etc. sshh!* Includes *mf* dynamic marking.

D

Staff with lyrics: *reep reep ree! reep reep ree! reep-reep reep-reep ree!*

woodblock
castanets

perc.

Staff with notation for woodblock and castanets.

maracas

congas

Staff with notation for congas.

bass/
djembe

Staff with notation for bass/djembe, including *f* dynamic marking.

xyl.

Staff with notation for xylophone.