

1947 coloring book cover

# **Peter and the Wolf**

WORK BY PROKOFIEV

**Peter and the Wolf**, Russian children’s theatre [composition](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/composition) for [orchestra](https://www.britannica.com/art/orchestra-music) and narrator by [Sergey Prokofiev](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sergey-Prokofiev). The work, which tells a Russian folk tale, premiered May 2, 1936, in [Moscow](https://www.britannica.com/place/Moscow). Since that time it has introduced many young listeners to classical [music](https://www.britannica.com/art/music) and helped train them to recognize the distinct sounds produced by various instruments of the orchestra.

Prokofiev was commissioned by the Moscow Children’s Theatre to compose a piece for children’s theatre. He chose as his subject the story of a boy and his [animal](https://www.britannica.com/animal/animal) friends capturing a [wolf](https://www.britannica.com/animal/wolf). In the story’s telling Prokofiev assigned each character a [musical instrument](https://www.britannica.com/art/musical-instrument) or class of instruments. The [bird](https://www.britannica.com/animal/bird-animal) was identified with a [flute](https://www.britannica.com/art/flute-musical-instrument), the [cat](https://www.britannica.com/animal/cat) with a [clarinet](https://www.britannica.com/art/clarinet), the [duck](https://www.britannica.com/animal/duck) with an [oboe](https://www.britannica.com/art/oboe-musical-instrument), Peter’s grandfather with a [bassoon](https://www.britannica.com/art/bassoon), the wolf with [horns](https://www.britannica.com/art/horn-musical-instrument), and the hunters with [percussion](https://www.britannica.com/science/percussion). Peter himself was given the entire [string](https://www.britannica.com/art/stringed-instrument) section or the full band and a jaunty lighthearted [melody](https://www.britannica.com/art/melody). So as not to distract from the music, Prokofiev [jettisoned](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/jettisoned) the original set of rhyming verses and wrote a simple prose narrative for the story. The work’s popularity grew quickly, especially after it was released as a [sound recording](https://www.britannica.com/technology/sound-recording), adapted for [ballet](https://www.britannica.com/art/ballet), and made into an [animated film](https://www.britannica.com/art/animation)(Peter and the Wolf, 1946) by [Walt Disney](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Walt-Disney).