



The Music Room
Conversations about Music
With Zoë Beyers

Episode Five

(First broadcast 28 August 2020)

Auricolae - Music and Storytelling

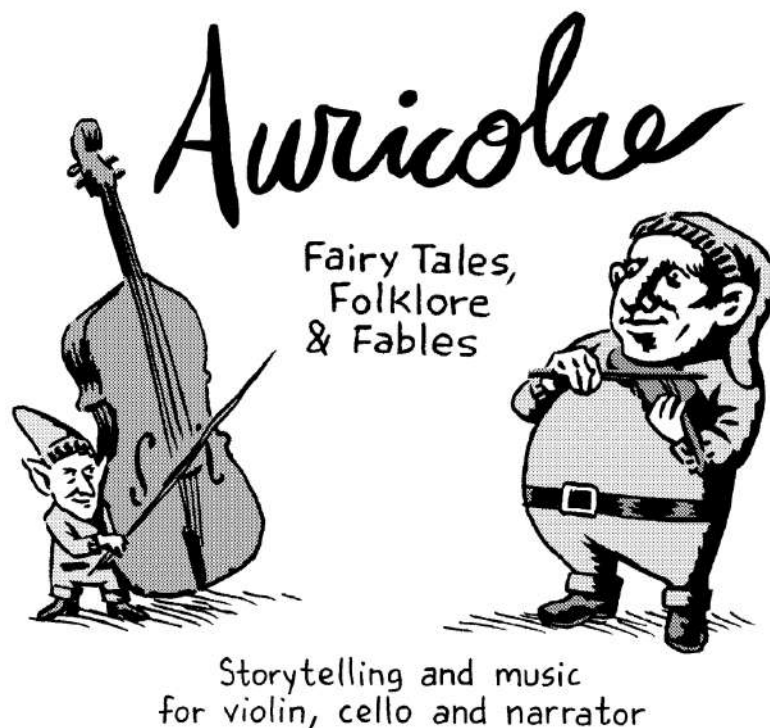
David Yang - violist, founder and Artistic Director of
Auricolae, narrator and composer

Kenneth Woods - cellist and composer

Programme Notes

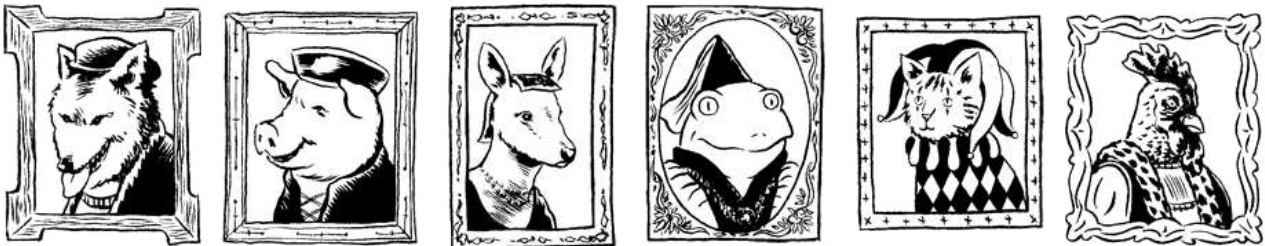
Welcome to the magical world of Auricolae... a genre-defining trio of narrator, violin and cello. Over two decades, they have written and commissioned more than twenty works for this unusual and highly effective combination. Founder and Artistic Director David Yang draws on his boundless curiosity as well as his mixed heritage in his search for myths, legends and fables which lend themselves to being set to music. His settings of four Jewish folktales form the backbone of Auricolae's impressive body of work, which contains compositions by various American luminaries, each with its own distinctive flavour.

The group's cellist, Kenneth Woods, is also a significant contributor to Auricolae's repertoire. His *Ugly Duckling*, a masterful setting which forms part of tonight's programme, has recently been recorded by the English Symphony Orchestra in a new arrangement for orchestra (by Woods himself). This, along with orchestrations of David Yang's *Lubin, From Chelm* and a wonderful selection of other stories - all narrated by Hugh Bonneville - will be available to view on the ESO Digital platform later this year.



The origins of the genre...

Before David Yang began his quest to commission musical storytelling pieces, only a handful of these genre-blending works existed. Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, Saint-Saëns's *Carnival of the Animals*, Poulenc's *The Story of Babar* and Alan Ridout's *Ferdinand the Bull* form the cornerstone of the oeuvre. Beloved as they are, they all (with the exception of Ridout's *Ferdinand*) rely on orchestras or large ensemble at the very least. Yang eloquently describes the challenges faced by his chosen composers when presented with Auricolae's limited forces, and part of the fascination for us as listeners is how remarkably different each work sounds. No two composers have used the voice or the text in remotely the same way - and the demands they make on the violin and cello differ just as widely. Kile Smith's *Bremen Town Musicians* follows the familiar, traditional pathway created by Prokofiev. At the other end of the spectrum, Robert Capanna plays with the narrator's voice in his Schönbergian *Rumpelstiltskin*, and Gerald Levinson bends all the rules of speech and music in his exceptional *Three Fables*, set to poems by Robert Lax. Yang himself writes truly brilliant comic libretti and vibrant, witty music to match.



Further listening...

Auricolae's two discs are worth every second of your listening time. Children will love the vivid fairytale settings and everyone will almost certainly be reduced to helpless laughter by the hapless Lubin, or the ill-fated Two Brothers. Listen to their records on [Bandcamp](#) and see them in action on YouTube:



Episode Playlist

- The Emperor's New Clothes by Andrew Waggoner (Auricolae: The Double Album/ Avie)
- An Adventure at Granny's [Little Red Riding Hood] by Gwyneth Walker (Auricolae: Fairy Tales, Folktales & Fables/ Avie)
- Prince Rooster by David Yang (Fairy Tales, Folktales & Fables)
- Rumpelstiltskin by Robert Capanna (Fairy Tales, Folktales & Fables)
- Lubin, From Chelm by David Yang (The Double Album)
- Ugly Duckling by Kenneth Woods (orchestrated by Kenneth Woods) (ESO Digital - coming soon)
- Three Wishes by David Yang (The Double Album)
- The Matzoh Ball Man by David Yang (The Double Album)
- Three Fables: II. A Problem in Design by Gerald Levinson (The Double Album)
- Ugly Duckling by Kenneth Woods (original version for string trio) (The Double Album)

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Auricolae
THE DOUBLE ALBUM
Storytelling and music
for violin, cello and narrator

