



Anne & Rob Burns as A Reasonable Facsimile

“Music of Shakespeare’s Time”
Entertaining and Educational PK-12 Programs
For Schools, Libraries, and Community Centers

“A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S PICNIC”
Lower Elementary, Pre-School - Study Guide

INTRODUCTION

“A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S PICNIC” is a musical production written and performed by Anne and Rob Burns. Two town musicians plan a picnic under the stars. They are visited by nocturnal insects, animals and others, and everybody wants to play along on tunes and songs. The story is influenced by the comedy of similar name by Shakespeare. Anne and Rob use music from Renaissance England and play copies of instruments from that period.

SOURCES

An excellent source about the Renaissance is *Handbook of the Renaissance* (1999) by Lee McRae. Ms. McRae's book is suggested for grades 7-12, but reviewers have also thought it useful for Middle School and it's a good resource for teachers. For more details about Shakespeare's England, look at *Daily Life in Elizabethan England* by Jeffrey L. Singman (Greenwood Press, 1995). Try your school or public library for other sources. Look under the subject headings: “Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616,” “Renaissance,” “Renaissance — Juvenile literature,” and “Musical instruments — History.”

For “mood music,” A Reasonable Facsimile has a CD *Popular Music of the Renaissance*, available. Part One, *About As Close As You Can Get* is for general audiences and Part Two, *The Merry Pranks of Robin Goodfellow*, is for children, especially lower elementary ages. There is also a song booklet called *The Merry Pranks of Robin Goodfellow* which contains the words and music to the songs in Part Two of the CD. CDs are \$15 each, and song booklets are \$10 each. Postage is included to addresses in the U.S. Make checks payable to Second from the Bottom. Order from Second from the Bottom Music, PO Box 80294, Rochester MI 48308.

There is a website that tells about Renaissance musical instruments: Musica Antiqua's "Guide to Medieval and Renaissance Instruments." It features a picture, a sound byte, a description and a bibliography for each instrument.

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Before the Performance

Introduce the performance: ‘Today [or soon] we will have the opportunity to see a musical production called “A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S PICNIC” performed by a duo called A Reasonable Facsimile. The show is about a picnic on a summer night, and it is set in the Renaissance times. Two professional musicians, Anne and Rob Burns, will be playing music and acting out the parts.’

Ask how many students have been to a music or theatre production. Discuss how an audience should react to the performers; e.g., laughter, applause or sometimes silence.

Ideas for discussion:

- Discuss the Renaissance - (The period 400-500 years ago in Europe) Just how long ago is 400 years? Are students' parents, grandparents 400 years old? How did people live 400 years ago? Did they have computers, electricity, automobiles, records or cassette players?
- Discuss what sort of communities existed in the Renaissance — Farms, villages, large cities. Have students visited a Renaissance fair or a recreation village (such as the Michigan Renaissance Festival or Greenfield Village)?
- Discuss the famous playwright, William Shakespeare, who lived 1564-1616 in England. Do students know of any of the plays (Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, etc.)? Have students seen any of his plays in the theatre, in a movie or on television? The language of the plays is English, but it is 400 year old English and sounds a little different.
- Discuss how young people might have lived in the Renaissance — Modern schools versus home schooling, apprenticeships. Modern toys and games versus making own entertainment.
- Discuss how insects and animals make musical sounds.

After the Performance

- Have students draw a picture of something they remembered and liked in the production.
- Discuss favorite parts or songs in the show.
- Talk about careers in music, theatre and dance.