

Learning by Ear 2010

Series: 'Shall I tell you something? African fables for a culture of peace'

Episode: 08 The owl and the cicada

Author: Ibrahima Ndiaye

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SHALL I TELL YOU SOMETHING? AFRICAN FABLES FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE

EPISODE 08: „THE OWL AND THE CICADA“

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CHARACTERS:

1. NARRATOR (male, 40 years old at least)
2. CICADA (female, about 15-20 years old)
3. OLD OWL (female, sounding 60 years old at least)
4. SIMBA THE LION (male, about 30 years old, deep voice)

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INTRO / PRESENTER:

Hello and welcome to Episode 8 in our Learning by Ear series 'Shall I tell you something? African fables for a culture of peace.' I hope all your bags are packed and ready as we take you off to a peaceful hill near a river. There live the owl and the cicada. Listen in and find out why both of them got into trouble and how they finally found a way out.

So take a seat and listen now to the story of: „The Owl and the Cicada“.

1. MUSIC (plays in background for the entire script)

2. SFX : Sound of a babbling brook

3. NARRATOR:

From the top of a hill, a river could be seen, writhing like a great boa constrictor lying on its back. Its water was clear and crystalline.

Trees ran alongside this river in a line like a guard of honour, as if to salute the people in boats who hum polyphonic songs in rhythm with the harmonious strokes of their paddles.

4. SFX: River and paddle sounds.

und wenn möglich: Polyphonic songs??? (Hr. Ndiaye)

5. NARRATOR:

It is in this place that by chance an old owl and a young cicada ended up being neighbours.

At the beginning they enjoyed living side by side but then, after some time, the owl began to get annoyed by her talkative neighbour who would sing every day from morning to evening. One day, the owl couldn't stand it any more and cried out in fury:

6. SFX: Chirruping cicada (Archiv: 4016291000)

7. OWL (in fury):

"Who on earth is it, making such a din?"

8. CICADA (from far away):

"It's me, the cicada with the goooooooooooooooooooooolden voice!"

9. OWL:

"Can you not stop singing? I haven't been able to sleep for the last three weeks! Your monotonous repertory upsets me. And what's more...., oh wait a minute, I'll come and tell you directly to your face!"

10. SFX: Owls wings flutter

11. NARRATOR:

So, the angry owl went to visit her annoying neighbour.

12. OWL:

"I was saying, you disturb my life with all your noise. So much so I'm on the verge of getting depressed."

13. CICADA (perplexed):

"Wait a second, Grandmother Owl. What have I done wrong?"

14. OWL:

"You're making fun of me, right? Listen, I had to spend my entire life hunting at night to feed my family and sleeping during the day. Now, I am retired and I have chosen this remote place to rest and enjoy my last days in peace. I do not see why I should have to be bothered by a child of your kind. Having said that, I have nothing against you, but can you please tell me why you have to sing all the time?"

15. CICADA:

"Grandmother, you must know that I am a fervent believer. With my litanies, I enter a trance to praise my personal god. And for your information, you should know that these litanies are called 'zikr'."

16. OWL:

"I did not know that you were praying. But, ok, let's talk about your religion. Aren't two of the most important pillars of every religion tolerance and respect towards one's neighbours? So, maybe you should also think about me. And if you are the fervent believer that you claim to be, well, why don't you build your own temple somewhere else, so that you can also be the preacher, as well as your congregation, and then you can devote yourself entirely to your religion. You could even form a partnership with the praying mantis who would be proud to be your disciple. You'd suit each other very well."

17. CICADA :

"I am not going to argue with you, Grandmother. If I could just explain to you that..."

18. OWL:

"Listen, my daughter, I have talked enough as it is today! I am so exhausted I'm falling asleep on my feet. Come and see me when you have thought over the conditions of a peaceful and lasting coexistence."

19. NARRATOR:

Finding herself alone, the cicada began to ponder her neighbour's comments. And, as the days went by, she became more and more irritated. She mumbled to herself:

20. CICADA (to herself):

"I cannot live without singing. It is my passion, the meaning of my life on earth. It is out of the question that I endure such a loss, only to please that grumpy old bird! She is really exaggerating!"

21. SFX: CICADA STARTS SINGING (Archiv: 4016291000)

22. NARRATOR:

And the cicada started singing with renewed enthusiasm. However, sometimes she felt very guilty, when she thought of the words of the owl.

23. CICADA (to herself):

"I suppose it is not particularly amusing to be continually disturbed when one has reached such an age. Honestly, maybe I should stop. Only, what will I become if I do stop? A builder? And spend all my time building houses, nests and cemeteries? Oh no! It is out of the question, although the situation troubles me."

24. NARRATOR:

In fact, the cicada was so confused that she went to visit the owl again:

25. SFX: Chirruping cicada (Archiv: 4016291000)

26. CICADA:

"It's me again, grandmother. And I've come to tell you that I do not want you to become so angry with me that we can't be on speaking terms anymore."

27. OWL:

"Not speaking to you anymore, Cicada? I do not even think about it, my daughter. However, I will only speak to you when you are less full of yourself and less selfish. So, let that be a lesson to you. Now let me rest and come back and see me another time."

28. NARRATOR:

Whereupon, the cicada went away, frustrated by the owl's attitude.

29. CICADA:

"Things are so complicated with old people! Once they have made their minds up, you can't do anything!"

30. NARRATOR:

... she sighed. Once back at home, the cicada even fell ill because she was so upset. Her singing became very irregular. Sometimes she sang, but sometimes she remained completely silent for days on end. Her strange behaviour even came to the attention of Simba the Lion, King of the Savannah. He noticed it one day as he was doing a tour of his kingdom checking up on the health of his subjects. The cicada hardly returned his greeting, which was not to the King's liking.

31. SIMBA THE LION roars

32. SIMBA THE LION:

"Cicada, why are you looking so gloomy? Has there been a death in your family? Usually, your singing precedes you, but recently, you have hardly sung at all"

33. NARRATOR:

So, the cicada explained the problem to the lion. After listening carefully, the King returned to his palace and immediately called a meeting of the board of elders, made up of the elephant, the tortoise and the billy goat, as well as the hare and the chameleon. Then they sent for the owl and the cicada. After a heated discussion, Simba the King proclaimed his binding verdict in his deep resounding voice:

34. SIMBA THE LION:

"We thought very carefully about this disagreement and it hasn't been easy to come to a conclusion. You, Cicada, have demonstrated respect for the aged! You made the first step towards the owl, you were ready to compromise.

And you, Honourable Owl, with all due respect, we still think you could turn a deaf ear to the singing of the cicada. This little insect is in the prime of her life and from time to time her singing might be a little high-spirited. But we love her for being the voice of the forests and grasslands.

So, we want both of you to keep in mind: the first step to solving a problem is to see the world through the eyes of the other."

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35. NARRATOR:

On that note, the meeting was dissolved and everyone returned home. The wise speech of the lion had smoothened everyone's ruffled feathers. The cicada started chirruping again, but now more cautiously and lovingly than before. And when the owl wants to take a nap, she just flies a bit higher in the trees, where the sound of the cicada chirruping is as soft and quiet as a lullaby...

36. SFX : Chirruping cicada (Archiv: 4016291000)

37. NARRATOR:

Thus our fable goes to sea, and he who will smell its perfume first will go to heaven.

38. Music

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OUTRO:

Once again our fable shows that there is always a way to find a solution that is fine for everyone. Although the owl seemed to be a bit intolerant, and the cicada was perhaps annoying, they had to get along with each other. What about you? Are you always ready to compromise? And how do you show respect towards older people? Go and ask your friends, and discuss it with your grandparents and let us know! Write an e-mail to lbe@dw-world.de.

Stay tuned and you will learn more next time by listening to our Learning by Ear series 'Shall I tell you something? African Fables for a culture of peace'.

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