

# Talking Birds

AND

# Golden Fish

A COLLECTION OF  
GLOBAL ANIMAL TALES



WITH  
DAVID  
GONZALEZ





# STUDY GUIDE

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# ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

## TALKING BIRDS AND GOLDEN FISH

This study guide allows viewers to dive deep into the magic of storytelling and the production of David Gonzalez's **Talking Birds and Golden Fish**.

A new storytelling performance featuring animal tales from around the world, including India, Persia, South America, and the Caribbean. The frisky critters have quite a few things to share with us: kindness, empathy, and other life lessons for young and old alike. Performed with piano accompaniment.

The performance includes the following stories:

How the Birds Got Their Colors, adapted from a Guarani story about how experiencing the vast and beautiful world changes us.

Hummingbird and Tree, a Jataka tale from India about a loyal friendship and how a tiny effort can have a big impact.

Margarita and the Golden Fish, based on a Haitian tale about the power of empathy and love.

Raven and Pigeon, a Persian fable about how it is better to work together to overcome our problems.

How the Goldfish Got its Gold, an original story/poem by David Gonzalez about risk and reward.



The production is appropriate for viewers of all ages, but to help guide you, we suggest the target grade levels of Grades K-5th with the following possible curriculum connections:

- Fine Arts: Dramatic Performance, Music, Storytelling
- Literature: Fables, Myths, Narrative, Creative Writing
- World Geography/Culture: South America, Persia, India, and the Caribbean
- Emotional/Social Development: Compassion and Generosity

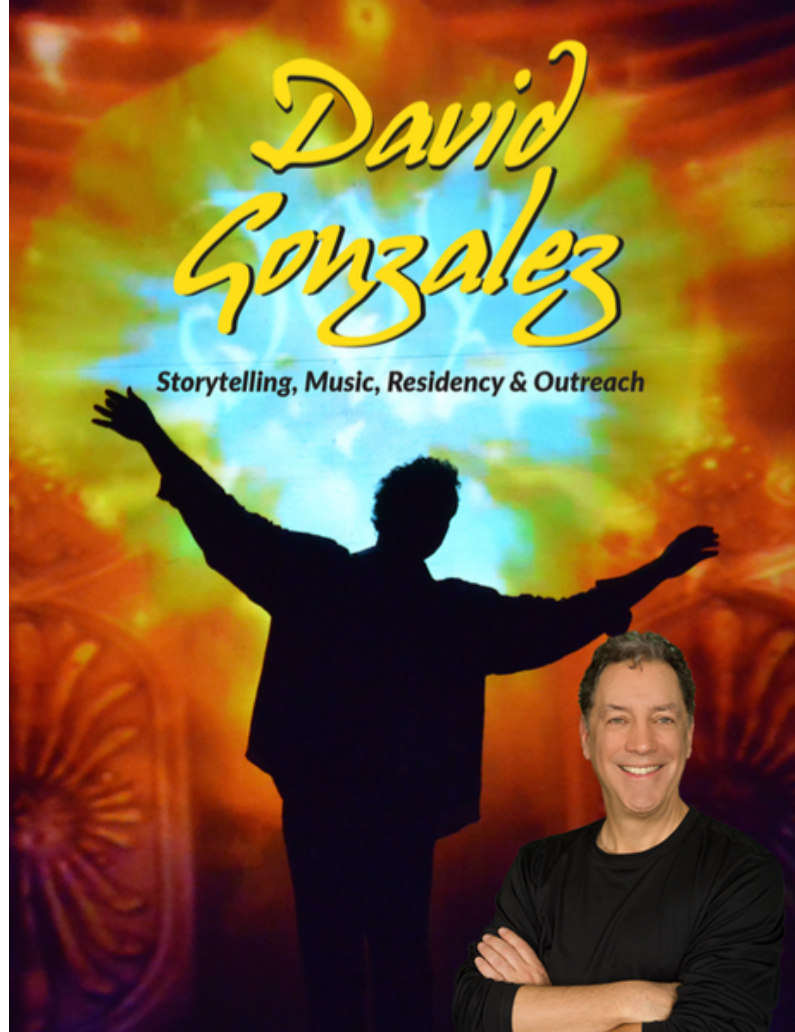
# ABOUT DAVID GONZALEZ

David Gonzalez brings a rich background to the stage. He has been telling stories since the age of seven when he performed with his puppets in a puppet theater made by his uncle and grandmother. Born in the United States, David was reared in Cuba for part of his early life and then moved back to New York City to grow up in the Bronx. He is a poet, actor, musician, and a master storyteller. In addition, he is a music therapist, having earned his Ph.D. from New York University where he taught for 10 years.

As an artist, David has created numerous productions that combine live music with compelling drama and often multi-media. His titles range from fairy tales to epic myths and fables to community voices, all of which enchant audiences of all ages with stories of love, hope, courage, and wisdom. He can also offer incredible workshops and residencies.

David has toured extensively across North America, performing for schools and such venues as The Smithsonian, The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, The McCallum Theater, The Smith Center, New Jersey Performing Arts Center, The Brooklyn Academy of Music, and more... David was a featured performer at the 2008 National Storytelling Festival, and he has performed at festivals in Spain, Egypt, Switzerland, France, Costa Rica, Norway, Puerto Rico, and throughout the United States. He also appeared for three seasons at the Royal National Theatre in London.

He was a recipient of the Helen Hayes Performing Artist of the Year award in 1998, and in 2006, was nominated for a Drama Desk Award for his version of The Frog Bride. He had the great honor of being named the Joseph Campbell Foundation Fellow for 2010 and received the IPAY (International Performing Arts for Youth) "Lifetime Achievement Award for Sustained Excellence" in 2011.



## 6 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE ARTIST:

David grew up in the Bronx, NY and lived in Cuba for a short time as a child.

David has a Cuban Father and Puerto Rican Mother.

David is bilingual in Spanish.

David is a performer, musician, writer, storyteller, poet, educator, and has a PHD in music therapy.

David's performances blend storytelling with live music.

David has toured extensively in North America and also internationally including UK, Spain, Egypt, Norway, France, and Costa Rica.

# ABOUT STORYTELLING

Storytelling is an art form that goes back thousands of years. Before written languages existed, oral storytelling was the only way to pass on information, history, and knowledge. Every culture in the world has a tradition of storytelling.

## REASONS FOR STORYTELLING

Traditional stories were used to teach people how to behave properly toward one another, and to describe the consequences of ignoring the social mores of a particular culture. Stories were told of gods, great deeds, adventures of the past, or the sacrifices and labors of heroes and heroines who overcame evil against great odds.

Stories also explained the natural events that people saw every day, such as the sun rising and setting, or the reasons for nature's fury as expressed in storms, earthquakes, and smoldering volcanoes. Tales even described spiritual journeys and visions. In stories, fools could become wise, the poor could become wealthy, and perseverance and goodness could be rewarded. Stories were told for lessons, for laughs, for tears shed, and for fears ignited or calmed.

For some societies, it is still the principal way for people to pass information and knowledge to one another and between generations. Storytelling maintains and sustains the body of shared beliefs of a community and thus serves to keep it alive. The children of traditional societies absorb the wisdom, knowledge, and love of their culture through storytelling and pass it on by continuing the practice.

## THINK ABOUT...

As you watch the performance, think about what the purpose of each story might be. What purpose do you think it served for people when it was first told? How might the stories have changed as they passed down through various storytellers and time? And, what do you want to know or think about when you hear David's version of these stories today?



## STORYTELLING TODAY

Today, we have come to recognize storytellers as artists. The storyteller is a master communicator who works to suspend the "real" world so that messages can be transmitted through imagery, sound, and emotion. By using language, voice, and body movement, the storyteller can infuse a story with the rhythms and music of life. Even today storytellers are often called upon to help celebrate the seasons, holidays, and ceremonies of our own culture.

One unique aspect of a storytelling performance is that the performer must use his body with gestures, movements, rhythms, and especially voice to create characters, place, and time. There is usually no scenery, and few props. The scope and type of costuming varies from performer to performer. On a stage, there is often minimal lighting.

# ABOUT MUSIC IN THE PERFORMANCE

Music has a long history of being used in storytelling. From early chants and spirituals to folks songs, music has long been infused with the art of storytelling.

In many cultures, traditional storytelling takes the form of song, chant, music or poetry. Many stories were often chanted or sung with musical accompaniment by an instrument.

David's performance includes original compositions written and performed by collaborator and pianist Daniel Kelly.

David also uses music to set the tone for his stories, as music can be used to convey a mood or feeling. Music in a major key can evoke a relatively cheerful tone and often accompanies happy stories, whereas music in a minor key can be used to show a sad or somber moment in a story. Changes in tempo and dynamics can also influence the mood. When the music speeds up, the change in tempo might build excitement and anticipation. When the music goes from very loud to very quiet, this change in dynamic can signal a sudden change of emotion or a pivotal moment in the story.

Music can also be used to create sound effects. With just a voice and a keyboard/piano, the storyteller can make many different sounds that help tell you what is happening in the story.

## THINK ABOUT...

How can music and sound tell stories?

How can music change the mood or feeling of a story?



Pianist & Collaborator Daniel Kelly

## DO YOU KNOW THESE TERMS?

**Major/Minor Key:** A key is the major or minor scale around which a piece of music revolves.

**Tempo:** The speed the music is played.

**Dynamics:** Volume or intensity of sound; the degree of loudness, softness, or changing volume.

## DO YOU KNOW HOW THIS MUSICAL INSTRUMENT WORKS?

A piano is a stringed instrument that makes a sound when one of its hammers strikes a string by pressing down on a key - or in an electronic keyboard, when a key is pressed, it sends a signal to the right note.



# ABOUT THE STORIES IN THE PERFORMANCE

Myths and fables featuring animals can be found in stories and oral traditions from cultures around the world.

The stories in this performance include traditional tales from South America, India, the Middle East, and the Caribbean, along with an original story from David's imagination!

## HOW THE BIRDS GOT THEIR COLORS

Adapted from a Guarani story found in Eduardo Galeano's "Memories of Fire" Vol 1. The Guarani are Indigenous people who live in the south-central part of South America, especially in Paraguay and parts of the surrounding areas of Argentina, Brazil, and Bolivia.

## HUMMING BIRD AND TREE

Based on a Buddhist Jataka tale from India. The Jataka Tales are a collection of fables and stories from 300BC-400AD that celebrate values of compassion, kindness, and wisdom. Though originally known as the story of the Gray Parrot or the Brave Parrot, David changes the bird in his story to a Hummingbird.

## MARGARITA AND THE GOLDEN FISH

Adapted from a Haitian tale in Diana Wolkstien's "The Orange Tree". Haiti is a country in the Caribbean and part of Latin America which has influences from Native, Spanish, French, and African cultures.



## THE RAVEN AND THE PIGEONS

Based on a tale from Persia, a historical region now known as modern day Iran. Birds in particular are very significant in Persian culture and were featured often in their stories.

## HOW THE GOLDFISH GOT ITS GOLD

An original tale inspired by Dr. Suess, this rhymed-verse story follows a plain-colored fish as it takes a risk to explore a golden undersea beam that leads into the sunlight.

## THINK ABOUT...

Have students locate each of these countries on a map and research more about their cultures. Discuss what each has in common.

Consider geography, weather, and customs of each culture where these stories are from. Do you think these factors influence the message or details of the story?

What animal stories do you know from your own specific region or culture?

# PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION

## TALKING BIRDS AND GOLDEN FISH

This new storytelling performance from David Gonzalez, features animal tales from around the world, including India, Persia, South America, and the Caribbean. The frisky critters have quite a few things to share with us: kindness, empathy, and other life lessons for young and old alike.

We suggest using the following discussion prompts & questions before seeing the performance.

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Discuss what you know about storytelling and its style of performance values. Do you think it would be challenging to tell a story with no props, costume, or set? Why or why not?

Discuss the importance of learning through stories as a way of developing respect and understanding among people. Discuss the fact that stories come from all over the world - whether the Middle East, South America, or even David's own imagination!

What do you know or what can you learn about the cultures that the stories in Talking Birds and Golden Fish come from? Consider geography, weather, and customs of each culture where these stories are from. Do you think these factors influence the message or details of the story?

What other stories do you know (or can find through research on world cultures and myths) that involve animals and have a moral message or teach us lessons? Can you re-tell it?

What are different ways we can experience stories? Think about why some stories might be known by different versions of the same tale. Why do you think stories might change over time?

In your opinion, what makes a good story?





# POST-SHOW: ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

Overarching (aka “big”) ideas that are central to the core of the discipline and may be transferred to new learning beyond the performances.

- Storytellers use their body with gestures, movements, rhythms and especially voice to create characters, place, and time.
- Stories serve a purpose. Stories such as folk tales, myths and fairytales are used to explain natural events, to teach lessons, or to help us understand more about ourselves as humans.

## COMPELLING QUESTIONS

Compelling Questions deal with curiosities about how things work, invite interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts, and address unresolved issues that require students to construct arguments in response.

Compelling question preview:

Inquiry #1

David Gonzalez is a master storyteller. He captivates our imaginations with the stories he tells. What tools does a storyteller use to draw in the listener?

Inquiry #2

Stories can convey lessons, explain why something occurs, or help us to learn more about ourselves. Agree or disagree?

What is the impact of stories on the listener?

# INQUIRY #1

David Gonzalez is a master storyteller. He captivates our imaginations with the stories he tells. What tools does a storyteller use to draw in the listener?

## GOALS

- Connect to self and lived experience
- Observe and draw inferences using the performance as text

## CONNECT

Invite students to think about stories told to them by parents, grandparents, siblings or others in their life. What makes a story exciting or fun to hear? Ask students to do a quick write on a post-it note that contains an initial response and at least one piece of evidence from their own knowledge that supports their claim.

## CONSIDER

Think about one or more of David's stories in the performance. Have students discuss and record answers on a white board, post-its or digital tool:

- Notice how often the performer's voice changes during the telling of each story. What is the "narrator's voice" and what are the "character" voices?
- How does the performance use silence?
- What did you notice about the performer's facial expressions throughout the story? Did he use different facial expressions for different characters? Explain.
- How does the performer use his body to create the "pictures" of the story?
- How did the performer use pantomime within the performance? How did he make imaginary objects come to life?
- How is sound and music used in the performance?

## CREATE

Invite students to be a storyteller and experiment with character voices, gestures, and using their body to create the "pictures" of the story. Challenge them to figure out their narrator voice and body, and then to do the same for two distinct characters. Example scenes for practice that include a narrator and two characters could include:

- Little Red Riding Hood meeting the Wolf, disguised in Granny's clothing
- The Big Bad Wolf trying to blow down the house of the third little pig, who built his house of bricks

# INQUIRY #2

Stories can convey lessons, explain why something occurs, or help us to learn more about ourselves. Agree or disagree?

What is the impact of stories on the listener?

## GOAL

- Determine the stories' central message, lesson or moral

## CONNECT

Invite students to do a quick write on paper or a post-it that contains an initial response and at least one piece of evidence from their own knowledge that supports their claim. Encourage them to use a story they know from a book, television show, or movie as an example.

## RESEARCH

Jigsaw read the 'About the Art of Storytelling' article (see Resources Page) and report out the findings from each section.

Create a class padlet or display that lists out various purposes that storytelling can serve. As your class encounters stories (either through David's performance, read-alouds, free reading books, etc.,) invite students to speculate on the purpose the author or storyteller had for each. Add the title and any notes to your class display to make visible the range of story purposes.

## CONSIDER

Think about one or more of David's stories in the performance. Engage students in a discussion of some of the thematic questions specific to that title.

## CREATE

Invite students to write, illustrate, or tell an original story that serves a purpose, such as explaining why something happens or that teaches a lesson. Share the stories as a class and invite peers to speculate on the storyteller's intent.

## ADDITIONAL POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

# TALKING BIRDS AND GOLDEN FISH

A new storytelling performance from David Gonzalez, featuring animal tales from around the world, including India, Persia, South America, and the Caribbean. The frisky critters have quite a few things to share with us: kindness, empathy, and other life lessons for young and old alike.

We suggest using the following discussion prompts & questions about the over all performance and specific stories.

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What was your favorite story in Talking Birds and Golden Fish? Who was your favorite character in this story? What happened to them? If you were a character in the story, would you have made the same choices?

The stories all had lessons or morals. Think of another lesson that is important for people to remember. Create a short story involving an animal that could teach that lesson. What animal(s) from your specific region could you include?

What are common elements in fables or fairy tales? Ex: Story beginning (Once Upon A Time), Magic, Royalty, Wicked character(s), Good character(s), Goodness rewarded, Forest Locations, Transformations, "Impossible" tasks, and Story ending (Happily Ever After)... Discuss how/if these common elements are used in the stories of Talking Birds and Golden Fish.

In How the Birds Got Their Colors, the performer urges the audience to go PLAY and experience the world. Why do you think that is a good idea?

In Hummingbird and Tree, why was the Cloud so moved by Hummingbird's effort?

In Margarita and the Golden Fish, why do you think Margarita's family was jealous of her special friendship with the golden fish? Why was Margarita able to gather clean water and break the curse on her friend?

In The Raven and The Pigeons, the birds are able to get their freedom by flapping their wings together at the same time. Do you remember a time or activity in your life where things were easier when you worked together with other people?

In How the Goldfish Got Its Gold, the fish takes a risk but gets a wonderful reward. Did you ever take a risk and discover something wonderfully surprising? Can you tell us a story about that?



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Augusta Baker and Ellin Greene, *Storytelling: Art and Technique*.
- Norma Livo and Sandra Rietz, *Storytelling: Process and Practice*.
- Vivian Gussin Paley, *Mollie Is Three*. How children use fantasy and story to construct their reality, and how a teacher entered a child's world through storytelling.
- The National Storytelling Network. Listings of festivals, resources, and local events. Many links to collections of stories and tales: [www.storynet.org](http://www.storynet.org)
- *Tell Me Another: Storytelling and Reading Aloud at Home, At School, and in the Community* By: Bob Barton  
Publisher: Heinemann, 1986 ISBN-10: 0435082310
- *Tell Me Another...* helps teachers make storytelling and reading aloud effective in their classes, both for themselves and their pupils.
- *Children Tell Stories: Teaching and Using Storytelling in the Classroom* By: Martha Hamilton Publisher: Richard C. Owen Publishers; 2nd edition, 2005 ISBN-10: 1572746637 Full of practical tips, handouts, and resources.
- *The Storyteller's Sourcebook: A Subject, Title, and Motif Index to Folklore Collections for Children* By: Margaret Read MacDonald and Bryan W. Sturm Publisher: Detroit Gale Research/Neal-Schuman, 1982 ISBN-10: 0810304716  
The first edition provides descriptions of folktales and references to more than 700 published sources of folktales. The new edition covers folktales from 1983-1999. Both editions include thorough indexing by subject, motif, title, ethnic group and country of origin and a comprehensive bibliography.
- The Kids' Storytelling Club [www.storycraft.com/](http://www.storycraft.com/) The only way to become a storyteller is to tell stories. The way to become a better storyteller is to learn new storytelling skills. And the way to become the best storyteller is to develop your own storytelling techniques. The best way to do all this is to explore many different kinds of storytelling. Find which things are easiest for you.
- Mensa for Kids – The Art of Storytelling [www.mensaforkids.org/teach/lesson-plans/the-art-of-storytelling/](http://www.mensaforkids.org/teach/lesson-plans/the-art-of-storytelling/) Site helps students give the rationale for the telling of stories, evaluate a story for its storytelling potential, outline a story in preparation for storytelling, and present a story before an audience.
- David Gonzalez [www.davidgonzalez.com](http://www.davidgonzalez.com)
- Daniel Kelly – Composer and Pianist [www.danielkellymusic.com](http://www.danielkellymusic.com)

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