

# The 16<sup>th</sup> Elmbridge Literary Competition



34

39 *Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind,*

44 *flight to the imagination and life to everything.*

The image shows a piano score with three systems of music. The first system (measures 34-38) features a treble and bass clef with a melodic line in the treble and a supporting bass line. The second system (measures 39-43) includes the lyrics 'Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind,' with a treble clef and a bass line. The third system (measures 44-48) includes the lyrics 'flight to the imagination and life to everything.' with a treble clef and a bass line.

# MUSIC

Winning, Highly Commended &  
Commended  
Entries

8-11 Year Old Category

## The 16<sup>th</sup> Elmbridge Literary Competition 2021

### MUSIC

*We are the music makers,  
And we are the dreamers of dreams...*

“Music is the art which is most nigh to tears and memory.” Oscar Wilde on how a song can roll back the years and take you to a forgotten place with friends long gone.

Literature and music have always gone hand in hand. Poets and authors, from Shelley To Shakespeare and Keats to Austen have woven it as themes through their works. 2021 is the 150th Anniversary of the Royal Albert Hall, a venue which has seen every style of music performed beneath its iconic dome. To celebrate this, the 16th Elmbridge Literary Competition was looking for poems and short stories that take music as their inspiration.

Following the success of 2020's 'New World', The Elmbridge Literary Competition was once more open to national and international submissions. Run in partnership between The R C Sherriff Trust and Elmbridge Borough Council, it was open to all ages.

2005:	Cook Up A Story
2006:	On My Way
2007:	A Life In Colour
2008:	Once Upon A Time
2009:	A Symphony of Life
2010:	The Elmbridge 100
2011:	Breaking The Barrier
2012:	A Dickens of A Christmas
2013:	One Act Radio Play
2014:	Dear Diary
2015:	Flights of Fantasy
2016:	Love
2017:	Luck
2018:	A Shiver Down The Spine/Things That Go Bump In The Night
2019/20:	New World

## Category: Short Stories

### 1st Place: The Key To Shift The Fog – by Arabella Camburn

Lizzie rang the bell and slumped on her hard suitcase, wheeling herself backwards and forwards. Cottage Cove sat alone, nestled between an extended forest and an overgrown field, the village just a short drive away. The last time she visited was the previous summer, and things were just beginning to take a turn for the worst.

As the door creaked open, a small, frail lady appeared, and Lizzie barely recognised her as she said, “You’ve been gone for ages Rachel. We only needed milk.”

“It’s me, Grandma.” Lizzie exhaled deeply. “Mum’s still unpacking the car.”

Grandma blinked and stared at Lizzie, as though she was trying to clear the fog in her head.

“Ah yes, Lizzie. Rachel’s just gone down to the bakery for your favourite blueberry muffin.”

*It’s worse than I expected*, thought Lizzie, her heart thudding painfully in her chest. While Lizzie’s mum unloaded the boot full of suitcases, Lizzie sat with Grandma in the front room. Everything was different. Sitting unnoticed like a cobweb in the corner, the grand piano waited to be played. Most of it was covered in a dirty cloth, but the discoloured keys poked out from under, thick with a layer of dust. On the walls, the once perfectly lined photos of Grandma as a young ballerina were now wonky. But Lizzie’s feet still sank into the thick peach carpet and the brown leather sofa still felt like a soft hug.

Whenever Lizzie came to visit as a child, on a Saturday night Grandma would take her down to the village to watch the brass band marching confidently between the shops and narrow cobbled streets. They played joyful music that filled the air, echoing around the houses and beyond for miles. Excitedly, Grandma told stories about when she was a young ballerina. Lizzie always listened with amazement. When they would return home, Grandma always played her favourite song from the Nutcracker on the piano, the one she danced to as a young ballerina.

The memories made Lizzie’s heart do a strange twist. “I’ll go and make you a cup of tea Grandma.” Now that she’d turned 10, Lizzie enjoyed her new independence in the kitchen.

“Thank you, Rachel, dear.”

Lizzie fought back the urge to cry at the decline in Grandma’s health. The cupboards were bare, and the dribble of milk in the fridge had turned sour. Slamming the front door, Lizzie’s mum said, “You’d think we were staying for a whole year, not just a few weeks. Now where’s Gran—”

“Mum,” Lizzie interrupted, “I think we need to go to the shops.” Lizzie said, pointing at the empty shelves.

They spent the rest of the day shopping for food, cleaning the house and unpacking their bags. They even bought a bunch of pink and white roses to brighten up the top of the piano. That evening, they all sat in the front room relaxing. Grandma leaned back in her chair and placed her feet onto the footstool, as if she was ready to fall asleep. She closed her eyes and her shoulders slouched into the back of the chair as she drifted off. Mum was engrossed in a book and Lizzie began to feel bored, wishing she’d brought more games to play with. Lizzie was surprised to hear the brass band travelling across the field from the village. *It is a Saturday I suppose*. Lizzie stared at the piano, now shiny and clean. The freshly washed cloth was still a little damp as Lizzie pulled it back and lifted the lid of the piano. She pressed firmly on each key, checking if it was still in tune. The same old notation was on the music stand in front of her, so she sat down and began to play Grandma’s favourite song. After a moment, she glanced over at Grandma, whose face lit up with a familiar smile. Suddenly, she sat up straight in her armchair and her eyes opened wide. Grandma moved her arms

elegantly through the air, circling and dropping them gracefully. At first, Lizzie couldn't work out what Grandma was doing.

Then she shot a glance at her mum, who dropped her book onto her lap, mouth open wide. As Grandma moved her arms in a range of dance positions, Lizzie realised the music was bringing back memories of her life as a ballerina. As she continued to play, Grandma continued to dance. The stories she used to tell, came flooding back to Lizzie who imagined the moments flashing through Grandma's mind.

Performing on stage in front of thousands of people. The orchestra, playing that same beautiful song. The music rising as she twirled into a pirouette. The silent amazement of the crowd as the dance ended. Flowers raining down at her feet, the fresh summer smell tickling her nose. Curtains closing, the roar of the crowd drowning out every other sound. Then it was all over for another evening.

From her chair, Grandma carefully stood and walked over to the piano. She lifted the roses from the vase, placed them to her nose and breathed deeply. Then she threw them to the ceiling, and with droplets of water they rained down from the air. As they landed and spread out at her feet, a huge smile spread across all of their faces.

A wave of happiness washed over Lizzie and she thought her heart would burst. *Grandma's still inside. I've found the key to shift the fog and find her*, she thought.

The piano was the only piece of furniture that Grandma asked to take when she moved in with Lizzie and her parents. Every night, Lizzie played the same beautiful song to allow Grandma to be a ballerina once again.

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## 2nd Place: DoubleSharp – by Natasha Truesdale

Hello, I'm DoubleSharp. I'm a double sharp. You might not have heard of me, as I am quite rare, and definitely not as popular as single sharps and flats. My best friend is DoubleFlat, who is as uncommon as me. We have lots of free time so we hang out together. We are both desperate to get composed but, according to FSharp, there just isn't room for "weirdos like us". I don't take it personally, I just ignore her and walk away, but not DoubleFlat. He sulks, gets depressed I suppose. That's just how we're made.

I think something is happening! I'm being traced onto a piece of paper!

"Hang on. F – is that you?" I called.

"Sure is," she replied casually. "I get this a lot, but it's usually Sharp who comes along. It must be your lucky day! Wonder what we're going into?"

I've been picked. I've been USED! Not just to transpose something though. This is NEW! Peering out from the stave I can see a small boy sitting at a handsome grand piano, a pen in his ink-splattered hand, drawing Ds, Es, Fs, Gs, sharps, flats, dynamics and bar lines. I'm in a real piece of music!

My composer's bright, glistening eyes smiled as he sketched two vertical line, like guards who protected the piece from harm.

"The end!" he exclaimed, scribbling his name. Jasper Townsend. Jasper rushed out the

spacious music room, past the trumpet that smirked on its stand by the open window, leaving us all to wait...

I woke with a jolt. Someone was humming the start of my piece. Where was I? All I could see was a blanket of thick, grey and brown dust.

"DoubleFlat? Are you there?"

No reply. Then I remembered. When I was composed, DoubleFlat didn't come with me. He wasn't used. What happens to music when it's not being played or written, I thought in a panic. I was about to give up all hope of ever seeing DoubleFlat again when a familiar, timid voice spoke.

"DoubleSharp? I – I was chosen!" he whispered.

"DoubleFlat! Why are you being so shy?" I asked.

"Well, BFlat here told me I was a loser, and that he was always right, so I believed him," DoubleFlat explained, "But Jasper definitely wrote me in. He added a coda. It must have been a key change. He is a musical genius."

"But where are we now? Why have I been asleep for so long? Didn't Jasper like his piece?"

"You must have been asleep by then. After composing the coda Jasper left us by his trumpet to play, but he must have been distracted because the last I remember, a gust of wind blew us off his music stand and...we must have slipped down a crack in the floorboards."

Hang on, here we go again!

We were seized out of the dust and darkness. Our page was smoothed out and a boy with messy brown hair and battered circular glasses squinted at us. He raised his eyebrows as he sight sang.

"Doobedoobedoowahh..." sang a young voice. "Ooh, cool, thanks Mum, I could play this!" he exclaimed.

"Really, Daniel? That's amazing. The builders put this whole box of junk out for rubbish. I wonder who wrote it?"

Daniel propped us on a music stand and took out a shiny trumpet.

"Bababa-da-da-da doowah..."

Not bad at all for a first go, even if he did mess me up. I sighed, and tried to look on the bright side.

The next day, we all grumbled as Daniel shoved us into a tatty rucksack, whistling our tune over and over. It was really catchy. Between this and Daniel's trumpet practice, the whole

village seemed to be whistling the same tune.

An old man shuffled by, then stopped suddenly when he heard Daniel's whistling.

"Excuse me, son, were you responsible for bringing my first ever piece back to life?" he asked.

"Well, I - er, my mum found this tune, and I played it, and it was really good so ...I was whistling it and then people joined in and somehow..everyone knows it now," Daniel confessed.

"Oh no, young man, don't worry! I am delighted. But wherever did you find it?" the old man asked.

"It was in an old box of junk. My parents have just moved into your old home. I think you should have it back, sir," said Daniel, digging us out of his rucksack. The old man gasped, seeing his childhood composition again for the first time in many years.

Two weeks later, we were all bubbling with excitement. We had been rediscovered, and now Jasper was taking us to a concert hall to be performed!

"Ladies and gentlemen, performing his lost work "Fanfare to The King" ...I give you...Sir Jasper Townsend!" the announcer shouted. Jasper's bright, glistening eyes smiled as he prepared his golden trumpet. Beautiful sounds echoed through the auditorium, filling the world with pure joy. Jasper's wrinkled face focused as he reached me. Would he manage me? Would he do us all justice?

And just as expected, he played me perfectly. It was the best moment of my life.

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### **Joint 3rd Place: Florence and Her Fabulous Flute** – by Francesca Anne Bates

Florence was a pretty girl with long flowing red hair and beautiful turquoise eyes. She was quite slim and had gorgeous long eyelashes that lay on her cheek when she closed her eyes. She had lived with her brothers and sisters in Fairy-tale Land for quite a while now. Her little home cottage was on the edge of the deep dark wood, the outskirts of which were a rainbow of wildflowers and full of friendly animals.

But Florence had a secret. The flute that she played was magic! When she was holding or playing it she could understand and talk to animals!

She was going out into the world soon and would leave the care of her brothers and sisters to her younger sister Anne. Florence wanted to do something about people cutting down trees.

One day she went out into a clearing in the wood and started to play her flute. Woodpeckers flew down from the trees, rabbits scampered up from their burrows, ladybirds and beautiful

butterflies came fluttering too. A pack of foxes gathered, hedgehogs came from their undergrowth homes, all to that clearing where Florence played a mesmerising tune.

Now Florence had noticed all this from the start but pretended to be immersed in the music so as not to scare the animals. The animals were afraid of humans as humans were destroying their homes.

Then Florence spoke, "Hello my name is Florence, please don't be afraid, I want to help you. I heard that the forest that is your home is being cut down." All the animals started whispering, urging each other to 'trust her', 'tell her', or in some cases 'she's human, how can we trust her?'

Suddenly all the animals rushed towards Florence, (who was playing a soothing tune on her flute) and started talking all at once. She tried to listen but in the end had to stop them and say "One at a time please". So the animals stopped and took it in turns to tell her their story.

By the time they had finished it was dark, "May I sleep with one of you" asked Florence. All the animals were eager to welcome her to their homes but most were too small so in the end she curled up by the foxes den. The animals brought leaves and moss to make a soft bed and covered her with the blanket she had brought.

The next morning they started off towards the sound of machinery and chopping. When they came to a big cleared site the diggers were hard at work. They could see and smell the freshly cut trees and dust in the air. It was heart-breaking to see the destruction.

Quietly Florence slipped out of the trees. No-one even noticed as she was so quiet! Then she started playing a soft, dainty tune on her flute. At first the diggers did not notice or hear the tune but when they did they stopped work and tuned off their engines to listen. The builders felt.....humbled. They suddenly knew that what they were doing was wrong, all from the power of music. They saw their destruction and how it had taken homes from the wildlife of the forest.

Slowly they gathered their machinery and started to leave the forest. Florence picked up her flute again, the destruction had to be fixed before the rains came and washed the soil away. She played a fast, energetic and exciting melody. The animals started to move and the trees and plants began to sway. Soon the air was full of seeds, some floating, some popping, some being thrown in all directions. They landed all over the bare earth.

Now Florence's tune became more wild and staccato, jumping about from note to note. Pitter patter! The rain came hammering down and then something magical happened. It started with just some, and then loads! The sprouts of trees came shooting up, faster and faster. In just ten minutes, the whole ground was full of shoots. Different shades of green were everywhere, shooting up into the air transforming the bare earth! Florence was astonished at how powerful her flute was and realised her journey was only just beginning.

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### **Joint 3rd Place: Playing To Your Strengths** – by Evie Sambrook-Smith

It was a cold Winter's night on December 3rd. Everyone slept quietly, apart from in the old house down the road. Four friends were practising for the big Christmas Eve show.

They were all unique and talented, but each instrument envied the sound of another and dreamed of becoming something else.

The flute was soft and charming, beautiful and graceful. The flute was a peacock with a voice like a nightingale. But that wasn't what she liked. She dreamed of being the trumpet, with a bold and dominant part to play in the orchestra.

The trumpet was courageous and glorious like a soldier at a royal parade. He was the leader of them all. He was the instrument lots of people wanted to play. He didn't like the popularity. He hated the limelight. He thought it would be amazing to be the violin.

The violin was sharp, but elegant. Like a chameleon changes its colour, the violin changes its sound to suit the music. He loves to play a melody but wishes he could set the beat like the drum.

The drums were strong, the ruler of the orchestra, as powerful as a pitch-black wave crashing against the solid rockface. They imagined being more like a ripple, dancing onto the shiny sand by the shore, more like a flute.

When they came together to practise, they sounded terrible. It felt chaotic and confusing. No one followed the tune or the beat. The crowd would be devastated to hear this!

Suddenly, the trumpet had a splendid idea. They needed to be themselves. Only then would the sound be wonderful. Only then could they play how they were meant to.

The trumpet stood up and told the flute how soft and charming he was, he told the violin how elegant it was, he spoke of the drums power and of the beauty to his own sound. The instruments listened and learned.

When the big day arrived, the sound was unrecognisable. The audience cheered and clapped and danced. The orchestra had learnt their lesson, remembering to be yourself and playing to your strengths is very important.

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### **Highly Commended: Hazelnut Orchestra** – by Arielle McLaren

Once upon a time a grand ball was going to be held in fairyland. All the fairies from the small but magical country, were going to go to the positively wondrous ball. The fairies expected that the huge, vast ballroom would be a fantastic sight with an enormous feast of great grape wine, a whole pleasing platter of cuddly custard pies and a big long table of delightful dishes filled with glorious gumballs. Every fairy food they could imagine would fill up the colossal canteen. They thought it was going to be the most delicious dinner ever.

There was also going to be an orchestra at the ball and only the most practiced players in all of fairyland were a part of it. The day before the ball, the fairie orchestra was rehearsing for the song, "The Spring is Blooming". The conductor did a heartfelt head count but for the first

time ever, someone was missing! The conductor said, "Hazelnut is missing, where has he gone!?"

"I don't know" said all the fairies at once.

"Well, I think we'll have to do the rehearsal without him" said the conductor.

"But we can't", said the Sunflower fairy who was one of Hazelnuts friends.

"I know his favorite song. If we play it, maybe he'll hear it and then follow it back here. Can't we?"

"We could do that. What's his favorite song then?"

"It's The Little Drummer Fairy"

"Ok, instruments ready. Now let's play The Little Drummer Fairy", instructed the conductor. And the fairies began.

A splendid symphony filled the atmosphere. The song was so beautiful that the players had their own little imaginations of an enchanted bird, singing. They played two rounds of the song but were beginning to give up hope.

Back where the Hazelnut Fairy was lost, he heard them playing the song, but he knew something was missing.

"The drums! They don't have any drums! Wait, maybe they're calling me to try to get me home" he said hopefully.

But he couldn't fly back to them because his wing had been bruised by some falling rocks.

Then, like a rock star fairy, he had an idea. He started using his surroundings to make a set of drums. He searched in the undergrowth for a conker shell from last autumn, which he used for a base drum, then he gathered three leaves. Two of them he put together and made a hi-hat, and the third he used as a crash symbol. He found a squat piece of branch for a kettle drum and for a snare-drum he used an empty snail shell filled with tiny rocks to give it a shaking vibration. All of these were bound together with strong, bendy twigs, he gave them a little love and decorated them with fallen berries. Finally, he fashioned wisteria pods into drumsticks which he embellished with flower petals to cushion the handles. And then, he started to play.

The orchestra by now, had their last hopes of him coming back, about to fly away into the breeze. At the back of the orchestra, the tiny Poppy fairy, who had a great sense of hearing and played the glockenspiel, questioned, "Um, Mr. Conductor, why don't we have a beat?"

"Well, we don't have a beat because we don't have the drummer."

"Well that's ok", said Poppy, "There's a beat being played right now, I can hear it".

"No, there isn't. Tell me Poppy, what can you hear?"

"The Hazelnut fairy of course, I can hear him playing his own drum set. I think he's north from here".

"Great job Poppy. Let's all listen to see if he really is playing the drums". And as they all listened super carefully, they heard the faint beat like rattling rocks being played.

“Hey, I’ve got an idea.”, said Sunflower, “Let’s all keep playing with Poppy in the front so she can lead us to him.”

All the fairies in the orchestra, with Poppy in the front, glided gracefully across the air, playing their instruments of all kinds, following the sound of the drum sensation. The other fairies in their homes were all preparing food, party clothes and decorations for the ball, and they heard the orchestra coming and playing their enchanting music. It was so wonderful and catchy that all the other fairies, as the orchestra passed by, were inspired to take up the search for the Hazelnut fairy. They lifted like winged dandelion fluff into the air, followed the orchestra music and headed towards the calling drums.

The determination of the fairies grew stronger, as they knew the Hazelnut fairy was close because the sound of the drums got louder. The fairies slipped around the sparkling blades of grass, amongst the trees and through the hawthorn bushes, then they suddenly burst into a glade where the Hazelnut fairy grooved and played on his nature filled set of drums.

They were all very happy that they had found him. After they had explained what each other had been doing to find one another, the conductor said, “I think we’ve done enough rehearsing, let’s take a break and cure Hazelnut fairy’s injured wing.”

All the fairies then realised every one of them had left their homes carrying whatever they were working on to prepare for the ball. The cooks had flown along to the music holding whisks and bowls filled with food delights, dressmaking fairies had followed with their materials of all kinds in their hands, decorator fairies had followed suit taking their collections of bunting on the search, since they all had been mesmerized by the beautiful beats. They realized that they’d brought everything they needed for the ball, including their fantastic drummer. They decided to have the ball in the glade right there and then. It was a wonderful sound to hear as the fairies rejoiced together and rocked and danced to their amazing orchestra music in the moonlit glade throughout the night.

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### **Highly Commended: Dance Off** – by Henry Santamaria

I’m Elsie and I’m about to tell you the weirdest thing that has ever happened to me and, trust me, I’ve been through many weird things!

It was a dark and stormy night; well, actually, it was a bright summer’s morning. I don’t know why I just said that (probably because that’s how any scary story starts). But, anyway, it was a week before we broke up for the summer holidays. I was walking to school with my two best friends: Michael and Ashley. Michael is really good at running; he’s the fastest in the class. And then there’s Ashley, who’s great at swimming and is so clever. However, I, Elsie Anderson, have a great passion for ballet and the piano. Anyway, it was when I was going to school that I heard the news that my ballet class was to have a new teacher.

I wondered what the teacher would be like: kind and caring like my old teacher; or maybe cruel and nasty. This thought was stuck in my head through the whole of the school day and I couldn’t manage to get it out. I must have bumped into at least half a dozen lamp posts pondering on the thought. And finally, with yet another bruise on my head, I managed to reach my ballet class and there, by the window, was the unfamiliar face and I knew it was the new

teacher. She was smiling and beckoning me in. On her name tag it read, "Mrs Evans, ballet teacher".

It was a great lesson; the most fun I had had in my whole life. I went home full of joy (and bruises) and told mum all about it. I went to bed that night thinking about my day. It was then that I heard it. Sound. Music. A piano. Not a violin, not a trumpet, just a piano playing at quarter to eleven.

I jumped out of bed, put my dressing gown on and raced downstairs to try see where it was coming from. It wasn't mum, she was sound asleep, so it must have been someone else. After a while I gave up and went back to bed, not that I could go to sleep. For some reason, bed made me feel comforted, feel safe.

This was the same story for the next two days, sleepless nights and the piano playing. I had been doing very badly in school and on Thursday it was worse. I even got 8 by 8 eight wrong, and I'm in grade seven.

After that incident, I knew it was time to act. I told my friends about the music, inviting them for a sleep over and Ashley said he would bring his tape recorder just in case we missed it. Again I went to bed and heard the same beautiful but also annoying tune. But here's the thing, Ashley and Michael couldn't hear it! It was then that I thought that I was going crazy. However, just in case I wasn't, I pressed the record button. That night was the longest night ever.

School the next day shot by and as I was cleaning my locker for the holidays, Ashley appeared, recorder in hand and told me to put on headphones and I obeyed.

Ashley pressed play and I could hear the piano, playing that same tune that I had heard for the past five days. When I took the headphones off, he explained that they had managed to record what I could hear.

In an hours' time, we were out of the school and heading to the music shop. When we arrived we asked the owner if he could recognise the song. After a while he said it was from the spooky pianist Paul T. Geist.

That night, me, Ashley and Michael decided to follow the piano sound to see where it would lead us. After a while of walking we reached the woods. To be honest, I was so scared, if my friends weren't there, well I would have screamed my head off. We kept trudging forward in anticipation until we reached the heart of the wood. And there, stood before us, a wooden hut which was half run down. From the outside it looked empty, but when I peeked through the window, there was a candle flickering in the dark. And by the candle, I could just make out a piano, but there was no player.

I shouted to the others to come and see this as fast as they could. They were in such a hurry to come to the window that Michael tripped over and out of the rucksack that he was holding came flying out the recorder and landed on the floor. It must have flicked the switch when it had descended to the floor because it started playing out loud. And as the song moved on from verse to verse, the figure of a ghost appeared. She seemed to be crying. She looked up at us and through her tears she said that she was not able to go up to heaven since she had died in a car crash before she could make it to her ballet competition.

And I decided to help and said that I would do it for her. I told the whole story to Mrs Evans, knowing that she would keep our secret. She put my name on the sheet for the upcoming

contest and helped me with my rehearsals. On the day of the competition, I twirled and danced as best I could until final bow and the crowd went wild. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the ghost smiling at the back of the theatre and winked. I went back stage with the applause still ringing in my ears and there was Mrs Evans, her smile like a banana, embracing me with happiness. I remember her words, "You were great out there, just like dear Polly, God bless her heart."

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### **Highly Commended: The Sound of The Blitz – by Ivo Santamaria**

I was sleeping with my torch switched on when I heard the air raid alarm go off. Everyone went into their dark, damp shelters but we were late in turning our torches off and closing the curtains. Just then a spitfire flew over us and dropped something! It was a bomb! I just remembered then that my piano was in the house. I tried to run out of the shelter but my dad grabbed me by the leg and I fell down on the ground. My piano flashed before my eyes sizzling into the fire.

"Nnnnnnnnnnoooooo!!!!!" I screamed as it got burnt to a crisp. My piano belonged to my great, great grandfather. Apparently, he played like an angel. Since the war started, playing the piano was my escape. The next ten days, I was having nightmares about the beautiful piano. My father was terrified when the bombs lashed down near our home that he sent me to move into the countryside where my grandparents lived.

I liked being in the countryside but I missed my parents like astronauts miss the Earth. I spent my time walking with my Grandpa and talking to animals and playing with my ball. I wrote to my parents everyday hoping for a reply but there were few.

I felt lonely for a while until I met an unusual but friendly horse. I asked the owner if I could look after it for a while. I called him Whitethorn because of a white patch on his nose in a shape of a thorn. I rubbed him down every day and fed him. We used to go for long walks through the forest together while I would tell him stories. One particular day when I was riding Whitethorn, I saw his ears twitch. "He must have heard something," I thought. We stopped and looked around; a chill went down my spine. Was it an animal? Were we in danger?

Then I heard it. A whispering whistle. Somewhere, amongst the leaves. Soon the bushes started to move, a gust of wind went down my shirt.

"The piano... play the piano...." said the wind.

"Who's there?" I asked in horror.

"The piano," was the reply from a man as pale as milk, emerging from the shadows. I recognised him from an old black and white photo on the mantelpiece at home. It was my great, great grandfather!

"Follow me" he said I moved quietly and slowly following him on Whitethorn. He came to a stop outside an abandoned, dusty cottage and pointed to the door. I opened the door and in the side corner I saw ... a piano! I turned around to thank my great, great grandfather but he had vanished.

From that day on, I didn't feel lonely anymore and played my piano to Whitethorn every day. When the war ended, I moved back home with my parents. My Grandpa promised to walk with Whitethorn every so often and my beloved piano came home with me!

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### **Commended: A Musical Mystery – by Daniella Clifton**

It was the flute. The renowned Capricorn Flute. It was right in front of him, Archie, just a normal boy from Surrey who happened to hate music. It was made of shiny oak that glistened like it was infused with moonlight, carved with angelic water creatures, worth millions of pounds. So beautiful, Archie found it difficult to believe it was only a musical instrument!

Everyone was chattering excitedly when Vanessa Falcon, the auctioneer with blonde hair and ivy-green eyes, held up the priceless artifact. Archie's aunt, Diana, was the most excited of all, gripping Archie's arm so tight that he thought it may fall off. Archie was a boy of twelve with dark, jet-black hair and eyes that were an inquisitive amber that he used for glaring at everyone in the room.

Archie was at Sambaz Music Museum's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary party with his aunt, who used to work there. He had a very strong dislike for music, "It's just sound waves that are bound by a beat and rhythm!" he would explain to anyone who would ask. Diana, on the other hand, was so passionate about music you could say it was a roaring inferno, with Beethoven's Ode to Joy playing in the background, of course! Archie's aunt had dragged him to this party because how better to spend a night at a fabulous musical celebration while introducing Archie to a variety of musical instruments?

"Presenting the Capricorn Flute! Otherwise known as Heaven's Instrument, Michael Bailey, one of Sambaz's most esteemed musicians, will now play this wonderous instrument to us!" Called out Vanessa Falcon. A man with honey-coloured hair and a navy suit strode onstage. He smiled kindly, "Thank you Vanessa," and took the flute from her hands. Michael Bailey put his lips to the Capricorn Flute, his hands tracing over the carvings, and started playing. It was the most enchanting melody you'll ever hear, even Archie enjoyed it.

Suddenly, there was a bang, dragging Archie out of his trance, then another, and then the bangs started to make an ugly chorus around him. He swiveled around; the chairs were collapsing! It was all a blur: standing up, and then a second later, he was being pushed and pulled all around by the panicking crowd. This carried on for a few minutes, everyone confused and everyone shoving, Archie did a great lot of the shoving, trying to find his aunt.

Soon, the noise started to calm down and everyone was looking at the stage with horror, the Capricorn Flute was gone! Men in black suits with gold badges saying "SECURITY" burst through the doors. "Michael Bailey, you're under arrest for suspicion of stealing the Capricorn Flute!" the bulkiest of them shouted in a voice like thunder. Two of the security guards leapt forwards and grabbed each of Michael's arms and dragged him outside of the room.

The walls started to close in on Archie as he started to feel faint, "I think I need to go outside." He told his aunt, taking in great gulps of air.

“Sure. As long as you are quick, dear, the police are coming soon, and they probably want to interview everybody.” Diana replied. Archie dashed out of the beige double doors into the Strings exhibition.

He crinkled his nose in disgust at the hundreds of pointless instruments in the hallway as he took in a enormous lungful of air, drinking it all in. Once he felt better, he started walking back to the auction room until he heard a rustle from behind a tall, mahogany cello. A wave of curiosity washed over Archie as he crept towards the cello cautiously, he peered over the top and it gave him a huge fright when he saw a girl behind it. She had honey-coloured hair pulled back into a ponytail and was writing in a notebook, she resembled Michael Bailey! She put a finger to her lips, “Shhhhh, sit and keep quiet.”

Archie folded his arms in return, “Why should I? After all -” He stopped short, there were footsteps coming down the hallway. As quick as a flash, the girl pulled Archie behind the cello and peered around the side; there was a shadow creeping around, “Hello, Jackie Bailey, I know you’re here, I’ve finally gotten rid of your dad, now you’re just a helpless little girl, you should be easy to take down. Such an irritating duo, sticking their noses into things that doesn’t concern them and bothering an innocent auctioneer.” The shadow sounded like... Vanessa Falcon!

“We both know that you’re not innocent, Vanessa.” Jackie stated. Archie opened his mouth, but Jackie stomped on his foot and it took all of Archie’s might to not cry out.

“Fine, I’m not innocent, but that won’t matter when no one can find you!”

Archie’s heartbeat quickened. Thinking fast, he grabbed a nearby bow and scraped it across the strings of the cello. Vanessa crouched down and covered her ears from the noise while Jackie darted out and hit her over the head with a violin. Vanessa slumped, unconscious, and a shining oak flute tumbled out of her blazer. Archie’s eyes widened and Jackie exclaimed in delight. They had just found the thief!

“I’m going to get help, you watch Vanessa.” Archie said and dashed towards the hall.

Everybody’s heads turned as Archie burst through the doors, “We found the thief!” he said breathlessly.

“Look boy, we don’t have time for your fantasies,” Said a policeman with a chestnut moustache. Determined, Archie grabbed the policeman’s arm and dragged him into the Strings exhibition where Jackie was holding down a struggling Vanessa, “You’re in trouble little girl, you don’t know who you’re messing with!” she said, not realising there was an audience.

“Bring out Michael Bailey, we found the real thief.” The policeman said into his microphone.

A few minutes later, a relived looking Michael Bailey was running towards Jackie while the policemen were taking Vanessa away.

Archie rushed to his aunt, “When’s the next music event?”

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## **Commended: A Life in Music** – by Amelie De Villiers

I came into the world to the rousing Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Messiah. It was the music chosen by my mother and father at my birth. They were so happy to have a healthy, beautiful daughter.

My family was very musical. My mother played the piano and my father, the cello. The house was always filled with music and laughter.

As I reached school age, I learnt every Nursery Rhyme and I loved singing in the school choir. My instrument was the clarinet, which I found quite challenging at first. The only part I didn't enjoy was the fact that I had to practise for an hour every day while my friends were outside playing. I felt upset and cross with my parents for keeping me in.

However, my efforts were rewarded because I gained a Distinction for my first clarinet exam. "Keep practising!" my father said. "One day you will be so glad that you persevered."

In Ballet classes, I danced to the music of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker and also to the sorrowful tunes of Swan lake. I marvelled at how each piece changed my mood, from joyous, carefree melodies, to Prokofiev's death throws in Juliet's tomb.

I remember my father playing his Jazz records and also my mother's beautiful singing voice as she worked around the house.

Throughout my teens I turned away from classical music. My friends made fun of my constant practising and they called me "square". Of course I went to discos and learned all the dance moves but I always returned to my clarinet, on which I could play so many haunting melodies.

Life moved on and I joined my local orchestra. How marvellous to play the Symphonies of Beethoven or the Overtures to Verdi's Operas. I made great friends with my fellow musicians and eventually married Leo, a very talented trumpet player. I will never forget Mendelssohn's wonderful music wafting through the church as the organist played our Bridal March.

Leo and I had a marvellous life together. We played duets and travelled with the orchestra. Often we gave small recitals in nursing homes just to cheer the old people up. The look on their faces was a wonderful sight as the music soared around them.

It was a freezing morning in December when the accident happened. A blanket of snow covered the whole of Surrey and a weak sun hung heavily in the misty sky. I didn't see the drunken driver in his speeding car but I felt the explosion of pain as it crashed into my body.

The surgeons worked for nine hours on my shattered frame. I slipped into a coma and my family began the waiting game.

Two weeks went by and eventually the Consultant informed my mother that sometimes music helped a patient to recover. My father played Chopin's Waltzes and Bach's Preludes on his iPod and the moving sounds echoed along the wards whilst I battled to live.

It was two days before Christmas. My mother, who had never left my side, began to sing "Silent Night" in her tranquil soprano voice. At that moment the miracle happened. A blazing white light shone in my brain... A door opened and I walked through. My eyes flickered open for a few seconds and saw my mother crying tears of joy.

What a celebration we had when I was home at last and growing stronger every day. My family's love of music had given me another chance at life and I was so grateful.

Two years on, it was Leo's and my turn to visit the Maternity Ward. This time I chose the Aria called *Nessun Dorma* by Puccini and we sang along as my beautiful son was born.

Music had formed the circle of my life.

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### **Commended: The Mermaid's Song** – by Giselle Grieger

CRASH! BANG! The storm out at sea was terrible. "Quick!" called out a man, "the storm is nearly here, bring us into land!"

The rusty old ship was out at sea with a ferocious storm above it. The captain of the ship yanked the wheel as hard as he could and the ship headed for land. But suddenly, some loud music came drifting towards their ship and hypnotised the captain! He stared blankly at the sea before steering the boat into a sharp rock. "Arrggghh!" screamed his crew. The captain jumped onto the rock and watched the men sink, sink down to the bottom of the ocean...

A man called Peter was one of the sunken crew. He watched helplessly as the captain swam all the way back to land. No one was prepared for what happened next. A beautiful sparkling mermaid came soaring out from a reef nearby and sang a weird, slow song. Suddenly, seven or eight more mermaids came and joined her. They all saw the men lying down on the seabed so nearly dead. The mermaids carried the crew miles away to a forest of long, green seaweed.

They lay the people down and gathered three long pieces of seaweed each. Peter heard them whispering something like "are you sure this will work?" and "it's the only way." The mermaids finished collecting it and swam down. As they wrapped the seaweed, they began to sing a sweet soft song and suddenly the crew were back alive and swimming up to the surface of the crystal clear water.

All of the men swam back to the surface and saw the captain un hypnotized on the beach. He was nearly dead like they had been so Peter took him back to the mermaids. They did the same ritual to the captain to what they had done to the rest of the crew and sang a swift beautiful song.

The mermaids found their old ship and repaired it. It was sunny, warm and bright out in the sea. But what mattered the most was that the group of mermaids were right next to the ship to guide them through the ocean.

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### **Commended: Mystery of Unknown Sound on Isle-of Cisumon – by Yunyeong Jung**

There was an explorer called George Marrison, who enjoyed the music. He once discovered an unknown island and found that there was no music. He named the island 'Isle-of-Cisumon' and played his guitar. When he bounced the strings, the sound of it stroke people's ears like an enthusiastic wave of the sea. People were astonished and interested in this unprecedented sound. This became a mystery and legend that led on for years to the people on the No-Music-Land.

Fred Elmbridge was a normal boy. Well, a normal boy on the Isle-of-Cisumon. He, like others, heard the story of George Marrison from his grandparents. He, like others, was curious about the sound that the explorer had performed. He kept wondering about the mysterious sound and longed to investigate it so much.

One day, he could not bear his curiosity anymore. Fred and his father decided to go to one of the big continents to explore the sound of the legend. Excited, they departed their long journey to the land.

After seven hours or so (it seemed like ten minutes to Fred), they finally reached the land.

Everything was different. It was extremely noisy compared to the Isle-of-Cisumon, so Fred and his father had to cover their ears to prevent them from going deaf. There was, of course, sound at the Isle-of-Cisumon but it wasn't that loud.

On the street was a group of singers and dancers. They sang a cheerful song that made the crowd sing and dance along. Fred saw people jumping and shouting as though they passed the moon.

"What are you doing that for? It looks a bit – sorry – stupid, jumping on a street for no reason," asked Fred.

" 'For no reason'? I'm not dancing for no reason; I'm dancing because I'm enjoying my time! 'For no reason'! Never in my life!" retorted a spectator, but too happy to look angry.

Fred could not understand what that person meant. However, after a few minutes, he noticed himself dancing unconsciously too. He had never experienced that feeling before. Though he did not know why he felt so positive, he wished to stay in the mood forever. When the song ended, Fred and his father continued travelling around the city.

They walked past the hospital. The patients at the hospital looked ill, but when they started singing, they were all smiling.

"Hello, Mister. I'm not trying to be rude, but why are you smiling? I would be miserable if I was too ill to stand up," inquired Fred to one of the patients.

"Ah, I don't know. I'm just happy! But why? Am I not supposed to smile?" answered the patient.

Fred wondered why the patients were so happy. In the hospital on Isle-of-Cisumon, things like that never happened. If someone was about to die, they became moody and depressed. He did not understand the whole thing. What made people so delighted? Why was everyone so joyful? What was special about the strange sound that he never heard on the Isle-of-Cisumon?

So to investigate more, he and his father attended a night concert. They thought the key to the mystery would be there.

“Hello, everyone! Are you ready? Let’s get started!” shouted the leader singer of the group. Audiences applauded and cheered. Fred and his father did it too.

*“Look out where you’re going!*

*You’re going to be singing!*

*The world of dreaming!”*

As the group – Beatles – began to sing, the crowd hummed and hoorayed. Fred and his father clapped along with the beat of the song.

Fred enjoyed all the songs that the group sang, but his favourite was one with Paul Cartney playing what looked like coconuts of palm trees on his island. Being a fan of its sound, he desired to have one of them.

It was nearly dawn when the concert finished. But Fred and his father wanted to stay. They hoped to hear that wonderful music again and again. They could not stop humming the songs.

As they could get signed by the musicians, Fred rushed to meet Paul Cartney.

“Hello, Mister! I really like your thingy’s sound! What’s that coconut called?” said Fred, almost jumping with excitement.

“What coconut, sorry? Oh, you mean my drum kit! Well, everyone likes the music that the drums make, you know!” replied Paul Cartney, laughing at jumping Fred and giving him an autograph.

“Music? What do you mean?” questioned Fred.

“You don’t know music? You’re a sad boy! Music is this thing making our friends jump in cheerfulness, child!”

Fred finally realised that the legendary sound was called music.

They spent another seven hours on the ship, amazed at his discovery, and arrived at the Isle-of-Cisumon.

“It was music! The sound in the mystery was music! It’s what makes people happy and sing along. We went to a concert and saw what’s called drums. I’m going to make it,” reported Fred proudly.

Then, Fred and his father cut off a palm tree and created their own drum kit. They used coconut as the base of a drum; the trunk of the tree as the major drum.

When Fred began to play, people could hear it: the powerful sound that encouraged them. Now, the music was spread all over the island, where no one had known about it before.

Like Fred did on the big land, people started wiggling and jiggling along with the beat of Fred's music. They were, for the first time, enjoying music. They finally solved the mystery of the unknown sound!

Fred's songs were not just about anything. It was about the power of music. It was about his little adventure. He inspired people about the importance of music and with his effort, all the people on the island knew that music was one of the key factors of their life!

They noticed that the word 'Cisumon' was 'No-music' when it is spelt backwards. Now that they could enjoy music any time they wanted, they changed the name of the island to 'Isle-of-Cisum'.

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### **Commended: James and His Guitar** – by Joe Moran

One boring lockdown day, a young boy called James sat on his sofa listening to his teenage brother John playing the guitar. If only *James* had a guitar! He talked about it with his mum and she said she would think about it. That always meant no.

"Oh mum, I would *really* enjoy it. I will even help with all the chores!" pleaded James.

Eventually he persuaded her by showing her how good John was at the guitar *and* how much John enjoyed playing. It took a great deal of reminding and complaining, but eventually, James persuaded her to get him a guitar *and* guitar lessons.

His mother was cautious though, warning James that if he broke his shiny new instrument he would have to pay to have it repaired.

His brother, though, was full of advice on how to play. He *even* showed James some chords! "Thanks John, you've really given me help," James told him.

James soon developed a natural understanding for the musical instrument. He soon learned quite a jumble of songs, including the popular 'Come Together' and also 'Coral Chorus'.

One day, he filmed himself as part of a TikTok video. He uploaded it on Wednesday, and the next day at school his friend Jack Scrumpet ran over to him and told him, "I've seen you on the internet! You are really good! I think your video is going viral!"

The video had indeed gone viral almost instantly, with James receiving 23,096,879 likes, 25,678,956 views and only 1k dislikes!

People loved James for his odd combination of songs: in his first video James put a beach conga along with a sad blues tune. In his second video he decided to play 'Renegade' by K-camp along with 'Danny Boy'.

Soon, he was part of almost everyone's daily life, almost posting a video every day!

However, sometimes people got jealous of James's success and some were bored of James's now famous songs, and posted comments such as "why don't you learn the piano?", or "Play the drums instead you bot".

But sadly, James did not know how to play any other instrument. His mum had no money left after spending it on lessons and the guitar. He explained this on another of his videos. It received a huge flood of advice, with people telling him to "stay strong" and "there are always loads of songs you can play on the guitar". "Thanks guys," a relieved James tweeted, "I don't know where I'd be without you." It was also giving him something to do in lockdown.

James didn't learn a new instrument, he just found old records, practised them, and made them good as new!

But his friend, Jack Scruppet had an even better idea. "Why don't I play along with you in your next song with my trumpet?" James had forgotten that Jack was learning a musical instrument too. "Yeah, I'd love you to play along". They made a great video together, which got loads of likes, and then they decided to ask some of the other people in their class to join in for some of their future videos.

They asked Billy Mello, who was good at the cello. Then they asked Felicity Boo who played the kazoo. Then they asked Hope Diallin, who played the violin.

They also asked Pee Anno, who, to their surprise, played the drums.

Now they had a whole band! And they had loads of fun playing together.

At the end of lockdown, James still practised his old songs and now he didn't care if people didn't watch, he just wanted to have fun! One day, he thought about stopping his videos. "I mean, I've had loads of fun and entertainment, but now I just want to play in front of live people rather than on videos". James performed his last ever video on July 1, 2021 and it was a good one too!

For the last concert, he asked every single one of his classmates to join in. The members of his class who couldn't play an instrument sang along, and some of them were even dancing. Even his mother and brother John joined in! John was in the background playing his guitar. They did a version of 'Blinding Light' by the weekend, and it was the most fun ever.

It was tearful at the end of the performance, but James had loved every second of it.

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### **Commended: The Piano Quest** – by Kayla Thompson

I sat in the back of the car with an unpleasant frown. I had ruined my school performance. "Cheer up lovey," mum smiled.

"No! You haven't ever been so humiliated in your life," I groaned "you've always been the best. I was the laughingstock of the whole school."

We drove home silent.

When we got home, I darted to my room shouting, "I'M NEVER PLAYING A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT AGAIN!" right before I slammed the door shaking the entire house.

Soon after, I heard mum and dad whispering; probably deciding who should talk to me. I speedily flipped over as I heard my door creak open; acted like I was asleep.

That night, I went to bed with my face dug in my pillow sobbing softly. But, when I woke up, my bed wasn't a mattress with a cuddly pillow on top, in fact, it was a whole guitar! I jumped out "bed" confused.

I went downstairs and all my furniture was musical instruments! And my parents weren't home! I gasped when I looked outside.

Everything was musical instruments! My neighbours' houses were ginormous trumpets, my mum's workplace was an entire saxophone, and all the doors of the houses and buildings were harps. The palm and apple trees had turned into maracas and microphones!

I was in a mix of emotions. I felt grumpy, excited, terrified and confused all at the same time. I went back indoors to pack my bag for a new adventure.

I should have known better than to walk because my legs got tired, and it was turning sunset.

I thought I was the only person in this world, so I went into a random house to rest. I went on to the couch to catch some shut eye.

I woke up to a girl pointing a violin at my face; I jumped up.

"Who are you and what do you want," the girl fretted, "you've got ten seconds.

"I, um," I spat, "I shouted that I wasn't going to play music again and now I'm here."

"OK I'm Jude. I got stuck here after smashing my recorder in frustration and I can't get out. I've tried to get out, but I failed the test and now I'm stuck. I'll see if I can help you leave this weird place."

We got up and left. Jude said that there is a special key to get back home, but to get it, you must go through a maze and find the Master's secret book. Then teach him how to play an instrument so that you can go back to your world.

We walked into town and separated at the library. I went in the library, inside was an enormous maze of books.

"I'm never going to find the book," I sighed.

After about forty minutes I found the centre. Jade didn't tell me what the name of the book was. But she did tell me that the book was purple. So, I went to the music aisle and finally, after a whole hour, I found a purple book. Printed at the front was an old Egyptian guy with a long beard.

"This must be it!" I danced.

I did the celebration dance that I had practiced before my failed school performance. I failed because I was playing the piano and suddenly my fingers got cramp! My fingers pressed all the wrong keys before I started screaming with pain.

I found my way back outside and went to the tallest building in town. It was a bass guitar. I went up the stairs and looked around before I heard a deep voice saying, "who enters."

I froze.

"Um, I'm Shawn," I shuddered

"Do you have my journal?" he spoke.

I turned around and there stood a tall man with a beard encased in solid gold. He had small eyes and dry lips. His hands, face, feet and neck were covered in wrinkles. I saw he was the same Egyptian guy in the book.

"I have indeed brought you your book," I bravely spoke. "Will you teach me the ways of an instrument?" he asked. "Yes. I will be teaching you piano."

We walked through a door to a room with a grand piano and a tall door behind it. I showed the Master 'C' up to 'G'. then gave me a riddle to solve:

"Out of this place, where you want to be, All you need now is to find the keys. Look around and tell me all you see."

“So, it is a key but how will this riddle get me a key?” I murmured, ‘look around and tell me all you see?’

I said the sentence repeatedly in my head and the words ‘Keys, All and See’ naturally just flew in my head. I kept saying those words over and over and then I thought of the whole sentence completely differently.

“What if he means that it's not a key but something else? What other keys are there?’ I thought out loud.

“Piano keys!” I jumped.

“And maybe not looking to see but looking for the ‘C’ key, and in the riddle it says ‘all you see’ so maybe all the ‘C’ keys need to be pressed.

I ran, Super-Sonic speed, to the piano and pressed from the top ‘C’ to the bottom; Nothing. Then I pressed bottom ‘C’ to top, the ginormous doors opened and there stood a portal. I shouted out “Thank you!” hoping the Master would hear and jumped straight in.

Suddenly, I woke up on my bed with my face still dug in my pillow just as I feel asleep.

“Morning sweetie,” my mum said with a smile. Her expression changed “You may get mad at me, but I have signed you up for a different piano studio to practice. Would you like to go?”

I remembered my adventure. “Sure, why not!” I smiled. Mum gave me a big hug and led me to breakfast.

It was all a dream.

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### **Commended: The Missing Minuet** – by Isabelle Wild

As I cautiously stepped outside into my winter wonderland of a garden, I noticed the cold, soft piles of snow heaped on the frozen patio like a snow lion. I could feel the gentle, bone-chilling breeze brushing down my tingling spine. I looked up into the branches of the tall, slender trees as the hazardous snow heaped onto their long arms. Far away, the tweeting birds crowded into a huddle like penguins trying to keep warm, as gusts of wind buffeted them. All the bushes were draped with an icy scarf, comforting them as they persevered against the strong wind.

In the blink of an eye, I noticed a faint rustling coming from the icy bush a metre away from me. Despite the fact my heart was drumming heavily in my chest, I plodded through the deep, fresh snow towards the mysterious sound. As I arrived, something zoomed out! I was quick to react and sprinted after it around my slippery garden and into a stiff hedge. As I caught up, I noticed a shiny, circular thing winding its way up a gnarled, ancient willow tree. I climbed up, ice flying into my eyes. When I reached the top, to my surprise, I saw a gleaming, gold beetle.

Gently, I perched on a branch, trying not to disturb it. As it crawled delicately over to me, it started speaking English! It crawled up my arm, its legs digging into my cold flesh. I noticed it's big, round, gentle red eyes staring at me desperately. Then out from a hollow in the trunk came about 100 more beetles. They bowed towards me in respect before they started telling me their amazing story.

“Hello, I am known as the shiny beetle, but my real name is Viola,” the beetle said as she pulled out her violin and started playing the first few expressive bars of La Cinquantaine.

“These beetles are my friends and family. We are The Beatle Band. We were on our way to our next performance near to the Egyptian pyramids. On our second day of trekking through the dunes, there was a giant, sandy storm. We lost sight of each other and were so scared. When we managed to find each other, we counted our numbers and noticed Minuet was missing. We looked everywhere, but there was no sign of her. We started to worry a lot because she has breathtaking, flute-playing powers. If she got into the wrong hands, someone could make people do anything they wanted by making Minuet play an enchanted tune. We haven’t seen her since. Please can you help us?”

After a few hours of planning, we decided we would contact some of the beetle’s friends, who live far away, to see if they had seen any sign of Minuet. By the very next day, we had news from one of the beetle friends that Minuet had been spotted in Scotland in a glass jar, in a rucksack, belonging to our arch nemesis, The Stench. We began to panic. The Stench is the smelliest, most devious skunk know to beetles.

As quick as lightning, we jumped up and packed our bags ready for the long journey ahead. We decided it would take too long to go by the treacherous road. Instead, we took a shortcut through an underground tunnel. Even though the ground was icy we did not slip. As we neared the end, we could see the blinding light shining in through the cave-like exit.

We could all see the faint outline of The Stench’s impregnable fortress as it loomed in the distance, its crumbling turrets peeping out of the clouds. As we trudged up the steep, rocky hill, dust flying up from the dry barren ground, an idea popped into my head.

“Beatles, I have an idea. What about I offer one of willow-wood flutes to The Stench and tell him it is magical, while you sneak in through the door and find poor Minuet.”

“That’s a brilliant idea,” said Viola and they all agreed.

Once we reached the intimidating fortress and its majestic drawbridge, we split up. As The Stench liked to keep up-to-date with technology, he had installed a doorbell. I rang it and got let in straight away. The Stench was standing at the opening door. His rancid smell buffeted me in the face nearly knocking me off my feet with its putrid aroma.

“Mr Stench,” I said, my nose twitching in disgust, “I have come to sell you this enchanted flute. You can use it to hypnotise anyone you want into doing whatever you want.” The Stench rudely snatched the flute and quickly slammed and bolted the gargantuan, creaking, oak door.

Meanwhile, the beetles had sneaked through the open door, as I distracted The Stench. They found Minuet in The Stench’s bedroom, still trapped in her glass jar, barely able to breathe. They quickly undid the lid and set her free.

Out of the corner of her eye, Viola spotted a wide, empty drain which they gratefully scrambled into to escape the fortress. They were nearing the end of the drainpipe when suddenly an alarm starting ringing. “Escaping beetles, escaping beetles, escaping beetles,” it screamed. Grabbing iron hooks appeared out of every corner trying to catch them. One of the beetles got caught but they saved him by linking arms and legs and clutching each other

so tight! The beetles managed to scramble out of the drain before scuttling fast along the lawn into the hedge where I had agreed to meet them. We sprinted out of the cinder black gates and disappeared into a thicket.

Once safely back in the icy tunnel, we slipped and slid back home. When we arrived home we had the biggest party ever! The Beetle Band played La Cinqantaine to the beat of their thumping beetle feet. I visit them every day as they live safe in their gnarled, ancient willow tree at the end of my garden.

*La Cinqantaine, by Gabriel-Marie is actually performed by Isabelle Wild.*

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## Category: Poems

### 1st Place: **The Piano** – by Daniella Clifton

Walk on a journey,  
where the ground are salt and pepper slabs.  
You see the way your steps take on a rhythm,  
with an underlying beat supporting you all the way.  
You hear a tune bloom,  
tend to it and cultivate it,  
holding on and letting go  
like memories.

You look up,  
you see jet-black sparrows,  
they seem to follow your steps.  
Do they jerk up and down,  
or glide smoothly?

Held by these sparrows, are golden gossamer threads,  
they seem to be tying everything together,  
your steps,  
your headspace,  
your emotions.  
Do you see now?  
This is a piano.

---

### 2nd Place: **Missing Music** – by Willow Wolff

Just before the world went mad,  
Shows and concerts made us glad.  
Music flowed from theatres and halls  
And singing was allowed in shopping malls.

Popstars and performers kept our world alive;  
Music helped good spirits survive.  
We had to lock down and singing was banned;  
A tragedy for choirs across the land.

The curtain came down on orchestras too,  
And the loss of pantomimes made us feel blue.  
Covid has made the melodies stop,  
We can only listen to on-screen pop.

Come back live music, we miss what you bring!  
We can't wait to feel the rhythms and sing  
At festivals and live shows soon  
We love you from the stars and moon.

---

### **3rd Place: Music Is For Everyone** – by Eva Mephram

Music is for everyone,  
A baby's first nursery rhyme,  
Or a teenager listening to Stormzy's grime,  
Dad's hits from the 90s chart,  
And Grandpa's classical Mozart.

Music is for everyone,  
It can cheer you up when you are sad,  
And calm you down when you are mad  
From Michael Jackson's Billie Jean,  
To the Beatles Yellow Submarine.

Music is for everyone,  
You can listen at home on your stereo,  
Or in the car on your radio,  
Capital plays Uptown Funk,  
While Absolute has the 70s punk.

Music is for everyone,  
On holiday sitting by the pool,  
Listening to Oasis and Wonderwall,  
And underneath the hot sun,  
With George Ezra's Shotgun.

Music is for everyone,  
The old man singing the blues,  
And Elvis dancing in his Blue Suede Shoes,  
Festive songs on Christmas Day,  
To Three Little Birds and reggae.

Music is for everyone,  
It can mend your heart or make it pound,  
Because with music Love Is All Around,  
So bye bye American Pie,  
Music will never die.

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**Highly Commended: It** – by Sophie Crichton

You can hear It but you can't see It,  
It can move you but you can't touch It,  
Not any violence but sometimes a hit,  
It can make you cry,  
It can make you laugh,  
It can make you feel powerful, even though you are shy,  
It can be quaint or It can be modern,  
It can be country or It can be house,  
Once heard, never forgotten,  
Words or no words,  
It can bring alive memories that were once neglected,  
It can tell a story through instruments or birds,  
What could It be?

---

**Highly Commended: All The World's An Orchestra** – by Matilda Hoberman

All the world's an orchestra,  
And all the men and women merely instruments.  
They have their solos, and their intervals,  
And one man, in his time plays a symphony,  
The piece being split into seven movements,  
each instrument having their part.  
At first, the piccolo.  
Squawking and warbling like a baby.  
And then, the screeching violin,  
With mechanical arm movements,  
Dreading each time he has to play, just like a reluctant schoolboy.  
Then, the viola. playing a muffled notes,  
Using too much vibrato,  
Watching his rhythm, like a lover, maid to his mistress's eyebrow.  
And then, the cello.  
Gruffly drawing at the strings,  
Seeking to be the best, and keeping in time with the orchestra,  
Like a soldier.  
And then, the clarinet.  
The round, solid notes wringing throughout the theatre,  
Repeating phrases,  
and playing with draconian rhythm, like a justice.  
The sixth movement shifts into a soft and melancholy E minor,  
A deep, forte tune turning into high, woodwind treble,  
While the oboe mournfully whispers its solo, like an old man.  
The last movement of all, which ends this strange, eventful piece,  
Where one lone flute, the lights growing dim,  
Sits by himself, wrapping the stage in the depressing sound of a dying embouchure,  
Barely heard, as his last notes die away, like a second childishness, and mere oblivion.

---

**Highly Commended: The Differences of Music** – by Summer McDougall

The vast variety of sounds bounce around my head,  
Then they all come back to me when I lie in bed.  
Whizz, bang, boom and fizzle,  
The different noises make one melodic scribble!

Sadness, happiness, grief and pleasure,  
Music can be like a box of mixed treasure.  
Open it up and you will see,  
Different genres of music branch out like a tree.

Pop, jazz, hip-hop and more,  
The emotion you will feel can't be guaranteed before.  
Some will give you a happy vibe,  
Some you simply can't describe.

Some will make you sing,  
Some could make you swing.  
It may be played with a booming drum,  
Or it could be just a simple quiet hum.

Everybody likes different types,  
Just like clothing - stars or stripes.  
We all have different preferences,  
And that's what makes our differences.

---

**Highly Commended: Clarinet of Concord** – by Jet Pariera-Jenks

I raise my clarinet, shining black,  
my heart beat calms from fast to slow,  
I push at the worry that tries to attack,  
and with a breath the music flows,  
A wave of joy breaks over me,  
but I remain focused, never stopping,  
my mind rejoices in tranquility,  
the pace of song neither ceasing nor dropping.  
I feel the power of determination,  
my heart beat races out of time,  
I feel not like one clarinet but a nation,  
this recording will be fine.  
I lower my instrument and slowly grin  
I knew I could do it, I knew it deep within

---

**Highly Commended: Bird Music** – by Alexander Walker

Bubbling calls,  
Babbling trills,  
World trembling with  
Wren's warbling,  
Plover's piping,  
Sparrow's chittering,  
Thrushes' drumming,  
Buzzard's mewing,  
Pigeon's cooing,  
Great tit's wisp and lisp,  
Jackdaw's chatter, natter, clatter,  
Starling's ringtones, whirring, beeping,  
All song, all beautiful, all music,  
Cadence cascading,  
Fluting fluttering,  
Musical muttering,  
Diffusing tune,  
Plaintive song,  
Precious music,  
Joyful throng,  
Bird song is glimmering, shimmering,  
Bird song is glinting, gilding,  
Like liquid gold water falling,  
All song, all beautiful, all music.

---

**Commended: Music** – by Molly Baskerville

She makes a single tear run down my cheek,  
She makes me sing on my darkest days of the week,  
She makes the world seem simpler,  
She makes me dance,  
She makes me give people a second chance.

She's my friend,  
My friend who will be there until the end,  
She's a breath of fresh air when I need to escape  
the world for the day,  
I need her in every way.

She is the trumpet,  
She is the flute,  
She is the piano,  
She is the beat that moves my feet.  
She is the guitar,

She is the recorder,  
She is the oboe,  
She is the song, small and long  
She is the trombone,  
She is the harp,  
She is the ukulele,  
Even when you are unaware, she is there.  
She is everywhere!

---

**Commended: Music To My Ears** – by Francesca Bates

Birds singing on the breeze,  
To me that is so dear,  
Grass rustling in the wind,  
That's music to my ears.

Waves lapping on the beach,  
Wash away my fears,  
Friends laughing happily,  
That's music to my ears.

Leaves falling to the ground,  
Coming to the end of the year,  
Under my feet they crackle,  
That's music to my ears.

The crunch of boots from outside,  
Through my window, I hear,  
This snowman has come alive,  
That's music to my ears!

---

**Commended: Music To My Ears** – by Ihita Boddupalli

When the trees sway,  
Swish swish they say,  
In the nature there is no fear,  
It is music to my ears.

The beach waves flow,  
Gently touch my feet and go,  
Through the sand they tear,  
It is music to my ears.

The shell close to the ear,  
Lovely waves I hear,  
Takes me to the sea where,

It is music to my ears.

Falling raindrops,  
On the rooftop,  
Washes away all tears,  
It is music to my ears.

The hands of the clock,  
Go tick tock,  
So peaceful when near,  
It is music to my ears.

All these sounds make me calm,  
Flowing through my body and tingling my palm,  
It is the music to my ears,  
That makes me lose my fears.

---

**Commended: Blast To The Beat** – by Ty Bourne

Blast to the beat, blast to the beat, the music will sweep you off your feet.  
Jump to the trumpet, while eating a crumpet, roam round the xylophone whilst eating a scone.  
Hum to the drum when having some fun, sing to the blues before you have a snooze.  
Sing a melody so you don't feel melancholy, sing a prayer if you are aware.  
Sing an anthem if you're feeling handsome, sing heavy metal to boil like a kettle.  
Blast to the beat, blast to the beat, the music will sweep you off your feet.  
The smaller the beater the rhythm is neater, if your voice is strong so is the song.  
If you're in a band share the land, if you're solo songs are good in slo-mo.  
If you play the flute get ready to toot, if you like to scuba you should listen to the tuba.  
Blast to the beat, blast to the beat, the music will sweep you off your feet.  
If you make a song, there is no right or wrong, if you make a rhythm, it's a good decision.  
If you have a tired partner don't make them work harder, if you have a band don't feel too grand.  
If you're an artist don't think you're the smartest, if you're a podcaster don't just go faster.  
Blast to the beat, blast to the beat. I hoped I swept you off your feet.

---

**Commended: Music To My Ears** – by Charlotte Buss

Boom, Boom, Boom what's that sound?  
Mr Timpani has just come in with a bound.  
Hold tight I can feel a storm crashing,  
and look there goes the lightning flashing.

At last the sun is up and the sky is clear,  
finally there is light, no need to fear.

I am lured to a place by a stream with the harp by my side,  
where the graceful swans swim around with pride.

I can hear a faint pitter patter falling from the sky,  
the xylophone chimes softly as the rain begins to cry.  
The birds sit high up in the trees shaking their feathers,  
preparing to take flight once there is better weather.

Beyond my wildest dreams I can see,  
a rainbow on the horizon, how wonderful it is to me.  
The gentle sound of the violin creates this vision,  
I can't wait for the next part of the expedition.

The enchanting sound of the wonderful bassoon so low,  
it reminds me of a seed starting to grow.  
A little acorn as small as can be,  
flourishing into an impressive oak tree.

What's that I hear, a unique voice full of soul,  
this must be the voice of a singer achieving their goal.  
This feeling makes me strong,  
now I know nothing will go wrong.

All these sounds are exceptionally beautiful to me,  
but if played together, so powerful they can be.  
Individually they make me happy, sad or take away my fears,  
together they are extraordinary, music to my ears.

---

### **Commended: What Is Music** – by Romilly Hall

What is music?  
Sing-in- the- shower joy!  
What is music?  
release from sorrows and pain  
What is music?  
a story told through rhythm  
What is music?  
a word  
a world  
an escape  
hope  
home  
What is music?  
me

---

**Commended: Music Is Forever** – by Aaron Matthews

Music is good for joy  
Music is good for pleasure  
Music is good for mental health  
And music is good forever  
Music music here and there  
Music music everywhere

Music can soothe a crying baby  
Music can reduce stress and anxiety  
Girl or boy, younger or older  
Music is your best friend forever  
Music music here and there  
Music music everywhere

Animals like different kinds of music  
High or low, fast or slow  
Do we know?  
Music music here and there  
Music music everywhere

Plants like music too  
'Cause it helps them grow  
Tune into some Jazz and Classical  
And you'd be surprised how fast they grow!  
Music music here and there  
Music music everywhere

Pitter-patter Pitter-patter goes the rain  
Whoosh-whoosh Whoosh-whoosh flows the river  
Splish-splosh Splish-splosh splashes the sea waves  
Chirp-chirp Chirp-chirp sings the birds  
Music is even hidden in nature!  
Music music here and there  
Music music everywhere

---

**Commended: Music** – by Isabella Whitehead

Listening to music  
Is absolutely great;  
It can leave you feeling happy,  
Or in a sad state.

Slow music makes me feel  
As calm as a swan,  
But fast music makes me

Just want to have fun.

Jazzy music is the beat;  
As I shake my hands,  
It makes me want to tap my feet  
And never fails to make me dance.

Rock music always makes me  
Jump, dance and cheer;  
It can be full of happiness,  
Or even full of fear.

But playing on an instrument  
Is a completely different thing;  
You are the one making  
Other people dance and sing.

So, goodwill to all musicians,  
And let the singers live long;  
For they've given us something special  
By filling our lives with song

---

### **Commended: The Rock Storm – by Fynn**

The rock band bounded onto the stage with a thud,  
I was so excited, I could feel it in my blood!

They checked their instruments making them ping alive,  
The band were ready, all of the five.

The guitar let out a loud ringing strum,  
All those talented fingers, that talented thumb!

The drums rolled in like a banging thunderstorm,  
Each and every cymbal wanting to perform.

The bass boomed away with it's low grumbling groan,  
The strings humming with a tuneful moan.

The keyboard zapped like a bolt of bright lightning,  
It gave me a jolt, it was a little bit frightening!

The singer chimed in with his harmonious tune,  
The storm was in full swing, it was like a typhoon!

My feet started jumping to the sound of the beat,  
I really love music, it makes me complete.

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The R C Sherriff Trust is an independent charitable trust, established through the terms of the Will of playwright, R C Sherriff. It has been promoting and developing the arts in the Borough of Elmbridge, for 25 years. Further details about the Trust can be found at [www.rcsherrifftrust.org.uk](http://www.rcsherrifftrust.org.uk)

Elmbridge Borough Council's Arts Development seeks to increase opportunities for people to engage in the arts, culture and heritage of our Borough, either individually or through partnerships, such as those with the R.C. Sherriff Trust that make Elmbridge Primary Schools Festival possible. With the aim of engaging residents, Elmbridge Borough Council's Art Development supports arts organisations and presents arts-based activities that improve the physical and mental health of people who live and work in Elmbridge.

