

## ★ **Once Upon a Tune: Stories from the Orchestra**

**James Mayhew**

Otter-Barry Books (Apr 1, 2022)

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James Mayhew's *Once Upon a Tune* is a beautiful collection of multicultural folk tales.

Recouching traditional tales for young audiences, this illustrated book includes entries like “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” (of *Fantasia* fame), a condensed version of Henrik Ibsen’s *Peer Gynt*, and the story of William Tell. It encompasses settings across Europe and Asia, with glimpses of cultural history involved. Here, people complete treacherous tasks in the hopes of marrying princesses, and women tell enchanting stories in the hopes of living just one more night.

Each story is a handful of pages long, employing precise, eloquent language to depict narrative complexities in a compressed space. They have nostalgic, fairy tale evocations, complemented by rich atmospheres and immersive tones that bring their faraway, fantastical settings close, and that vivify their good and evil casts.

The book’s gorgeous multimedia illustrations are made of layered papers, resulting in complex patterns and vibrant colors. In them, curling waves pull people out to sea; colorful patchwork outfits capture lifestyles and livelihoods; and hairy green trolls and other monsters burst from the page in awe-inspiring glory.

Musical note motifs dance across the pages as part of the background, acting as a reminder that this book is meant to be read to the music suggested at the start of each story. Still, whether enjoyed with music or without, this is a captivating book. Its dreamlike storytelling and magical illustrations represent fresh spins on timeless classics.

*Once Upon a Tune* is an enchanting collection of familiar tales paired with magnificent artwork and music.

AIMEE JODOIN (March / April 2022)

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