

DINOS CONSTANTINIDES

The Dancing Shoes

LRC 216



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for reader, dancers, flute, percussion, and strings

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The **Dancing Shoes** is the fifth in a series of musical stories for children, involving small ensemble, reader, and solo instruments. **The Dancing Turtle** (1999). **The Singing Cucaracha** (2000), **Lazy Jack** (2001), and **The Penguin Parade** (2002) are the previous pieces in the series.

All the stories are adapted by Judy Constantinides for reader and ensemble. This work may also be performed without text. In this case, the repeats function as regular repeats would.

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The music of Dinos Constantinides has been performed throughout the world. He is the recipient of many grants, commissions and awards, including first prize in the 1981 Brooklyn College International Chamber Opera Competition and the 1985 First Midwest Chamber Opera Conference. He also received the 1985 American New Music Consortium Distinguished Service Award, the 1989 Glen Award of l'Ensemble of New York, several Meet the Composer grants and numerous ASCAP Standard Awards. In the 1994 he was honored with a Distinguished Teacher White House Commission on Presidential Scholars.

THE DANCING SHOES

A long time ago, there was a shoemaker who lived in a village where there was little music or laughter because everyone was too set on making money and keeping up with his neighbors.

The shoemaker and his wife were hardworking but very poor nevertheless, and one evening they realized that they were down to their last bit of food. The shoemaker gathered some scraps of leather from the floor of his shop and carefully cut out the pieces for one last pair of shoes, which he laid on his bench all ready to be stitched up in the morning. Then he and his wife went wearily to bed, not knowing where their next meal would come from.

What was their surprise when they woke up next morning to find two beautiful shoes already stitched and polished to perfection, sitting in their shop's window display. No sooner had the couple discovered the shoes, than a prosperous round-bellied merchant waddled in and begged to be allowed to buy them for a very large sum! The cobbler and his wife were delighted and sold him the beautiful shoes. The merchant immediately kicked off his old shoes and put on the new ones to show them off to the townspeople passing by. No sooner had he left the shop than he began to dance—his shoes twinkling and shining on his feet!—as he happily made his way home.

The excited shoemaker and his wife took the merchant's money and straightaway bought some more leather—enough to make two pairs of ladies shoes, which they very carefully cut out and left on the workbench to be stitched next day. Then they went to bed. The next morning, lo and behold! two lovely pairs of dainty ladies' shoes were sitting in the shop window, all stitched up and ready to be sold! In the blink of an eyelash, two well-dressed ladies came into the shop and bought the shoes for a great many coins. Putting the shoes on, the ladies immediately began to smile and tripped lightly out into the street, holding their long skirts up and humming a tune as they tippy-toed home.

The happy shoemaker rushed out to buy some more leather—this time there were enough coins to buy leather for four pairs of children's shoes! That night he and his wife did as before: they cut out the four pairs of shoes to be worked on in the morning and left them on the workbench. Then they went to bed with light hearts, still hearing faintly the tune the ladies were humming as they left.

Next day, when the couple awoke at dawn, four pairs of children's shoes sat in the window, shiny and saucy, all ready for little feet. Soon a housewife came bustling by with her four children in tow, and the shoes caught the youngsters' eyes. They joyfully pulled their mother into the shop. Each pair of shoes was a perfect fit for one of the children, so their mother handed the wife a generous amount in payment. In a twinkling, there were four delighted children with new shoes on their feet, dancing round the shop and out the door with their mother hustling after them!

And so it continued for the shoemaking couple: each night they laid out the leather, cut out to make into shoes, and in the morning the shoes were completely finished and in the window, where they soon were sold to the eager townspeople. Pretty soon the shoemaker and his wife were no longer poor but were living comfortably. One night, the shoemaker turned to his wife and said: "Let us stay awake tonight, and discover who or what has

brought us this wonderful good fortune!” So that nite the couple hid behind the workshop door and waited. Promptly at midnight they heard the patter of little feet and two tiny elves appeared, scampering around the room. Taking up their tiny hammers and needle and thread, they approached the bench and stitched and hammered the leather, singing and laughing all the while. When they had finished, the completed shoes went in the display case, and the two elves gathered up their tools and slipped away.

The watching couple were astonished at their good luck, and the wife said: “These two little elves have brought us prosperity—let us make them a gift—they look cold without any shoes or clothes!” As quickly as they could, the man and his wife stitched and sewed. The shoemaker made two tiny pairs of elegant boots out of leather and his wife made little trousers, shirts, vests and tiny hats to match. When they were finished, they laid their gifts on the workbench and slid out of the room to hide behind the door.

Presently the clock struck twelve midnight and the two tiny elves danced into the room and up to the bench, prepared to work. Instead, they were surprised to spy two little outfit neatly laid out next to two pairs of fine boots! Smiling and laughing, the elves quickly put the clothes on and skipped around the room, looking at each other this way and that, admiring their finery and clapping their hands with glee. And then they turned and danced out of the room singing:

“Here’s to the good shoemaker and his wife!
May they be blessed with a happy life!”

From that day on, the shoemaker and his wife never laid eyes on the elves again, but they continued to prosper, and they continued to create magic shoes for all the villagers, shoes that set their feet a-dancing and their voices singing, and *everyone* lived happily ever after!