

Dinos Constantinides

The Magic Snake

for Reader and string orchestra

LRC 255

Story adapted by Judy Constantinides



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Magni Publications

THE MAGIC SNAKE (2011)

for reader and string orchestra

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Duration: 10 minutes

The Magic Snake is adapted by Judy Constantinides from a Chinese Story.

The Magic Snake is the eleventh in a series of musical stories for children, involving small ensembles, reader, and solo instruments. **The Dancing Turtle** (1999), **The Singing Cucaracha** (2000), **Lazy Jack** (2001), **The Penguin Parade** (2002), **The Dancing Shoes** (2003) **Anansi and the Hat Shaking Dance** (2006), **The Cat that Walked by Himself** (2007) **How the Camel Got His Hump** (2008), and **The Magic Pot** (2009) and **The Frog Prince** (2010) are the previous pieces in the series.

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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.

Judy Constantinides has been a storyteller and children's librarian for over forty years. She has a BA in English from the University of Rochester and an M. S. in Library Service from Columbia University. She is recently retired from the East Baton Rouge Parish Library where she worked as a Children's Librarian for over 14 years, serving as Head of Children's Services at Bluebonnet Regional Branch Library for six years. She also reviews children's books for the *School Library Journal*, and appears as storyteller often with the Louisiana Sinfonietta.

THE MAGIC SNAKE

A long time ago in China there lived a poor widow and her son, whose name was TEN CHOU. Ten Chou was a very good-hearted boy, and cheerfully helped people who were poorer than they were, until finally there was almost nothing left for his mother and him to eat. Finally, his mother handed him a knapsack with some rice cakes in it, and told him to go out into the world to seek his fortune.

Ten Chou put the cakes in his knapsack and set off down the road. At noontime he sat down in the shade under a tree by a river to rest and eat a little. But before he had even taken a bite, he noticed a poor, thin snake on the ground that at first glance looked lifeless. When the boy saw the snake move a little, he crumbled some of his rice cake and shared it with the snake.

After a while, Ten Chou got up to go on and gently picked up the snake and put it carefully into his knapsack. Each day as they walked he would share his rice cakes with the snake, and it seemed to Ten Chou that each day the snake grew a little bigger. Finally came the day when Ten Chou sadly told the snake: "I cannot take care of you any longer—the rice cakes are all gone and I must look for my fortune." Suddenly the snake spoke and said: "Take me to the nearby river and I will repay you for your kindness." So Ten Chou did as the snake directed and slipped it into the river. As the water touched the snake, it was transformed into a beautiful dragon with shining scales and wings. And the dragon said: "Here is your fortune: behind the tree over there you will find a horse. Say to it 'Kishe, Kishe, Kishe' and you will see what happens." Then the dragon disappeared under the water.

Ten Chou went to the horse and said "Kishe, Kishe, Kishe " and the horse answered "Nee-how, Nee-how" and from its mouth dropped golden coins. Ten Chou put them in his pocket with delight and turned to go back home with his wonderful horse. But it was a long way and it grew dark, so when he came to an inn, the boy decided to spend the night there. The innkeeper came out to welcome him and take his horse to the barn, and Ten Chou said: "Feed my horse and he will be fine, but do not say to him 'Kishe, Kishe, Kishe.'" So the innkeeper settled the horse in the barn and when everyone was sleeping he crept out to the barn and said "Kishe, Kishe, Kishe" and lo and behold gold

coins dropped from the horse's mouth. "Ah, this is a magic horse!" said the innkeeper. "I must keep it!" And, in the morning, he gave Ten Chou another horse that looked exactly like the first.

Ten Chou returned home and proudly showed his mother the horse, saying "I have made our fortune—this is a magic horse!" But when he said "Kishe, Kishe" the horse said "Nee how, Nee how" but no gold coins dropped from his mouth. "This is just a plain old horse!" exclaimed his mother angrily, and she drove her son out of the door.

Ten Chou went back to see the dragon. "Your horse is not magic and it does not give golden coins so I have not yet made my fortune!"

"Well," said the dragon, "If you look behind that bamboo over there you will find a rooster—say to it "Kishe, Kishe, Kishe" and you will see what happens." Ten Chou thanked the dragon and went to find the rooster. When he said the magic words, the rooster said "Co-coo-coo" and out of its mouth came silver coins. Ten Chou clapped his hands and picked up the coins to put in his pocket, then took the rooster under his arm and turned towards home.

But the way was long, and when he came again to the inn he stopped overnight. "Here," he said to the innkeeper, "take care of my rooster—he will be no trouble if you do not say 'Kishe, Kishe, Kishe.'" Later that night, the innkeeper snuck out to the barn and said "Kishe, Kishe, Kishe" and lo and behold, silver coins fell out of the rooster's mouth. "Ah, this is a magic rooster!" said the innkeeper. "I shall keep it!" And he gave another rooster back to Ten Chou.

The boy went back to his mother and said proudly: "I have made our fortune—here is a magic rooster!" But when he said "Kishe, Kishe, Kishe" the rooster answered "Co-coo-coo" but no silver coins fell from his mouth. "This is just an ordinary rooster!" said his mother angrily, and she drove Ten Chou out of the door.

Ten Chou went sadly back to the dragon and said, "This is not a magic rooster and it does not give silver coins so I have not made my fortune!" And the dragon said "Here is one more gift—Take that stick lying over there and say 'Kishe, Kishe, Kishe' and you will see what happens. But," he added, "if you want it to stop, you must say 'TING! TING! TING!'" Ten Chou thanked the dragon and doubtfully picked up the stick, though he thought to himself "This crooked old stick will never make my fortune!"

He started off home slowly. When he came to the inn, the innkeeper was waiting for him and eagerly welcomed him. Ten Chou gave him the stick to put away for the nite, and said “Oh, but do not say ‘Kishe, Kishe, Kishe’ to that stick please.”

Of course, the innkeeper went straight away to the stick as soon as Ten Chou’s back was turned and said “Kishe, Kishe, Kishe!” And the stick began to dance and beat the innkeeper about his legs and body and arms. Although the innkeeper jumped up and down and sideways and cried “Stop! Stop! Stop!” it was no use—the stick did not stop. The desperate innkeeper finally shouted out to Ten Chou “Stop the stick and I will give you back your own horse and your own rooster!” So Ten Chou joyfully called out “TING! TING! TING!” and the stick stopped beating the innkeeper, and the innkeeper gave the magic horse and magic rooster back to Ten Chou. Ten Chou went happily back to his mother with his fortune made.

After that, whenever he and his mother needed anything, they had silver and gold coins aplenty. But they kept the stick—just in case!