

# The Winter Circus

## A concert piece for children

Music Alf Hoffmann

Text Monika Reimers

English Roy Kift

### *Music No. 1*

With the last few notes of the little orchestra and the applause of the audience still ringing in her ears Pina stood alone and lost in her dreams on the square in front of the circus.

It had been a remarkable year. She had made her first solo appearance riding on the back of a horse as a circus princess. She could still sense the admiring eyes of the many young spectators as she performed her daring bareback tricks.

The workers had already taken down the circus tent and now the tiny Circus Maroni was about to set off on the journey to its winter quarters in a nearby village.

This time Pina had been given permission by her father, the circus director, to sit in the large tractor which was leading the circus convoy.

As always it had proved difficult to start the tractor.

But finally it sprung to life and the journey began.

### *Music no. 2*

### *Music no. 3 (Text in music till end of the arrow)*

The noise of the heavy tractor motor and the fog outside put Pina in a strangely dreamy mood.

After a two hour journey they reached the peak of a broad high hill.

Below them lay their destination. They looked down on to the village with its large ploughed fields that ended in a wood. Swathes of fog were still rising from the tips of the fir trees -

This was to be their home until the following spring.

The village had never experienced such a sight: the long line of coloured wagons with the title "Circus Maroni" trundled over the village road towards a farm at the end of the road, owned by Robin and his mother.

It was the smallest farm in the village, but it contained a large old barn with an adjacent meadow.

This was to be the winter quarters for the circus folk.

Robin had been so excited that he had scarcely slept a wink. Indeed he could hardly wait to greet his friends – as he secretly called them.

After a brief warm welcome the work began. Everybody knew what to do, how to do it, and where to do it. Even the circus children had their own particular jobs.

First of all the doors of the animal wagons are opened. Brightly marked ponies, a donkey, a camel and a pig have to be brought into the meadow. Suddenly the pig turns tail and scampers back onto the street. The circus folk know this pig only too well. One of the boys chases him, jumps onto the galloping pig, throws his arms around its neck and, more or less lying on the back of the pig, grasps it tightly between his legs.

The pig seems to like this. It began to slow down, turns around, grunting in satisfaction and runs back to the other animals in the meadow with the delighted boy still lying on its back.

### *Music no. 4*

Robin gaped in amazement. This was an absolute circus number! He wondered if it was possible to do that with the village pigs.

The work continues: cages with monkeys, doves and rabbits are carried into the barn.

Robin was brought back to reality with a friendly poke in the ribs. Someone pushed a closed casket into its hands. Who knows whether he would have agreed to carry the basket if he had known what was inside - - -

Pina was very taken with the way that Robin was so willing to help. She had arranged everything so that he was always nearby. In this way Robin was able to learn almost everything about the Circus Maroni – that the whole programme is the responsibility of just a single family: and the importance of every single individual – not only their importance but their versatility.

Suddenly Pina took Robin by the hand and began to run with him until they pulled up breathlessly in front of a wagon with bars containing a camel. Pina whispered something into the ear of its keeper. He nodded, led the camel out of the wagon on the lead, ordered it to sink on to its knees, which it did so with wheezy grunt, and told the dumbfounded Robin to climb on board and sit down between the two humps. Pina took the lead, the camel climbed to its feet and rocking from side to side it made its way slowly back to the barn, accompanied by Pina and its keeper.

### *Music no.5*

Everybody was busy at work, hammering and banging; a saw screamed as it bit through the wood, cables were laid down.

Two men were hammering in rhythm, knocking posts into the ground for partition fences. Shelters were being built for the animals.

### ***Start music no.6***

*(Text 1 in music no. 6)*

Water was being pumped up out of an old deep spring with a squeaky hand pump.

*(Text 2 in music no.6 )*

Twilight slowly fell over the village. The lights went on in the caravans. The animals were fed. Everything became quieter, and two tired and happy children - Robin und Pina - sat in front of the barn.

### ***End music no.6***

The next day the circus children had to go to school. Once again a strange place, strange children and strange teachers. Robin introduce the circus children proudly as his new friends. If the village children were curious, they scarcely showed it. Indeed a little group around a tall boy called Jimmy Hoskins treated them as if they didn't exist.

For some inexplicable reason Jimmy Hoskins had decided that Robin was his enemy and this meant that Robin's friends were also his enemies.

One of the members of Hoskins' little gang was a short fat boy named Leo. He was always blinking because he was short-sighted and ashamed to wear his

glasses. The pockets of his trousers were always bulging because they were full of sticky sweets.

He was full of admiration for Jimmy Hoskins and at the same time afraid of him. Hoskins treated Leo no better than a slave who would always do his homework for him.

Ricky, a dark haired pretty girl, was also one of the gang. She could run more quickly and jump higher than all the rest. She could also shout at least as loud as Hoskins. She was the only one who was brave enough to speak her mind to Hoskins.

“Hey, where's my essay?, Hoskins complained, poking Leo painfully between his ribs.

" I haven't got it " whispered Leo.

Hoskins stood over him in a threatening pose.

" Leave him alone", said Ricky “you can have my essay."

Hoskins sat down irritably on the bench and growled at Ricky and Leo.

“ Let's all meet down at the wood."

“..spy on the circus?". Ricky giggled and rolled around on her seat.

“ Them filthy gypsies”, hissed Hoskins between his teeth.

“Let's show them who's in charge around here”.

## ***Music no. 7 (Loud chords)***

That afternoon Pina began her bareback riding exercises behind the barn. She would run in time alongside the galloping pony before springing lightly onto its back and riding round in a circle with outstretched arms.

***Musical example 1 no. 8 start to bar 5 on 3  
Tutti***

By now Hoskins, Ricky and Leo had crept in close through the wood, and were standing hidden behind a hedge at the end of the meadow.

***Music example 2 no. 8 bars 14 to 16  
Fag. Pos.***

Although Hoskins was amazed at the tricks Pina was doing on the horse, he made sure that no one else noticed it. Leo gaped at her with an open mouth.

As Pina was trying out a particularly difficult stunt during which she galloped her pony at full tilt towards the hedge, Leo choked on one of his sticky sweets and fell into an awful fit of coughing. Pina was so surprised that she was unable to stop and fell off the horse almost at Hoskins' feet.

***Music example 3 no.8 Bars 18 - 23 on 1***

***Tutti (Wind instruments come in on bar  
19 with start  
(Fag.) and bars 22 and 23 tacet)***

The three young people behind the hedge roared with laughter at her plight.

***Music example 4 no.8 Bars 22 - 26  
Only wind instruments***

Pina got to her feet calmly, took control of her pony with ease and went on with her exercises.

Hoskins tossed a few small stones into the meadow. They landed just behind Pina.

" Don't let him see that you are afraid!", thought Pina.

Without even deigning to glance at the rowdy she brought her exercises to an end with a few unruffled figures.

Annoyed and also a little afraid she then rode back to the barn.


### ***Music no. 8***

For some time now a few of the village children had been meeting every afternoon in one of the farmers' pigsties.

They wanted to try to teach a young pig to do tricks.

Up to now other the only thing they had succeeded in doing was to get the poor pig to race up and down the rows of pigsties.

### ***Music no. 9 start piano (vamp)***



Every attempt to get near the pig was met with a fearful squeaking and the scampering of tiny feet.

The farmer's son approached the little pig – he too was grunting in the same way. The other children could scarcely stop themselves bursting out into laughter.

The little pig looked up in astonishment at the two legged human grunter. Suddenly it gave a giant leap – right in the middle of a bowl full of pig swill – and scampered off down through the row of pigsties squeaking more loudly than ever..

### ***Music no. 9 from bar 5 to the end***

What had Robin told them all about the circus boy?

How he had leaped onto the back of the pig with elegant ease?

"Show him! Jump!" shouted one of the onlookers. "Now or never" thought the farmer's boy. The pig was galloping towards him. He gritted his teeth in concentration and threw himself through the air in desperation at the pig. He managed to land on the tail end of the pig. For a moment or two he held it fast between his arms, with his legs dragging behind him on the floor, before the pig slipped between his arms leaving him flat on the ground with his face in the pig's snout.

The children were unable to control themselves any more and burst out into loud peels of laughter.

One thing was now clear to all of them. Getting an animal to do tricks was a real art! Perhaps they should start with an older and slower pig.

The children opened the gate and the pig marched into its sty, grunting with satisfaction.

## *Music no 9a*

In the meantime a proper little circus arena had been constructed in the barn.

And there were plans to attach a trapeze to the heavy beams under the roof - just like in a proper big top.

Robin spent every minute of his spare time in the barn.... watching the jugglers and the acrobats practising their tricks, the fire-eaters puffing out flames into the air, the artists bouncing on their trampolines and dancing on the high wire.

The amount of work that had to be put into each exercise!

The person whom Robin admired most of all was the music clown, who just happened to be the circus director and Pina's father.

There was scarcely an instrument on which he was unable to play a few trills.

The only one that gave him any real problems was the bass trombone.

### ***Music no. 9b (Triller)***

One cold December night Hoskins and his gang – Leo and Ricky – met up at the end of the village.

Carrying a long ladder the three crept through the damp, cold and misty night towards the barn used by the circus folk.

Hoskins was planning to climb up the ladder onto the barn roof in order to reach the trapeze.

Leo was told to keep watch. He was trembling, not only because of the cold: he was also afraid of the dark and what they had been told to do.

### ***Begin music no. 10***

#### ***Continue with the text following the conductor***

By now Ricky, who had crept into the barn, was also feeling increasingly uneasy. She had a funny feeling in her stomach! She jumped every time she heard the slightest scratch or noise caused by Hoskins as he climbed the ladder.

The light streaming from her torch passed over all the tidily arranged objects needed for the circus performance.

Hoskins had told her to scatter them all over the place.

She did not understand herself any more. Suddenly there was a scream –something was slipping and tumbling from the roof.

Followed by the clattering of loose roof tiles. Ricky froze in horror.

***Continue music no.10 to end***

Silence – then a groan.

Terrified, Ricky ran out of the barn and bumped straight into Leo who was almost out of his mind.

Hoskins was lying on the ground nearby, whimpering quietly.

The circus folk had been woken by the noise and as the lights went on in their caravans, Ricky and Leo ran for their lives.

The circus folk searched the whole area with torches.

### ***Begin music no. 11***

#### *Text in Music no.11*

They soon came upon the injured Hoskins. He was almost out of his mind with the pain in his left leg.

Hoskins scarcely noticed when they lifted him up onto a stretcher and brought him back gently to his parents in the village.



### ***Continue music no. 11 to end.***

In the following weeks Hoskins was confined at home, bored out of his mind with his swollen leg wrapped in a plaster cast.

He even missed going to school.

The days grew colder and colder. Winter decorated the windows with flowery patterned alloys and one morning the village, the meadow and the wood were covered in a thick layer of snow.

It was too cold to practise any more in the barn.

Instead, all you could hear all day was the clattering of an old typewriter in the caravan belonging to the circus director.

He was busy writing hundreds of letters to towns and villages in order to get bookings for the next circus season.

### ***Music no. 12 (typewriter)***

Suddenly March arrived.

By now Hoskins could move around quite quickly on crutches. He had changed considerably. For the first time in his life he began to feel a sense of shame. And when Pina invited him to her birthday party he was utterly and absolutely confused; both at his inexplicable anger at Robin, whom he would have loved to have had a friend, and his rage at the circus folk.

And when the circus folk came to pick him up for the party he wished he could be swallowed up into the earth.

Even Ricky and Leo had been invited.

Pina was greeted in the arena by the circus folk and the village people with a round of "Happy birthday to you".

### ***Music no. 13***

All the children gathered eagerly around the plaster on Hoskins' leg, and in no time at all it had been transformed into a colourful work of art.

Pina gave Robin a secret signal to fetch the large basket from the corner where he had put it months ago when they arrived. She ordered it to be placed in front of Jimmy Hoskins.

With a few rapid movements of the hand Pina covered herself with a bright silk cloth and slowly opened the lid of the basket.

You should have seen the look on the faces of Robin, Jimmy Hoskins, Ricky and Leo when Pina carefully drew out a seemingly endless snake from the basket and draped it around her shoulders and body. Their mouths were open in incredulous astonishment and joyful horror.

What followed after that was for everyone – the inhabitants of the village and the circus folk alike – the finest performance which had ever been given. The barn was transformed into a big top, and after the show there were celebrations with food, drinks and joyful dancing.

### ***Music no. 14 (alla Turca)***

Some days later when the circus folk began to make preparations to leave their winter quarters, all the children in the village lent a hand. Above all Ricky and Leo – and even Jimmy Hoskins despite his crutches.

Pina and Robin were already making plans for the following winter.

The inhabitants of the village stood waving at the side of the road as the little Circus Maroni departed the village.

***Music Finale***  
*End*