

Playing Music to a Cow (Dui niu tan quin - 对牛弹琴) by Tak Cheung

Direct translation: 对 Dui (toward) 牛 Niu (cow) 弹 Tan (play) 琴 Quin (guzheng)

There is a young violinist, studying music at a city university, planning to become a music teacher, and helping young children to learn music. One day, she was at a local park, and she noticed music was playing, people were dancing, and some were juggling. Passersby stood and watched, enjoying the performance, and leaving money for the performers. She went to the park the next weekend, finding a spot, taking out her violin, and leaving her violin case open for people to leave money. She started to play her favorite classical compositions, filling the air with exquisite notes of Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven. When she went home, she was disappointed, discovering only a few dollar bills in her violin case. She told her Grandmother that her music must not be good enough and asked for her advice. Her Grandmother told her that she might be in a situation of the ancient chengyu story Duì niú tán qín 对牛弹琴, which means playing music to a cow. She asked her Grandmother to tell her the story. Grandmother said that in ancient China there was a famous musician who played an instrument called guzheng, a virtuoso player and a great composer. One day he was traveling on his carriage, passing through the countryside, returning from a performance. He saw a beautiful pasture with several grazing cows and calves, enjoying the warm and beautiful weather. He stopped his carriage, stepping onto the verdant green grass, bringing his guzheng, and sitting down to play for the cows. His music was heavenly, rising high and dipping low, racing through valleys and flowing with the river. The cows continued with their grazing, paying no attention to the beautiful music. The musician was disappointed. As an exceptional player, the musician started to play sounds imitating nature, with birds singing, cows mooing, dogs barking, and wolves howling. Suddenly, the cows stopped to graze, raising their heads, listening to the sounds he made, and even walking closer toward him. The young violinist understood the meaning of this chengyu, and she changed her song list for her next performance, quickly becoming one of the favorite performers at the park.

The End

Tak Cheung's Wok With Tak YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCP5IL4yyiwYxKZUyZEeyRlg>

Oportuno Podcast - Audio of this Story:

<https://pnc.st/s/oportuno/3d6f88ff/032-story-time-playing-music-to-a-cow->

Oportuno Podcast - Video of this Story:

<https://youtu.be/fVoT7Yvm4pg>