

Learning by Ear 2010

Series: Shall I tell you something? African Fables for a culture of peace

Episode: 09 The most beautiful of all

Author: Ibrahima Ndiaye

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SHALL I TELL YOU SOMETHING? AFRICAN FABLES FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE

EPISODE 9: „THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF ALL“

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CHARACTERS:

1. NARRATOR (male, 40 years old at least)
2. PEACOCK (male, about 20)
3. MARABOU (male, about 30)
4. PARROT (female, about 20)
5. SPEAKER FOR ONE SENTENCE (female, age irrelevant)

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INTRO:

Hello dear listeners and welcome to Learning by Ear and Episode 9 in our series “Shall I tell you something? African fables for a culture of peace”. Today, we are going to get in a time machine and travel back many, many years. In this episode, we learn why vanity is a big mistake and how the peacock was punished for it. So, listen in now to: „ The most beautiful of all“.

1. MUSIC (plays in background for the entire script)

2. NARRATOR:

Many moons ago, when time had just begun, Bigolo, the God creator of animals, sent the winged species to live on the earth. It was intended that there the birds should blossom and procreate in peace. At this time the hen still had teeth and the peacock was still as white as salt. They lived there happily and in harmony with each other. There was enough to eat and drink for everyone. However, some time after their arrival, the marabou stork that God had officially named as King, made the following speech:

3. MARABOU:

Dear brothers and sisters, it is certain that we have been sent to live here for a good reason. For the first time, we have been left to our own devices. Only God knows what our fate will be. However, our lives are in our hands; it is up to us now to strive to live in peace and harmony. I wish you all happiness.

4. SFX: Fluttering of wings and bird cries

5. NARRATOR:

So saying, the King took leave of his subjects. Thus, everyone could go about their business and entertain themselves according to their moods and needs. Everything was idyllic and the birds lived carefree until one day a bitter cold swept over their kingdom. The harsh winter caused great damage amongst the birds: the peacock whose thin feathers were obviously not designed for such weather, was the most stricken of all. Indeed, he trembled like a leaf.

6. SFX: Chattering beak (by the peacock actor)

7. NARRATOR:

Coughing incessantly, the peacock was overcome with fever, and, in despair, he went to visit the marabou, his King, to seek refuge and advice.

8. PEACOCK (still chattering, trembling voice):

Have mercy, Your Majesty, I cannot stand this weather anymore! It is biting cold! I even have goose pimples and I am not a goose! If you do not do anything, Great Chief, something terrible will happen to me and whatever it is, it won't take long.

9. NARRATOR:

The marabou, moved with compassion, immediately called a general assembly through his messenger, the parrot. All the birds attended. At the pitiful sight of the peacock, they all showed him sympathy and were kind to him. At the King's request, everyone willingly gave at least one warm blanket to the poor sick bird. Then they bustled around him to stick all his feathers back on with baobab sap. Later, everyone went home. The peacock, relieved, went into hibernation.

A few weeks later, spring finally arrived in all its splendour, and the sun generously illuminated the earth with its warm rays. To celebrate the long-awaited return of the good weather, the King decided to hold a big celebration at his court. The parrot, as usual, was commanded to spread the news to the whole community. Thus she paid a visit to each citizen to inform them personally.

10. PARROT: Repeated cries

11. PARROT:

Praise the Sun! Praise the Sun! Our king invites everyone to celebrate the good weather. Praise the Sun! Praise the Sun!

12. NARRATOR:

Even the peacock, who was still a bit sleepy, got wind of the news. The next day, everyone was there, except for the peacock, who took the time to go down to the creek to prepare himself so that he would look as good as possible. Just as he was about to dip his head in the water he saw his reflection in the surface and noticed with surprise, that as if by miracle he had become incomparably beautiful, a beauty for which he is still renowned even today. His plumage had transformed itself into a multi-coloured coat that glittered all over. A crest had even grown on his head, the famous blue crown in the shape of a comb. He therefore bathed slowly, and then took his time to smooth down his shimmery plumage and dry in the sun.

Afterwards, proud of his new appearance, the peacock hastily made his way to the ceremony. The festivities were in full swing and the tam-tams rang out, accompanied by the chattering of many different kinds of beaks, when, suddenly everyone froze like statues to stare at the metamorphosis of the latecomer.

13. SFX: Bird cries and fluttering of wings suddenly stop (people talking and some bird cries in the studio?)

14. PARROT:

Is that really our peacock!?

15. SPEAKER:

How enchanting he is!

16. PARROT:

Praise the Sun! Praise the Sun!

17. NARRATOR:

The comments were flying around. The birds were all fascinated. Whereupon, boasting his new look and full of his own importance, the peacock took the opportunity to display his new plumage as much as he could and even strutted around as if he were doing a lap of honour. Pretending to apologize for his delay, he bowed briefly to the King, and then, full of himself, he turned around and shamelessly addressed the others:

18. PEACOCK:

“Thank you, kind people! I am the most beautiful of all! From now on, I suggest you to call me Mansa Dibon, the King of the Forest!”

19. SXF: EVERYONE TALKING ANGRY TO EACH OTHER (actors)

20. NARRATOR:

This haughty attitude greatly irritated all those who had given him blankets back in the cold days when the peacock was freezing. Feeling offended and getting more and more angry, some birds had already decided that the peacock should have all his feathers pulled out without exception, when the King, from the height of his throne, intervened to avoid the worst and tried to reason with the peacock:

21. MARABOU:

Peacock, you are indeed splendid, but vain. And let me tell you this: You will see where your vanity will lead you. God will decide your fate. I will say no more. The celebration is now over!

22. NARRATOR:

The next day, at early morning light, God made a rainbow appear for the first time. All the birds rushed to the creek to contemplate this unique work of art.

23. SFX: Rush, fluttering of wings, peeping, chattering

24. NARRATOR:

Afire with enthusiasm, the birds flapped their wings, cackling, fluttering and chattering with joy. At that moment the peacock arrived and was immediately jealous of his rival, the rainbow. He spread his wheel-shaped tail, but nobody took any notice. Wounded in his pride, he cried himself hoarse.

25. PEACOCK: Hoarse cry

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26. NARRATOR:

But it was no use; on the contrary, his voice was ruined forever. Since then, he has indeed remained beautiful, but whenever he opens his beak, everyone runs away from him and that still happens, even today.

Thus our fable goes to sea, and he who will smell its perfume first, will go to heaven.

27. Music

OUTRO:

And so ends our tale „ The most beautiful of all“. What a bitter fate for our elegant peacock: in the end he got punished all by himself... But wasn't it his own fault because he was so vain and greedy for admiration? Or do you think that the other animals were too hard on him? Please tell us! We want to know!

Send us an email to lbe@dw-world.de. Or leave us your comments on our website at: www.dw-world.de/lbe.

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