

# ***The Grim Grey Ogres and the Butterfly Kids***

By Justin Nicholls and Chris Ellis

## **The concept**

There's more to life than building grim grey walls around yourself.

This is a unique musical play inspired by nature, colour, music, and a diversity of surprising characters. A highly original performance piece for children that is very entertaining in itself and can also inspire a range of work across the school curriculum. With vibrant, melodic songs and music and a mix of high comedy and thought provoking drama, this show will engage and entertain children and adults alike.

The play was created with and for five to eleven year olds (with the older children taking the lead roles). It is very much an ensemble piece – everyone can join in, with as many performers as you like. There are opportunities for singers, actors, dancers and musicians and rich opportunities for art and design. It is great fun to do and really gets performers and audiences thinking and feeling more about what life is all about. The play is 1 hour 10 minutes in length.

## **The Practicalities**

The show can be performed anywhere, but works best on an open stage. There are no scene changes. Setting, costumes, props and lighting can be as simple or as elaborate as you like. All you need is a basic sound system/PA and a couple of microphones – the rest is up to you!

Musically, the piece is very flexible. It is performed to the accompanying soundtrack but has all the space you need for percussionists and instrumentalists to join in throughout. There are spaces created specifically for the most inspired players to 'jam' on their instruments together. We strongly encourage the use of homemade instruments, especially percussion, which really add to the spirit of the play.

The show stands on its own as a performance piece but is stronger still when integrated into the curriculum. Staging the play can give a creative focus and purpose to activities across many subjects including English, Maths, Science, Art, DT, Citizenship, Humanities and PE, as well as Drama and Music. Notes on ideas for the classroom are available with the script.

*The Grim Grey Ogres and the Butterfly Kids* is above all a show for the young performers to enjoy and own. The children that created the first performance invented a giant Ogre mascot and the idea of the Slug spraying the audience with water pistols! Feel free to change things, add ideas of your own and celebrate colour, music, diversity, optimism and imagination.

## The Story

On a distant mountaintop, the *Grim Grey Ogres* live a life of unquestioning gloom, repetition and pointlessness. They have lived this way forever. One day two children arrive from the world below carried by a giant butterfly. The beauty of the butterfly causes the Ogres to cover their eyes as they fear and mistrust the 'world of colour'.

The children themselves aren't sure why the butterfly has brought them there, but come to realise that by sharing their stories, they may be able to inspire the Ogres to try new things and feel better about themselves. For example, they might observe nature and draw like *The Butterfly Watcher*, or delight in playing music like *The Young Harmonica Player*. Every story has something new to enjoy and think about. There is a surprising twist in the tale of *Old Wassiname* and mischievous fun with the giant *Squidgerly Squasherly Slug!* The chief Ogres resist the attractions of this dangerous new world but the 'littlest ogre' Number 27 is inspired. He (or she) is left to choose: head for this exciting new world or stay safe in the old ways?

The second half of the story has more temptations and delights to offer. We see the amazing energy and acrobatics of *The Zaprobats* and witness the mysterious magic of the *Light Box*; almost all of the Ogres are won over. Only Ogre Number 1 (the Over-Ogre and leader of the clan) resists until the ridiculous comedy of *Theobald Truff* finally causes him to laugh out loud at himself for the first time ever!

The Ogres have opened their eyes and ears to other points of view and learned to appreciate that life *doesn't always have to be grey*; the poem, *Our River* reflects on this. The entire cast and audience then join together in the Grand Finale during which the Ogres throw off their grey garments and celebrate a world of colour, music, diversity, optimism and imagination.

## The Creators

The show is the creation of Justin Nicholls (music and lyrics) and Chris Ellis (book). Justin has scored many award-winning TV series including BAFTA Winner, *The National Trust* and his songs have featured in movies such as the cult classic *Memento*. Chris Ellis is a writer for stage and television, BAFTA nominated for his work on *Grange Hill*, and writer of award winning shows such as *Fourways Farm* and *Numberjacks*.

**If you are interested in performing *The Grim Grey Ogres and the Butterfly Kids* at your school or theatre group then contact [justin@justinnicholls.com](mailto:justin@justinnicholls.com) for your FREE performance pack. This will include a script, simple score, practice CD and performance CD/soundtrack. You can also visit [www.GrimGreyOgres.org](http://www.GrimGreyOgres.org) to see what other schools have done and download the script as a PDF for duplication.**