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## THE PIANO

Where does music come from? Is it something that you learn? Or is it simply given to you – and nobody knows where it comes from?

The young boy in this story is not good at school. He is not good at learning words or numbers. He likes to sing with the other boys and girls; but he is not good at singing. He does not get the first job that he tries to get. He is a nice boy, but he is not good at anything special.

And then he finds a piano. He also finds that he can play the piano. So, perhaps we can say that he does not find music, but that music finds him.

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# The Piano



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*Chapter 1**In the Dressing-room*

SIR ANTHONY EVANS PLAYS LISZT. The words above the door of the theatre were a metre high. On the wall there was a big picture of Sir Anthony at the piano. Hundreds of people were waiting outside the ticket office. It was Sir Anthony's eightieth birthday concert and everybody wanted a ticket. I had a special ticket, because I was a newspaper reporter. I wanted to talk to the famous pianist before his concert. I showed my ticket to the doorman and went into the theatre. Then I walked upstairs to the dressing-rooms.

On my way upstairs I thought about the famous pianist. I was a little afraid. My mouth was dry and my hands were shaking.

I arrived outside the dressing-room.

There was a big gold star on the door.

I knocked, and a tall man opened it. He was very old, but his eyes were blue and bright. He was wearing black trousers and a beautiful white shirt. He had a lot of straight, silvery hair. He looked just like his picture on the wall of the theatre.

'My name's Sally Hill,' I began. 'I . . .'

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*The Piano*



*Hundreds of people were waiting outside the ticket office.*

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*In the Dressing-room*

The old man saw my notebook and smiled at me.

‘Don’t tell me. You’re a reporter. Which newspaper do you work for?’

‘*The Sunday Times*, sir.’

‘A very good newspaper. Come in and sit down. Ask your questions. We were young once, weren’t we, Linda? But of course that was a long time ago.’

He turned to a tall woman, who was standing in the corner. She smiled at me with friendly brown eyes. ‘So this is Lady Evans,’ I thought. ‘What a nice face she has! She looks like a farmer’s wife.’

I was not afraid any more. I sat down and opened my notebook.

‘Tell me about yourself, please, Sir Anthony. Did you come from a musical family? Did you start to learn the piano when you were three, like Mozart?’

The famous pianist smiled. ‘No, no, my dear. I am the first musician in my family. And I was fourteen years old before I touched a piano for the first time.’ He saw the surprise on my face. ‘We have a little time before my concert. I’ll tell you my story. It’s a strange story, but every word of it is true. You see, I left school when I was thirteen. Everybody called me Tony in those days. I worked on a farm . . .’

It was an exciting story and he told it well. At first I

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*The Piano*

tried to write everything down in my notebook. Then the pen fell from my hand and I just listened. I was lost in Sir Anthony's wonderful story. He told me about an old school behind a high wall in a dirty street. There was broken glass on top of the wall. The school yard was very small. As he spoke, pictures came into my mind. I saw a little boy called Tony Evans, playing football with an old tin . . .

*Chapter 2**A Poor Boy*

The teacher's name was Mr Grey. He was grey, like his name: he was old and grey and tired. Everything about him was grey: grey suit, grey shirt, grey hair and a long, thin, grey face. When he smiled the children saw his long, grey teeth. But he did not often smile. Mr Grey did not enjoy his job. He did not like children.

'Why does he work here?' one of the children asked one day. 'He doesn't like us.'

'But he likes the long school holidays!' said Tony. The other children laughed. They thought that was a very clever answer.

But Tony was not a clever boy. He was big and slow and silent. He did not enjoy his lessons. Usually he just

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*A Poor Boy*

sat at his desk and waited quietly for four o'clock to come, when he could go home.

But Tuesday mornings were different, because Tuesday was music day. Every Tuesday morning an old lady called Mrs Lark came to the school. Mrs Lark played the piano and the children sang. She was not a very good pianist, but she liked children and she enjoyed her work. She knew a lot of songs too. Every Tuesday her fat little fingers flew like birds up and down the keys of the piano. The children sang like birds, too. Then twelve o'clock came. Mrs Lark said 'goodbye' and locked up the piano for another week.



*The children sang like birds.*

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