

## review: Peter and the Wolf

by Robert C. Lewis

Type: Multimedia Package for ages 6 and up

Publisher: Time Warner

Retail Price: \$69.95

Street Price: \$34.95

Requires: LC III or higher, 256-color monitor or better, CD-ROM drive, System 7.x, 4 Mb of free RAM

Protection: None

Back in 1936 a man by the name of Sergei Prokofiev wrote a classic that told a story of a boy and a wolf. But instead of telling it in the written word, Sergei Prokofiev set the entire story to music and he called it Peter and the Wolf. Almost 60 years later this classic story is still alive and well in the hearts of millions all over the world. Over those years many different renditions of this musical masterpiece have been done. Now, Time Warner brings us a new interpretation of this story with the voices of Kirstie Alley (Cheers), Lloyd Bridges (Airplane!), Ross Malinger (Sleepless in Seattle) and the animation talents of the legendary Chuck Jones (Beep! Beep!).

**The Music.** Only the medium of CD could supply the needed programming space to do justice to this adaptation conducted by George Daugherty and the Time Warner Symphony Orchestra. As a matter of fact it is so good that Time Warner saw it fit to include a 52-minute audio CD as a bonus. This is one edutainment package that lives up its roots. Chuck Jones did a great job breathing new life into this Russian tale. The animation and graphics interact and keep pace with the orchestra in such a way that you really need to see it to appreciate it.

**The Story so Far.** When you bring up the tale, you will be presented with the main menu consisting of four category buttons. These four fields are The Animated Tale, Artist and Composer, The Symphony Orchestra, and Log Jam. Pressing The Animated Tale first brings up a short intro by Ross Malinger about the story and the instruments used in telling the story. You can also bypass this portion with a click of the mouse. Then you can decide whether you want to leaf through the story in the manual mode or let your Mac do the work

in the auto mode. As you will discover, viewing the story is a total delight. Chuck Jones did an excellent job adapting the story to this multimedia environment. The way the story unfolds is truly a delight as it keeps pace with the musical score.

**et's Learn.** After viewing the story you can return to the main menu and explore the three other categories. Pressing the Artist and Composer button will present you with informative biographies on animator Chuck Jones and Sergei Prokofiev. Clicking on The Symphony Orchestra will teach you about the parts of the orchestra and which instruments are use for each character in the story. You can also view QuickTime performances by young musicians playing the key instruments used to tell the tale. With features like this, Peter and the Wolf would make a fine tool for any instructor who teaches music appreciation classes.

**Let's Play a Game.** The last category called Log Jam is an arcade game based fully on the classic game Frogger. It is a race against the clock to get Peter from one side of a river to the other by jumping from one log to another. Miss a log and you start the crossing all over again. Just make sure you avoid the logs with the wolf or oil cans on them or you will fall off the log. It has been a long time since I have played Frogger, and Log Jam is a great variation of a classic game.

**Weak Links?** The only weak links I found was in the system requirement area. Peter and the Wolf requires 4 megs of free RAM in order to run. Using RamDoublor, and the Apple Multimedia Tuner allowed me to run it on my 5 meg Mac IIsi. It also requires a minimum clock speed of 25 megahertz or the equivalence of a LC III. I was able to solve that problem with the Speedy Accelerator by MicroMac. This device allowed me to bypass my Mac's 20

megahertz clock and up the speed to around 30 for only \$100. That may not sound like a lot, but it sure breathed new life into my Mac.

**Bottom Line.** Although the target age is 6 and up, I found my 3-year-old son completely mesmerized by the tale. The story is so well done that I think the target age could easily be dropped to the level of a curious 3-year-old. Since the story is only 22 minutes long, I found it makes a great bedtime story as well and a good way to spend some quality time with your child. So head out to the meadow and watch how Peter handles that nasty wolf as long as grandfather does not catch you.

#### Pros

- Beautiful adaptation of a classic story
- Animation and art done by Chuck Jones
- Voice Talents of Kirstie Alley, Lloyd Bridges, and Ross Malinger
- 52-minute bonus audio CD
- Updated version of Frogger is included
- Great for any music appreciation class

#### Cons

- Limited to Macs that have 4 free megs of RAM and a clock speed of 25 megahertz or better
- No interactive “hot spots” within the story