

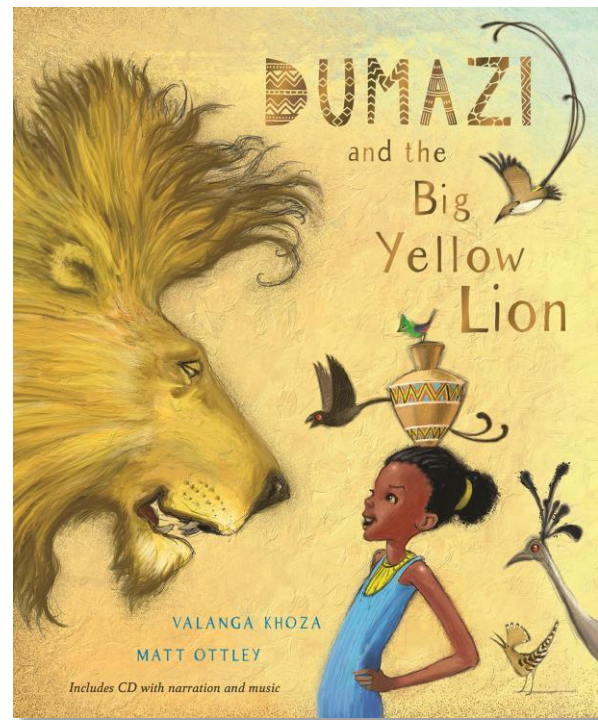
# Dumazi and the Big Yellow Lion

Author

Valanga Khoza

Illustrator

Matt Ottley



## Synopsis

Dumazi is a young Zulu girl who sets off one day with her calabash to fetch some water. While she is cheerfully strolling along, she hears someone calling from behind some bushes, and upon investigation discovers a lion trapped in a hunter's rope snare. After eliciting a promise from the lion to not eat her, Dumazi frees it from its bonds...only for the lion to declare that it will not be keeping its promise after all. Dumazi is not the sort of girl to meekly consent to be prey however, and convinces the lion that he should seek the opinions of the other animals nearby. Unfortunately for Dumazi, not all animals are fond of humans and the impact they have had on the environment and for a while it looks as if there will be a consensus in favour of Lion's proposed diet of young Zulu girls. Monkey, however, has other ideas, and luckily for Dumazi, Monkey is both quick-witted, and quick to act. How Monkey tricks Lion into reluctantly keeping his word, is a classic tale of both trust and deceit, and at the end of it all, Dumazi's kind heart shines through to the benefit of all. Accompanied by a CD containing Valanga Khoza's dramatic telling of the story interwoven with Khoza and Ottley's performance of Ottley's original score, Dumazi and the Big Yellow Lion is an innovative and engaging approach to the story-teller's art in all its forms.

## About the Author: Valanga Khoza, Author, Narrator and Musician.

Valanga's grandparents always told stories when he was a small boy growing up in a village in the province of Limpopo, northern Republic of South Africa. They never went to sleep without listening to stories around the fire. Many of those stories focused on the interaction between animals and humans, like in Dumazi. Valanga says he is influenced by those traditional fire-side tales, and they have enriched his own storytelling.

## About the Illustrator: Matt Ottley, Illustrator and Composer.

Matt Ottley is a multi-award-winning picture book creator and musician. This is Matt's fourth book with Scholastic Press. His first, Teacup (text by Rebecca Young) was the winner of the Patricia Wrightson Prize for Children's Literature, 2016, and has most recently been named as the IBBY Australia Honour Book for Illustration, 2018.

### The Creative Partnership: Matt and Valanga

Valanga and Matt have played music together on a couple of occasions, and as they love working together, they decided they should do a book and music project together. Valanga really understands intuitively how Matt works as an artist and composer, because music and storytelling are so intrinsically linked in his culture of origin. Valanga's story, with its very modern themes of environment and compassion carried on an ancient story telling style, grabbed Matt immediately - it's fun and what illustrator doesn't dream of having a project where they can draw elephants and lions and giraffes! In the music, the pulling together of an African singing style with western orchestral scoring is something Matt has dreamed of doing for a long time. This has been such a joyous project for Matt, and he has found that Valanga has been such an extraordinary person to work with.

### Themes

Compassion, friendship, promises, human impact on the environment, danger, consequences, trust, nature, hope, courage.

### Writing Style

Written in the third person throughout, the story follows the character of Dumazi, a young Zulu girl. While Dumazi is clearly the protagonist of the story, the inner dialogue of the various animals with whom she interacts is clearly presented to the reader, and their viewpoints are explicitly shown. As a result, while both Giraffe and Elephant recommend that Lion should eat Dumazi, reader sympathy with their perspective is maintained throughout. The presentation of diverse and conflicting viewpoints throughout serves to both strengthen plot tension, and to develop reader compassion for the various animals, which echoes the compassion that Dumazi shows towards Lion in spite of his desire to dine on her.

### Illustration Style

Created using digital mixed media, Ottley's artwork captures the vastness of the African countryside in both his colour choices and his use of full and half page spreads. Backgrounds are faded neutral tones with a strong bias towards tertiary hues, while the foreground and figures are depicted using stronger natural tones for the animals. The predominantly sandy-soft palette is lightened by the contrasting splashes of vibrant green foliage, the bright blue of Dumazi's dress, and the intense red of a bird's plumage. Ottley's figures are depicted realistically, while the animals' highly expressive faces complement their ability to converse with Dumazi and each other.

## TEACHER NOTES

- 1) Before reading the book, as a class discuss the cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion are:
  - Where do you think this story might be set, and why?
  - What does the picture on the front show?
  - Who do you think Dumazi might be?
  - What do you think might happen in this story?

- 2) In small groups, research lions. Create an illustrated poster sharing your research findings with the class. Some things you might want to include in your research are:
  - Where do lions live?
  - What do lions eat?
  - How big are lions?
  - What effect have humans had on lions and their habitat?
  - How many types of lions are there?
  - How many babies do lions have at once?
  - What groups do lions live in - how many lions in a family group, and how are they related?
- 3) Go on a trip to a local zoo, and visit the giraffe, lions, and elephants.
- 4) Listen to the CD telling the story of Dumazi, and the music that goes with it. After listening to the CD, as a class discuss the experience, and compare it to your experience of reading the book. Some things to include in your discussion might be:
  - Is the story that Valanga Khoza tells the same as the story in the book, or is it different in some ways?
  - What effect does listening to the music that goes with the story have on your understanding of what is happening?
  - How does the music make you feel?
  - Is it the exact words that are used in telling a story that are the most important thing, or is it something else?
  - What is your favourite part of the music?
  - When you listen to the story, what do you see in your imagination?
  - When you look at the pictures in the book, how do they match your imagined pictures when you listen to the story and music?
- 5) When you listen to the music, what instruments can you hear being played? Are there any instruments you can hear, that you can't identify? In pairs, try to classify the types of sounds you can hear. How can you describe all the different sounds?
- 6) Two of the instruments Valanga Khoza plays in the soundtrack of *Dumazi and the Big Yellow Lion* are the African Marimba, and the Kalimba. In groups or as a class research and find out what these instruments are, how they are played, and what sounds they make. After researching them, listen to the soundtrack again, and see if you can identify their sounds in the music.
- 7) What sounds can you hear in the music that remind you of aspects of nature?
- 8) The lion promises Dumazi that he will not eat her, but then once he is free, he happily says that he will not keep his promise. As a class discuss what a promise is, and whether it's important to keep any promises we make and why.
- 9) What is the scariest thing to happen in the story? What makes it scary?
- 10) Why might a hunter want to catch a lion?
- 11) What is a calabash?

- 12) How difficult is it to carry a container full of water on your head? Wearing a raincoat, or swimsuit, try carrying a container of water on your head. You will probably want to try doing this outside!
- 13) Which animal has the best reason for acting as they do? Do you think any of the animals don't have good reasons? Why/why not?
- 14) Write a lullaby to sing to a lion. Use a xylophone or keyboard to create the music, and think of soothing words to go with your tune.
- 15) In small groups, write a story about a child having an adventure in your local area with a local native animal or two. Create a percussion and voice soundtrack to accompany a retelling of your story, and perform it for your class.
- 16) Illustrate one of the scenes from *Dumazi and the Big Yellow Lion* that is described but doesn't have its own illustration.
- 17) Create a painting that expresses the different emotions that Dumazi and the Lion feel. Listen to the CD while you paint, and try to capture the various feelings expressed by the words and music in your brushstrokes and colour choices.
- 18) Look at the patterns on the end pages of the book. What do you think these zigzag patterns might represent? Go for a walk to a local park, reserve, or bushland, and spend some time looking closely at the landscape, grasses, plants, and trees. What different patterns can you see in nature? You may want to make some sketches or take photos of interesting patterns you can see. When you return to class, use what you have observed on your nature-walk as inspiration for a page full of patterns of your own.