

PAUL TRACEY

The Great Briton

Art Form: Music and Storytelling
Style: Traditional
Culture: British

MEET THE ARTIST:

Paul Tracey was born in South Africa to British parents. His mother was Scottish, from the Campbell clan, and his father could trace his English heritage back to the time of William the Conqueror, in 1066. Educated at boarding schools in England, Paul sang in the church choir, learned to play the flute and taught himself the guitar. On his return to South Africa, he attended the University of the Witwatersrand but completed his education at "The University of the Bush" - which simply means working on the family farm. He co-authored the hit musical revue show "Wait a Minim!" which ran in theatres on four continents for seven years, appearing on Broadway for 13 months. He played in other Broadway productions but on the birth of his daughter, he began writing his own songs, some of which were featured on Jim Henson's "The Muppet Show." He has received a 'lifetime achievement award' from the California Alliance for Arts Education and a 'service award' from the California Dance Educators Association. He co-founded the Professional Artists in Schools Awards (PASA).

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

This one man show explores the history and culture of the British Isles, with songs and stories from Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland. Paul makes an impressive entrance in his kilt playing the bagpipes, and then connects his American audiences to Great Britain by singing a song about his own feelings of being an immigrant to the USA. He takes us to his ancestral home on the Isle of Skye with a story of a young bagpipe player and a fairy, before discussing the Loch Ness Monster and singing the "Bonnie, Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond." There is a rapid Scottish patter song which raises the subject of the 'haggis,' a traditional food. Then he moves on to England where he uses nursery rhymes to point out the cities of London

and Gloucester and the towns from which many of our first immigrants left for the New World. He uses his flute when he sings the Welsh folk song "The Ash Grove." As an introduction to Ireland, he plays "When Irish Eyes are Smiling" on a penny whistle, followed by his original song "Kiss Me, 'Cause I'm Irish." The story of the Prince and the Mermaid ends with the "prince" playing his Irish harp and singing "The Quiet Land of Erin."

PREPARING FOR THE EXPERIENCE:

Located in Europe, in the North Atlantic Ocean off the coast of France, is Great Britain: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Southern Ireland broke away from the union in 1921 and is now an independent country. English is the common language spoken throughout these countries, but each region is clearly identified by its particular accent and dialect. Great Britain is a democracy with a monarchy playing a largely ceremonial role. Currently the monarch is Queen Elizabeth II; her son Prince Charles is expected to be the next king. Parliament, the law-making body, consists of a House of Lords and a House of Commons, headed by the Prime Minister. The total area of Great Britain is smaller than California, but it continues to play a major role in world affairs. The United States declared its independence from Great Britain in 1776; however, the two countries have

long been close allies. The national pastime is cricket, a game played with a bat and ball similar to baseball; when playing international matches, this game can last up to five days. In Britain, soccer is called 'football,' while a game called 'rugby' is more akin to American football. Although today most Scotsmen dress like Americans, their traditional attire is the kilt. It may look like a skirt, but it - along with the Gillie shirt - is worn by both men and women. The sporran is a leather pouch, and Gillie shoes (without a tongue in them) have long laces that attach around the calf. Tucked into one of the long socks is a "skean dhu," a decorative dagger.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What did you learn from the story of the young bagpipe player?
- What emotions did you feel when you heard the story of the Mermaid? If you could change anything about this story, what would it be?
- Do you remember the name of the capital city of England? (London) Can you recall the names of any of the other cities in Great Britain? Which ones? (Gloucester, Liverpool, Plymouth, York, Glasgow, Londonderry, Cork, Belfast and Dublin)
- What is a haggis? Would you like to try one? What other countries have traditional or unusual foods?

FRAMEWORK FOCUS - LANGUAGE ARTS:

Ask students if they could remember the stories from the show to tell their parents or friends later. Mr. Tracey says, lightheartedly, "If you forget part of it, make it up as you go along!" This is part of the folk story tradition; stories change with each new generation.

Select one of the stories to review as a class. Identify and summarize the beginning parts. List the sequence of events in the middle, what the problem was, and how it was solved (conflict/resolution).

Divide into groups to tell different parts of the story. Each group should practice telling this part, adding their own flavor and details, making up voices and different body language for the characters. Accept positive criticism and tell it again, more smoothly and with more confidence. After practicing, each group will tell their part of the story in sequence for the class. Let your audience know that you are enjoying the telling of the story by your energy and the twinkle in your eye!

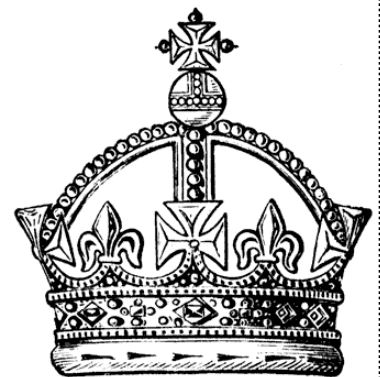
This can be repeated with new versions of the story or by rotating characters or segments. Notice the difference in styles.

- Legend:
- 🌀 Artistic perception
 - ❖ Creative expression
 - ▶ Historical & cultural context
 - 👁️ Aesthetic valuing
 - * Connections, Relations, Applications

ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE:

- ▶ Copy a map of the British Isles. Mark in the four countries that are part of Great Britain (also known as the United Kingdom). Recall the nursery rhymes that Paul recited in the show and locate London from "London Bridge is Falling Down," York from "The Brave old Duke of York" and Gloucester from "Dr. Foster Went to Gloucester."
- ❖ Paul used leather-working tools to decorate his sporran (the leather purse that hangs around his waist). He created the head of a boar. This is his clan's emblem. Brainstorm symbols, animals or colors for an emblem that might represent your own family. Take these ideas and create an original emblem for you and your family.
- ❖ Design a flag for an imaginary new country. It might contain aspects of the Stars and Stripes, or the Union Jack, but also should include elements that represent the values, colors and images of your country.
- ▶ Find someone in your family or in a friend's family who comes from another country. Write down questions that you could use to interview this person. They might include questions about folk tales, family stories or traditions of that country.
- ▶ Try singing the first verse of Britain's national anthem, "God Save the Queen/King," to the melody of "America" (My Country, 'Tis of Thee).

God save our gracious
Queen,
Long live our noble
Queen,
God save the Queen.
Send her victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
God save the Queen.



SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

MacManus, Seumas. *Donegal Fairy Stories*. Dover. Illustrations by Frank Verbeck.
Leapman, Michael. *Great Britain*. Eyewitness Travel Guides.
Both titles listed above were found on Amazon.com
<http://www.paultracey.org/>

VOCABULARY

PAUL TRACEY - ABOUT AFRICA

- *Hamba gahle:* the Zulu words meaning "Goodbye."
- *Kalimba:* a modern version of the uniquely African musical instrument, mbira, commonly known as "thumb piano"
- *Kunjani:* the Zulu word meaning "How are you?"
- *Musical revue:* a stage entertainment without a story line
- *Sabona:* the Zulu word meaning "Hello"
- *Sikona:* the Zulu word meaning "I'm all right!"
- *Sotho:* (pronounced Sutu) an ethnic group based in Lesotho
- *Swahili:* a lingua franca spoken in East Africa
- *Swazi:* an ethnic group based in Swaziland
- *Zimbabwe:* a country in Southern Africa formerly called "Southern Rhodesia"
- *Zulu:* a large ethnic group based in Zululand, near Durban, South Africa

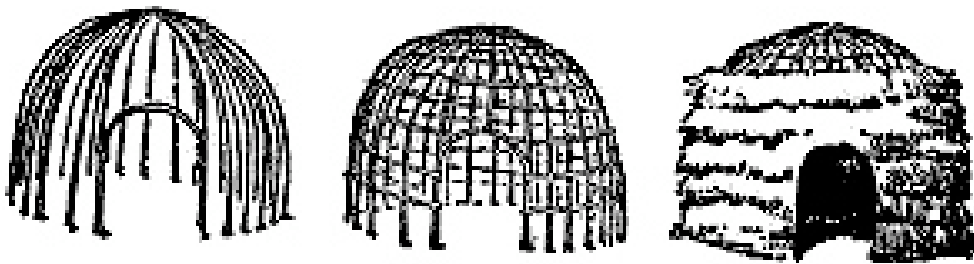


Illustration of a traditional Zulu grass hut
from *Scouting for Boys*