

Mp3 Elizabeth Falconer - Plum Boy! And Other Tales From Japan



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You may have met Peach Boy, but have you met his cousin, Plum Boy? Peaceful endings to adventurous stories that come to life with koto music told by a "storyteller with a feather-light touch." 5 MP3 Songs

KIDS/FAMILY: Children's Storytelling, WORLD: Asian Details: Winner of a Parents' Choice Gold Award and NAPPA Silver Honor Award! Steeped in the culture and language of Japan, Elizabeth Falconer is a storyteller with a feather-light touch. Weaving Japanese words into each story, she's also a master of the 13-string, Japanese koto, and accompanies these colorful Japanese folk tales on that eloquent instrument. In the title story, a boy, born from a plum, becomes a hero when he and his friends a dog, a monkey and a pheasant to divert a pack of demon thieves from evil-doing and rescue a village. "Kumo the Spider" repays a farmer's good deed and spins not only cloth but clouds. "Issunboshi" is about a boy who is an inch tall and follows his dream to become a Samurai, with magical results, and in "Shiro and Kuro," a monkey teaches a couple of quarrelsome kitties a lesson in sharing. "The Tale of a Snail" paints vivid word pictures of a husband and wife planting and harvesting their rice fields and adopting a little snail, who comes to them courtesy of the Water God, as their son with rewarding results. It is an unusual, entertaining tour-de-force performance by a gifted artist. -Parents' Choice Here's the short-take on Elizabeth Falconer's Plum Boy! And other tales from Japan: Buy the recording. A newcomer to storytelling and a magical musician, Falconer weaves original and traditional Japanese folktales with the soothing sounds of the ancient koto on Plum Boy! The resulting hour-long CD is a listening treat that is both calming and exciting. Filled with important life lessons, Japanese words, and cultural reflections, Plum Boy! And other tales from Japan is a fun, fascinating, and highly educational introduction to Japanese arts and language. While listening for the first time, my 4-year-old repeated the simple Japanese words and

refrains Falconer injects into her tales. By the end of the 14-minute title story "Plum Boy!," she was singing right along with Falconer's two young sons in a rousing chorus of the Japanese translation of Plum Boy: "Sumomotaro-san, Sumomotaro- san!" Falconer, who now lives in Renton, Washington, spent 12 years in Japan and began studying koto in 1979. Since then, she has become a master player of the courtly 13-string instrument introduced in Asia more than 1,000 years ago. Her storytelling career began three years ago when she adopted her sons Jesse and Brian, then ages 3 and 5. "I have always loved all things Japanese. We started reading and reading to them and I was just amazed at how they got into the stories," Falconer says. By adding koto and chorus musical highlights, Japanese words and cultural intonations to the tales, she says, her sons and other listeners are able to experience Japanese cultures on a number of levels. The five tales on the recording offer some pretty universal values: a.k.a., be grateful, share, love is power. But Falconer lets "the stories tell it all... What I want people to walk away with is the sense anything is possible. Some of the things that happen in the story are imaginary, but the overriding theme is that anything is possible if you try." Falconer calls her unique melding of music and words "musical adventures." It's an apt definition -- each listening session seems to take you someplace new. Falconer's storytelling voice is powerful, yet soft. She does not rush a tale, but instead lets it roll out in waves, giving young listeners time to latch on to themes and follow along. My daughter was particularly enamored of "Kumo the Spider." A lesson on the importance of appreciation and gratitude, the story also explains why the Japanese word for spider and cloud (kumo) are the same. Falconer's koto tunes feel like a unique character in each story, rather than extraneous accompaniment. The delicate sounds give the stories flavor and help sail the listener into the bay off another culture. The instrument's own ancient history also works to give stories a timeless quality. Plum Boy! is the first release from Falconer's new Koto World recording label. Fortunately, a second release is due out this fall. Seattle's Child, June 2000

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