

The big brass band

Story by Patricia de Villiers

Illustrations by Heidel Dedekind

Zaide and Joe were hiding. They were hiding under the big stage in the town hall. It was very dusty under there and Joe was sure that there was a hairy spider hanging over his head. They were hiding there because the big brass band was getting ready to practise in the hall, and the one thing that Zaide wanted to do more than anything else in the whole world, was to play in the band.

Earlier that morning Zaide had stopped Joe outside the shops. She was holding an orange vuvuzela, a battered old pot and a stick.

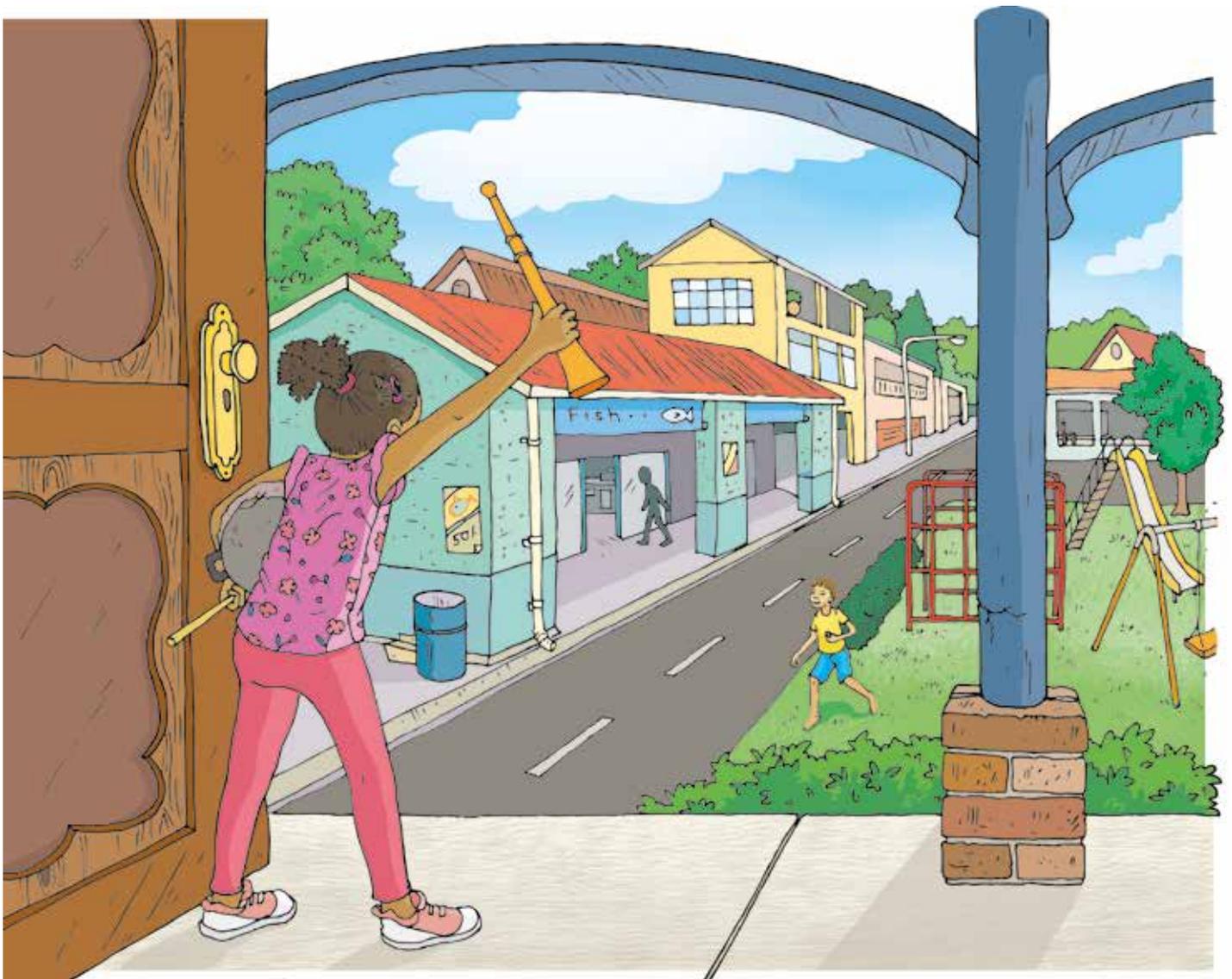
“Joe,” she said, “Joe, come with me quickly!”

“Where to?” asked Joe who was busy eating a koeksister. It was Saturday morning and he was happy just strolling down Main Road with sugar on his lips and the warm sun on his face.

“We have to go to the town hall,” said Zaide. “Quickly! Let’s run!” And off she went.

Joe didn’t feel like running, but he liked Zaide, so he followed her around the corner, past his uncle’s fish shop and across the kiddies’ playground to the town hall. Then he saw Zaide waving at him wildly from behind one of the big doors at the top of the town hall steps.

“Come on!” she said. “Hurry up, Joe!”



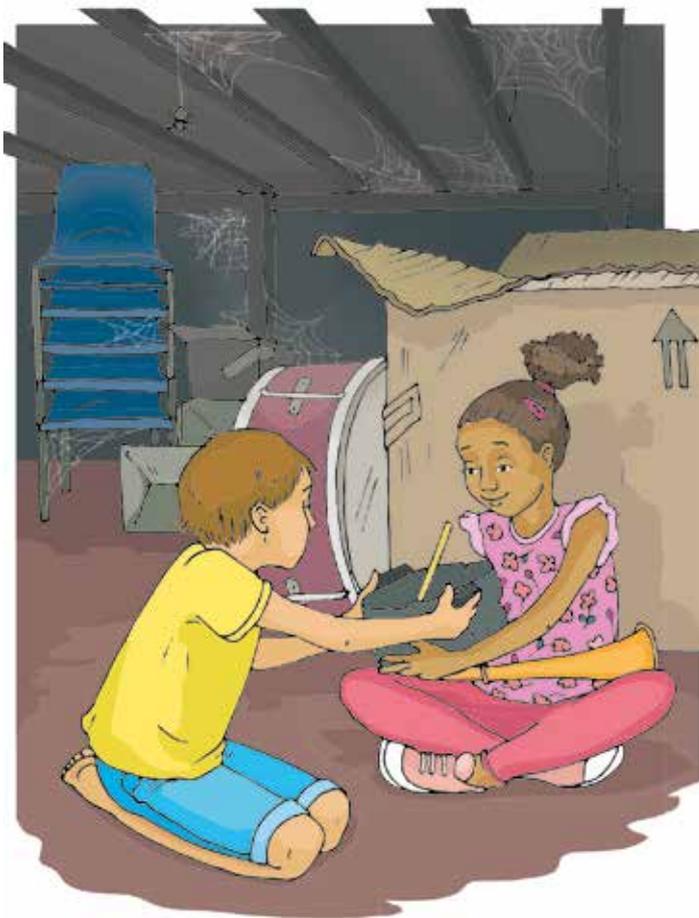
She led the way into the hall and held her finger to her lips. “Shhhh,” she said, “shhhh.” The hall was quite empty except for a big man in a green uniform who was asleep on a chair.

“What are you doing?” whispered Joe.

“Shhhh!” said Zaide again and crawled on her hands and knees through a gap under the stage. “Come on!” she mouthed at Joe. Joe really didn’t want to follow her into the dark space, but he scrambled in behind her anyway.

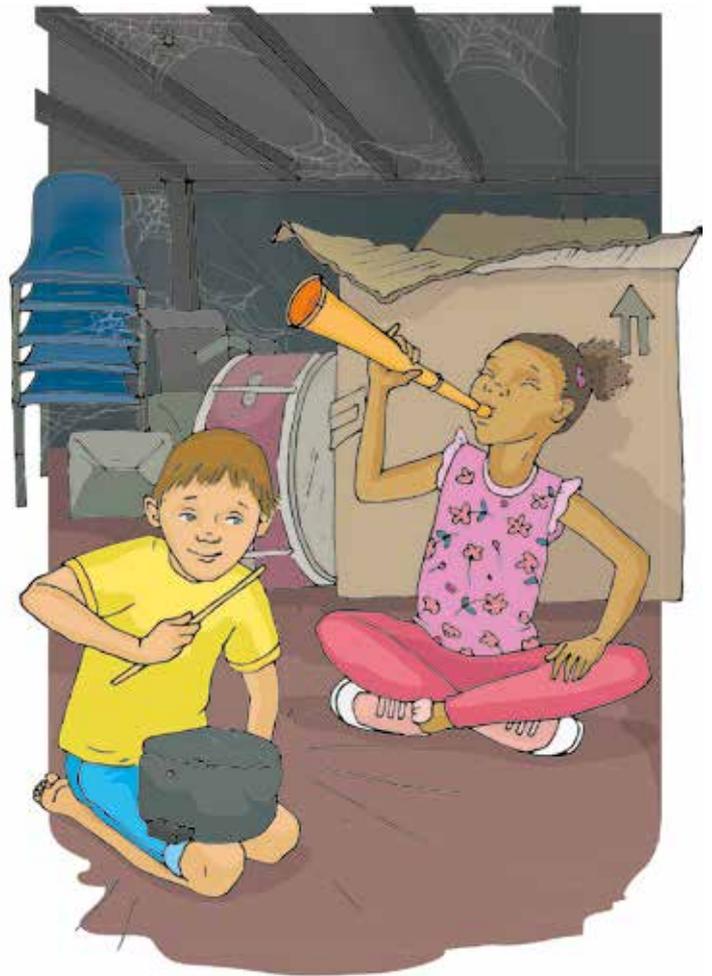
“What are we doing here?” whispered Joe. “I’m scared. I’m sure there are spiders.”

“Don’t be a baby,” Zaide whispered back. “We’re going to play with the band! Here’s your drum.” And she handed him the pot and the stick.



At that moment they heard loud voices in the hall and the scraping of chairs being moved about. Then there was the sound of *Oom-pah-pah* and a loud blast from a trumpet and the booming of a big drum. And then suddenly, with a burst of sound, the whole band began to play a tune together. It was really very exciting.

“Come on, Joe,” said Zaide and she put the vuvuzela to her lips and blew a big blast. “Come ON! Hit your drum, Joe!” So Joe started banging the pot while Zaide blasted the vuvuzela again and again.



Suddenly the band stopped playing. But Zaide and Joe played on for a while before they stopped too.

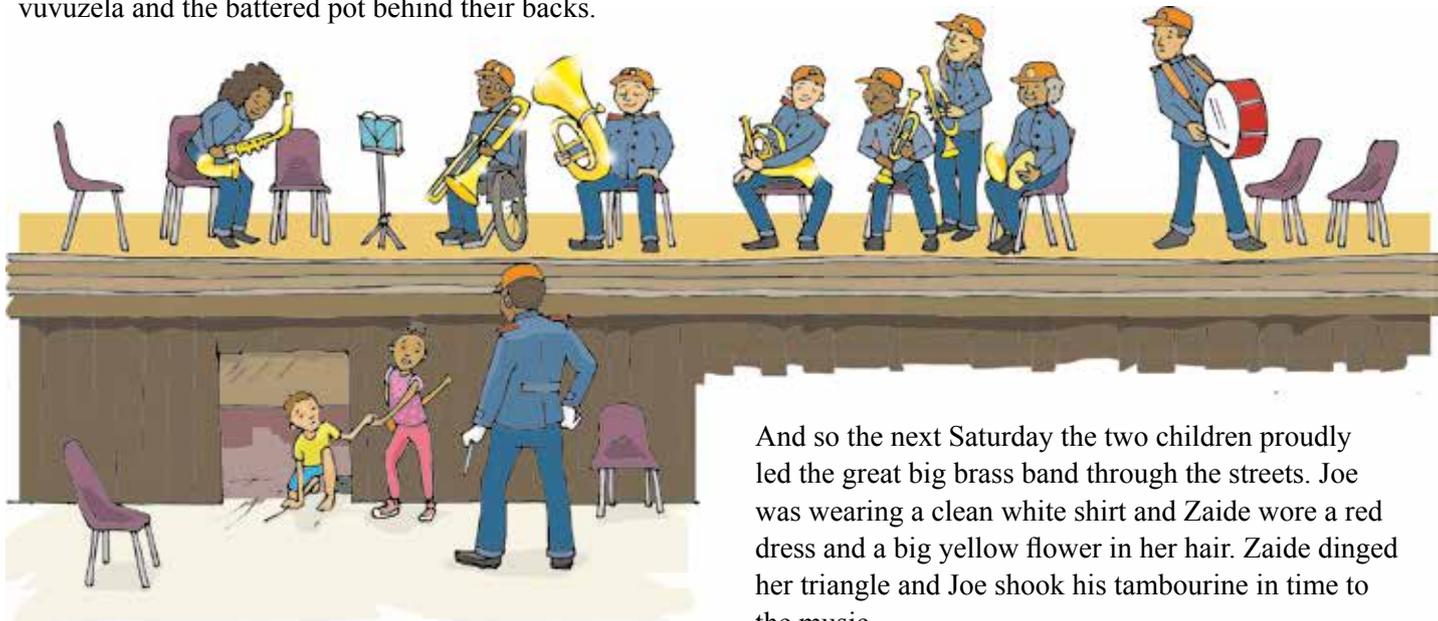
“Somebody was playing out of tune,” they heard a voice say.

“It’s not one of us. It’s coming from under there,” they heard another voice say.

Zaide and Joe kept very still. Then a face appeared – somebody was bending over and looking under the stage! The two children crouched deep in the shadows. But, oh no! The dust was tickling Joe’s nose and he couldn’t stop himself. He sneezed, not once, but three times! *Aitchoo! Aitchoo! Aitchoo!*

“Come on out,” said a man’s voice. “I know someone’s under there.”

Slowly Zaide and Joe crept out from under the stage and into the hall. They were both covered in dust and cobwebs. Everybody in the band was looking at them sternly. They were all wearing smart caps and dark jackets with shiny buttons and their big brass instruments sparkled brightly. Joe and Zaide tried to hide the orange vuvuzela and the battered pot behind their backs.



“Who are you and what are you doing here?” asked a short man with a big moustache. He had white gloves on and as he spoke he tapped a thin stick on the side of his leg.

“Please, p-p-please don’t hit us!” stuttered Joe.

“We only wanted to join in,” said Zaide. “I’ve always wanted to play in your band – always!”

“Come on, kids,” said a red-faced man, “time to go!” And he started to lead them towards the door.

“Wait a minute!” said the man in the white gloves. “If they want to play with us – why not let them join in? But,” and he turned to Zaide, “you can’t play a vuvuzela! And you,” he turned to Joe, “you can’t play on a pot!” He opened a big box and rummaged around inside. “Aha!” he said and he pulled out a little metal triangle and stick, and a tambourine. He gave the triangle and stick to Zaide and the tambourine to Joe.

Zaide’s face fell. “But I want to play a trumpet!” she wailed.

“Once you’ve learnt to play a trumpet, then you can,” said the man. “But, for now, you two can play these. And next Saturday you can lead the band down the Main Road when we play in the parade.”

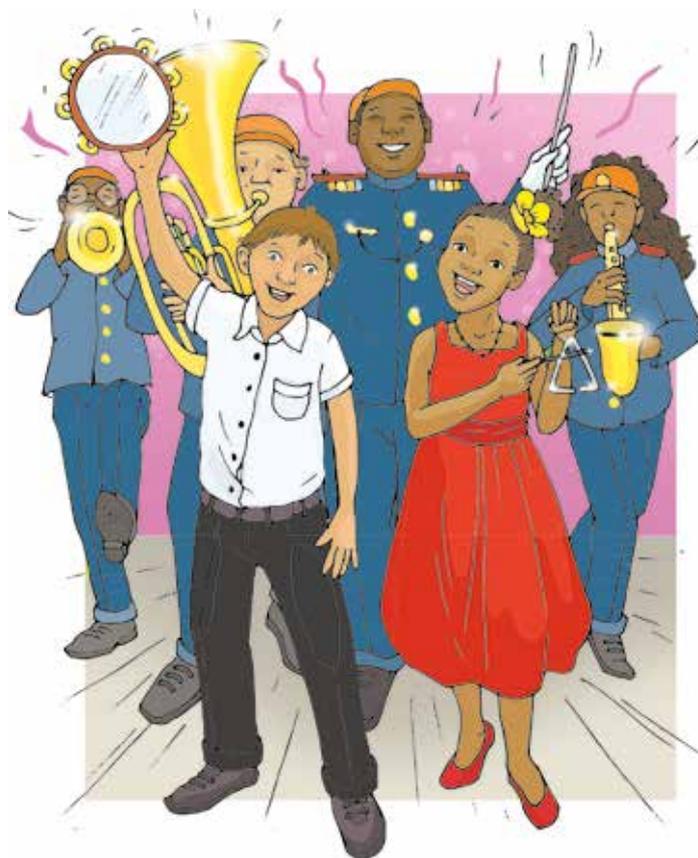
He turned to the band, “What do you say to that?”

“Why not?” said the man with the big drum.

“Sure, why not?” said a woman with a saxophone.

And so the next Saturday the two children proudly led the great big brass band through the streets. Joe was wearing a clean white shirt and Zaide wore a red dress and a big yellow flower in her hair. Zaide dinged her triangle and Joe shook his tambourine in time to the music.

And as they marched, Zaide thought about how one day she would be playing a trumpet in the big brass band at every town parade.



Get story active!

Here are some ideas for using the story on pages 1 to 3 with the children in your class and/or your reading club. Choose the ideas that best suit the ages and interests of the children.

- ★ Find a cooking pot and a wooden stick or spoon. As a way of introducing the story, turn the pot over and start beating it with the stick/spoon as if it is a drum, to create a regular rhythm. Wait for the children to notice what you are doing and then invite them to join in by using their hands on their legs or the floor. Explain that you are going to read them a story about a girl who wanted to play in a band.
- ★ After you have read the story, ask the children if they have ever played in a band or heard one playing. (It doesn't have to be a brass band – it can be any group of instruments playing together.)

Then let them share which instruments they played or would like to play in the band. Together try to make the sounds of instruments that you all know.

- ★ Ask the children to create posters that might have been displayed around the town to advertise the parade being held. Have a discussion about what information they would need to include on the posters before the children begin.
- ★ Suggest that the children use recycled materials and other things to make musical instruments. For example, you can make a shaker by putting small stones in a plastic container or tin with a lid. Decorate it by drawing patterns on a sheet of paper and then gluing the paper onto the container/tin. Once the instruments have been made, let the children use them as they sing some of their favourite songs together.

About the Story Powered Schools project

Nal'ibali (isiXhosa for "here's the story") is a national reading-for-enjoyment campaign to spark children's potential through storytelling and reading.

Story Powered Schools is a pilot project bringing the Nal'ibali reading-for-enjoyment campaign's proven approach to literacy development to selected schools in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. Endorsed by the Department of Education, it has been made possible by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The schools that are part of the Story Powered Schools project are committed to sparking their learners' potential through storytelling and reading. They use the power of stories to inspire their learners to want to read and write.

