

## Synopsis of the musical DANIEL GRYPHUS

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### ACT I

The heights of the Andes Mountains in the Colca Canyon of Peru provide the setting of DANIEL GRYPHUS - THE MUSICAL. In this land without time, where Incan and Spanish cultures collide, Andean condors have been ruled by High Priests for 500 years. These condors are awaiting the day they will once again be able to crown one of their own Prince of the Andes. No one knows where in the whole Andean territory of South America this condor is going to be born or when. The High Priest Condorcaca currently presides over the Colca region. During many of the scenes, Andean songs like '**HANAN PACHA**', '**ANDEAN PEAKS**' and '**APU KUNTUR**' are played.

The story begins with three boys - Cheman, Nano and Théo - walking through a park after a soccer match. Théo finds a baby bird whose species the three cannot agree upon, so they walk over to the house of Aunt Mery, who is the show's narrator. With the help of a seagull, the four characters return the chick to its family during the song '**AUNT MERY.**' Aunt Mery narrates the story of Daniel Gryphus to the boys using an electronic device as the stage turns into the shape of a computer tablet. During numerous funny scenes, condors will run into Aunt Mery's invisible, undestructible LED screen on stage. The tablet's computer screen is a metaphor of the barrier that separates the world of literature and fantasy from reality. This screen is also an allegory of the enmity and distance that exists between the animal kingdom and humans.

Kachitu Gryphus is a handsome but arrogant condor who is in charge of the group of condors that work for ColcaTour, a local business which entertains tourists visiting the Colca Canyon at a spot called Condor Cross, where these majestic birds glide and show off their flying skills. Kachitu attempts meet up with his friends and fiancée at another location in the the Colca Canyon when he falls head over heels for a beautiful young condor he spots in the corner of his eye. He is unable to stop looking at her and he flies into the invisible barrier on stage. He invites Asiri to have lunch with him in the song '**IF YOU WANT ME TO.**' After the Kachitu's frenetic and hilarious courtship dance, they run into Oscar and August, a pair of clownish king vultures and fellow scavengers. Kachitu attempts to get Oscar and August to leave in the song '**CLOWNS.**' Finally, Kachitu and Asiri begin to eat. They sing about delightful Peruvian seafood pickings in the song '**SEAFOOD RHAPSODY**' while feasting on a dead llama. Oscar and August join the song. They try to barge in and eat the meal.

Asiri finally says 'yes' to Kachitu's advances. Their baby makes his first appearance at the edge of the Andean cliffs when Asiri lays a giant blue egg. Kachitu is upset because the egg looks nothing like the egg of a "pure Andean condor." He attempts to convince Asiri to roll the egg over the cliff and immediately lay another egg - something that is not unusual when a predator robs this species' eggs or the egg goes bad - because Kachitu does not want to become the laughingstock of the condor community. Asiri threatens to take the egg and go to her mother's home. Kachitu says he will keep the egg under one condition: the High Priest Condorcaca "must come and certify that the egg is a

NORMAL Andean egg." In the song **'THAT EGG'**, Kachitu expresses his frustration at not fathering a normal egg as he sings with Asiri and the High Priest Condorcaca, who later comes to the conclusion that Asiri's egg is blue due to pollution.

A month after all the other chicks in the condor community have hatched, Chick hatches from the bright blue egg. His pink legs and smaller-than-average albino body emerge as children sing the song **'PHURU PHURU'**, a Quechuan expression that means a pompom made of feathers. Kachitu has a fit when he sees his son, who to him looks more like an animal from the North Pole than from the Andes. Asiri consoles her distressed baby bird with the song **'AVE MATRIX.'** Kachitu decides not to give his newborn baby a name until the chick is old enough to pick a name for himself. In the meantime, he decides to call the chick **'Chick.'** Asiri is upset by this decision and asks Apaza, the baby condor's godfather, to take the baby bird to the city hall behind Kachitu's back and register him with his own name. Before doing this, Apaza and four friends go to a bar and euphorically celebrate with **'chicha,'** a fermented corn maize beverage that is typical in the Andes, while they sing **'LET'S MAKE A TOAST.'**

The scene shifts to a classroom on Chick's first day of school. One of the students, a bully named Yanac, is imitating Amauta, the teacher, in the song **'BELIEVE AND TAKE FLIGHT.'** He dances on the teacher's desk and shows off different flying techniques, inviting his classmates to follow his dance moves. Amauta soon arrives and makes the boys line up and sing **'APU KUNTUR,'** the Condorian national anthem. Amauta explains to the young condors that they will soon be preparing for their **'Malku Kuntur'**, a rite of passage consisting of three challenges: 1. The condors must be able to dive head first into the Colca Canyon for at least three seconds and subsequently fly over the canyon for four hours; 2. The condors must find the largest animal carcass they can within six hours; and 3. In a period of three days, the condors must bring back a headband belonging to one of the Andean human boys who are undergoing their own ancestral rite of passage, the Warachicuy. The young condors and Amauta sing **'GROWING PAINS,'** where they express how hard it is to grow up. One of the students asks Amauta about the long-awaited Prince of the Andes. The teacher explains that an average condor cannot fulfill the highly stringent requirements needed to become Prince of the Andes. Suddenly, Yanac announces that there is no need to wait any longer because Chick is the long-awaited Prince. The entire class laughs and mocks Chick. Chick punches Yanac, flees the classroom and jumps into the abyss of the canyon with his pillow. He lands on the roof of a tree house in a human village as **'DESOLATION'** plays in the background.

## **ACT II**

Chick befriends W'achi, an Andean boy who owns the treehouse. In the song **'I WANNA BE BLACK'**, Chick explains why he is unhappy being an albino. Then he begins to cry. W'achi consoles Chick by telling him that there is someone who always cares about him in the song **'THERE IS SOMEONE WHO LOVES YOU.'** The next day, W'achi states he has brought Chick some food. W'achi attempts to regurgitate meat he has eaten because his teacher taught him that condors eat regurgitated food. W'achi helps Chick pick out his new first name - Daniel - after they talk about W'achi's hero, Daniel Boone. W'achi teaches Daniel how to swim; in the process, Chick lets go of his baby pillow that his mother

made for him with her own feathers. W'achi also teaches Daniel an expression that comes from a forgotten, unknown language - **'OHWASHYWASHYLASHYYAY'** - that will give the condor courage in times of trouble. W'achi tells Daniel not to take himself so seriously and calls him 'a vulture in a white tuxedo.' W'achi tries to help Daniel get bigger by pulling on his limbs. He goes bike riding with Daniel, who finally is able to fly. In the meantime, the High Priest Condorcaca calls off the search patrol, which has been unsuccessful at finding Daniel. Kachitu searches for his son on his own and deeply regrets having neglected Daniel.

Daniel promises to help W'achi with the boy's Warachicuy, an Andean rite of passage in which young men have to find a condor feather. After spending six months together, Daniel Gryphus decides it is time to return home to his family. W'achi gets upset and leaves as Daniel flies back to the cliffs of the Andes mountains. **'MY FRIEND W'ACHI'** is background music woven throughout the entertaining and touching scenes between boy and bird in Act II.

### **ACT III**

Daniel is back at school. With the instrumental **'THE SCHOOL CHIMNEY'** playing, Amauta reprimands Daniel and Yanac for fighting. The two condors have to stay and clean the classroom while their classmates go on a field trip. The condors have lunch and soon need to go to the bathroom. However, they discover they have been locked in the classroom, where there is no bathroom. After repeated attempts to 'hold it in' and get out through the bars covering the window, the birds 'do their business' in the school chimney. The class returns to a frigid classroom and decides to light a fire in the chimney. The birds run for their lives because of the smell until they crash into the invisible and unbreakable computer screen, causing Nano, Cheman and Théo to laugh hysterically.

Amauta reviews what the condors need to do if they encounter a puma or a human during their Malku Kuntur ceremony. Then the young condors ask Amauta why humans and condors do not get along. Aunt Mery sings to Nano, Cheman and Théo about why it is so important for people to take care of **'THE HIDDEN GARDEN'** in their hearts. Daniel informs his parents that he has finally chosen his first name: Daniel. At the same time, Asiri confesses to her family that she had already registered the name 'Misty' as her son's name. Her explanation is that Misty is the name of a volcano and Kachitu had always wanted to be named after a volcano. The family agrees that 'Daniel Misty' will be the boy's new name and they rap about this in **'RAPPING KUNTUR.'**

Daniel and all the young condors prepare for their Malku Kuntur. At the same time, W'achi and the Andean boys are preparing for the Warachicuy. Birds and boys sing about their passage into adulthood in **'THE TRANSITION SONG.'** Daniel and his classmates embark on the first part of their Malku Kuntur: they must nosedive into the Colca Canyon for at least 3 seconds. In the song **'YES, I CAN SOAR,'** Amauta lifts up the students' spirits as they prepare themselves for this challenge. Daniel dives head first into the Colca Canyon with his wings tightly pressed against his body, reaching a speed of 198 kilometers per hour. Upon completing the flight, the High Priest Condorcaca announces that Daniel's dive lasts over 8 seconds: Daniel has set a new record! Aunt Mery and the boys sing about this feat in **'YOU CONQUERED IT.'** Daniel

also rescues Felico, who has fallen into the water, by teaching him how to swim. Then Daniel and his classmates are recognized during a **'GRADUATION MARCH.'**

The young condors furiously try to complete the second part of their Malku Kuntur - they must find the largest dead or dying animal they possibly can in six hours. Daniel spots an injured spectacled bear named Mochita who begs Daniel not to eat her yet in the song **'MOCHITA.'** At the same time, hikers trek into the area. They argue about the "true" historical the Peruvian people in the song **'IDENTITY MATTERS.'** Daniel flies acrobatically around the hikers, helping them find and rescue the bear right before a forest fire overtakes the area.

Don Leoncio Kelley, a rich businessman, and W'achi's teacher, Luis, decide to change the rules of the Warachicuy: the boys will no longer try to find a condor feather; instead, they will capture condors that will be used in a 'Yawar Fiesta' - a superstitious Andean custom in which a condor is tied to the back of a bull, which the locals bullfight. Later, while hunting quail with Gonzalo, his father, W'achi breaks the news that he does not want to participate in his Warachicuy because he disagrees with the last minute changes. In the song **'THAT IS JUST BALONEY!'**, W'achi says that capturing a condor, which is an endangered species, is both barbaric and cruel. His father becomes angry and tells his son the condor is just another bird and that capturing condors is good for the local tourism trade.

Bruno, W'achi's rival, captures Yanac while the young condors are going through the third challenge of their Malku Kuntur rite of passage. Bruno ties Yanac to the back of a bull, breaking one of Yanac's legs in the process. W'achi convinces Luis, his teacher, to set Yanac free in exchange for him finding an even better condor to use in the Yawar Fiesta. W'achi sings **'NO MORE YAWAR FIESTA'** as he heals Yanac. W'achi soon encounters Daniel, and they go to a secret hideout and plan how to help each other with their respective rites of passage.

The reunited friends check the Warachicuy website on their cellphones and discover that two more young condors have been captured. W'achi pretends to have captured Daniel and he gets Luis to free the other two condors in exchange for turning Daniel in. Daniel is tied to a bull for the Yawar Fiesta. As the ceremony begins, Daniel extends his wings and lifts both himself and the bull off the ground. Bruno takes out his bow and arrow and tries to shoot Daniel, but W'achi jumps in front and gets hit by an arrow. As paramedics take W'achi off stage, condors and humans sing **'NO MORE YAWAR FIESTA.'** Multitudes of condors descend the cliffs as a journalist announces that humans have put an end to the cruel 'Yawar Fiesta' tradition in another Andean city. Daniel continues to fly into the skies with the bull tied to his legs. Daniel pierces the invisible barrier that divides the animal kingdom from the world of people. Daniel Gryphus breaks through into Aunt Mery and the children's dimension by flying through the tablet's computer screen and soaring over the spectators who are watching this musical. Daniel Gryphus is crowned the new Apu Kuntur Prince as all the characters sing **'APU KUNTUR.'**