



## San Diego Storyteller Brings African Folktale to Print

Contact: Steven Gregory  
Tel: (858) 525-5236  
Email: [info@talesalive.com](mailto:info@talesalive.com)  
[www.talesalive.com](http://www.talesalive.com)

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SAN DIEGO, California – When San Diego-based storyteller Steven Gregory and his musician wife began telling multicultural musical folktales, their biggest problem was finding tellable tales, especially from Africa. “A lot of them were just too violent for children,” Steven says. “And the happily-ever-after ending wasn’t always there.” So Steven started telling his own versions of these stories that were better suited to his storytelling audiences. *The Lion’s Drum* was just such a story, becoming one of the most popular African tales they told.

In this 32-page colorfully illustrated book, a young African hunter named Ajani discovers a lion playing a magical tree stump deep in the jungle. When he tells the chief and people of his village what he has seen and heard, they don’t believe him. But Ajani is determined to prove he didn’t lose his senses. This story tells the origin of the drum, the most prominent instrument in Africa. More specifically, the story is about the West African djembe, which is now the most popular hand drum in the world.

Steven Gregory, an African-American, has both his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in literature. “I’ve loved folktales and stories since I was a kid, and storytelling was a natural way for me to pass on these stories to the next generation. Some of my favorite childhood memories are of my grandfather telling me stories.” He has been a featured storyteller at multicultural and folk festivals in Southern California since 2000.

The book’s vibrant illustrations were done in colored pencil by New York-based artist Claudia Obata. Claudia has her bachelor’s degree in art from UC Berkeley as well as a teaching credential in art from the California College of Arts and Crafts.

Tales Alive! focuses on multicultural folktales as a way to share diverse cultures with others, spark imagination, and encourage reading, which is especially important at a time when many children spend hours watching TV or playing a video game. *The Lion’s Drum* is the first in a series of multicultural folktales planned by Tales Alive! Publishing. The book is available for purchase at the Tales Alive! website ([www.talesalive.com](http://www.talesalive.com)).