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## Dahlov (Zorach) Ipcar

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### About this Person

**Born:** November 12, 1917 in Windsor, Vermont, United States  
**Died:** February 10, 2017 in Maine, United States  
**Nationality:** American  
**Occupation:** Artist  
**Other Names:** Ipcar, Dahlov Zorach  
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Dahlov Ipcar has made her career primarily in the art world; her paintings have been exhibited in New York City and throughout the state of Maine, and grace many public and private collections. But she has also created many children's picture books, including *One-Horse Farm*, *I Love My Anteater with an A*, and *My Wonderful Christmas Tree*. In addition, Ipcar has authored stories and fantasy novels for young adults, including *A Dark Horn Blowing*. First published in 1978, *A Dark Horn Blowing* was praised by *Mythprint* contributor Eleanor M. Farrell as "one of a small but delightful sub-genre of fantasy novels retelling traditional ballads" upon its reissue in 1997.

Ipcar was born Dahlov Zorach on November 12, 1917, in Windsor, Vermont. Both her parents were artists--her father, a sculptor, and her mother, a painter and craftsworker. The Zorachs were a part of the modern art movement, and believed that much of their formal art training had inhibited their creativity, so they let Dahlov discover her artistic talents independently. From the beginning, she enjoyed drawing animals, jungles, and dinosaurs. Ipcar's parents sent her to progressive elementary schools to further encourage her freedom of expression. They also greatly influenced her by surrounding her with art, as Ipcar recalled in an essay for *Something About the Author Autobiography Series* (SAAS): "Our home was full of color. Bright modern semicubist paintings hung on the walls. The floors were painted bright orange, and covered with my mother's hooked rugs of her own design; she did batik hangings and bedspreads, and every piece of furniture was decorated in vivid colors. The Garden of Eden was painted on one wall, with Adam and Eve, and the snake winding down the tree."

When Ipcar was five years old, her parents bought a farm in Robinhood Village, on Georgetown Island Maine. She spent summers there and learned to love farm life, but in winter she lived in Greenwich Village in New York City in order to attend school. Ipcar admitted in her SAAS essay that "at first I resisted learning to read." She was bored by the primers that depicted everyday life, but "when we moved on to a book of traditional nursery tales about the little red hen and the big bad wolf, etc., I suddenly began reading with enthusiasm," Ipcar wrote. After mastering reading, some of her favorite books were those of Hugh Lofting's *Doctor Dolittle* series, Enid Bagnold's *National Velvet*, and Felix Salten's *Bambi*.

Though Ipcar began writing stories during her childhood, she was much more naturally drawn to art. She related in SAAS: "I was never a natural teller of tales. Most of the writers I know seem to recall that they always wanted to be writers--they always enjoyed making up stories. I didn't. Stories, plots did not come to me. I was more visually oriented. All my childhood writing, even in high school, was visual and poetic. I would write 'mood pieces,' descriptive vignettes: a man rowing a skiff in the fog, mice dancing in a twilight room, a city street in the rain." She further explained that "art was really my main interest." During her high school years, she became interested in the works of muralists such as Diego Rivera, and painted her own murals, often depicting war scenes.

Perhaps because of her progressive schooling, Ipcar was ready to enroll at Oberlin College when she was only sixteen. She did not stay there long, however; her early freedom left her resentful of the restrictive and old-fashioned art classes offered there. But "they kindly gave me a vacant room to work in," Ipcar affirmed in her autobiographical essay, "and I went ahead on my own doing large mural-scale colored drawings in chalk." In addition to Oberlin not quite meeting her expectations, Ipcar was being pressured to marry by a young man she had come to know during her summers in Maine. When she was eighteen, she finally married Adolph Ipcar, leaving Oberlin.

At first the Ipcars lived in New York City, teaching for a living. In addition to teaching art classes, she also tried her hand at creating children's books, but none of her efforts were accepted in that period. In 1937, Ipcar and her husband decided to return to Maine to live on her family farm. They built up a herd of dairy cattle, and started a family. "When we first started living in Maine year round and dairy farming, we lived on \$600 a year, which was very precarious," Ipcar told *MAICYA*. "It was children's books that eventually gave us our first real financial security." However, Ipcar continued to work on her art, and in 1939 two of her paintings were exhibited in the Corcoran Biennial. Later that year, she was given a one-woman show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

Ipcar continued working on her art, occasionally selling pieces and getting exhibitions in New York. When New York styles in art changed in the 1950s, her exhibitions were more often held in Maine.

"Before we came to Maine I had tried my hand at illustrating some of my ideas for children's books, but with no success," Ipcar told *MAICYA*. "I had given up all thought of writing and illustrating books when a publisher, William R. Scott, got in touch with me. He was looking for new young artists and asked me to illustrate a book by Margaret Wise Brown." The publishers were quite impressed with Ipcar's work. "I made sample illustrations and he was very enthusiastic," Ipcar told *MAICYA*. "My illustrations were simple and realistic, but modern. He wrote me, 'This is marvelous stuff!'" The result was published in 1945 as *The Little Fisherman*. "The book was a success, and they wanted me to illustrate other books," she said. "I did two others, and then thought I would try writing one my own about animal camouflage. Frankly, I was inspired by Margaret Wise Brown's writing. At first I had read her stories and thought, 'There's nothing much to this.' But as I studied the text, I began to see how carefully she had selected just the right word, with just the right poetic feeling, and how beautifully she had woven her ideas and words together. It was not simple at all--it was magical."

Ipcar's first solo effort was *Animal Hide and Seek*, published in 1947. The book "was accepted for publication and did well," Ipcar told *MAICYA*. "But Scott turned down my other ideas for books." Ipcar became dissatisfied with Scott, and submitted her second picture book, *One-Horse Farm*, to Doubleday, who "took it with no hesitation," she said. This effort became one of the author/artist's best-known works. "It was published in 1950 and remained in print for over 30 years," Ipcar told *MAICYA*. "It was my first Junior Literary Guild selection. I still remember that I was working in the vegetable garden when I saw Adolph coming down through the orchard waving a check in his hand. The check was for \$2000, and we were both stunned; we had never expected that kind of money. Not all my books did this well, but they all sold well enough to be a big boost to our income."

Since the publication of *One Horse Farm*, Ipcar has continued to produce quality picture books. While she often draws inspiration from her life on her family farm, many of her later works, including *Calico Jungle*, *The Land of Flowers*, and *The Biggest Fish in the Sea*, have featured more imaginative settings.

During the late 1960s, Ipcar began to work in a different direction, penning short stories and fantasy novels for young adult readers. The first of these, *General Felice*, saw publication in 1967. In 1990, she published the short story collection *The Nightmare and Her Foal and Other Stories*. Her fourth book for young adults, *A Dark Horn Blowing*, was inspired by a fragment from an old Scottish ballad, "The Queen of Elfan's Nourice." Despite her new interests, Ipcar continued to produce children's picture books, notably 1986's *My Wonderful Christmas Tree*. She also continues to make her home in Maine, where she creates and exhibits her imaginative artwork. In addition to praise from reviewers and readers, she has received numerous awards, including the Maine Governor's Award and several honorary degrees.

"I believe that a child raised without art is as surely deprived as a child raised without love," Ipcar told *MAICYA*, "and I feel that the best way to bring art into the lives of the largest number of children is through really fine illustrations in children's books. In the illustrations for my own books I have always done the very best art that I could."

As an artist, Ipcar is "more visually oriented than word oriented," she told *MAICYA*. "In doing a book, I usually start with pictures and write a story to go with them. Some of my books were based on farm life taken from my own experience, and some were done for the pleasure of exploring interesting and colorful subject matter," including *Deep Sea Farm*, about imaginary undersea life, and *The Marvelous Merry-Go-Round*, about unusual carved carousel animals.

"As I have grown and changed in my art career, so I have also changed my ideas about children's books," Ipcar told *MAICYA*. "I have come to value the qualities of originality and imagination over mere teaching. Although I still feel a book should have teaching value, I also feel an artist should bring new worlds to life for children to enjoy."

#### PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Born November 12, 1917, in Windsor, VT; daughter of William (a sculptor) and Marguerite (a painter; maiden name, Thompson) Zorach; married Adolph Ipcar (a dairy farmer), September 29, 1936; children: Robert William, Charles. Avocation: Old folk songs, chess, gardening, nature study, promoting art legislation, and fighting against nuclear power. **Education:** Attended Oberlin College, 1933-34. **Memberships:** American Civil Liberties Union, Citizens for Safe Power (director, 1970-73), Bath-Brunswick Regional Arts Council (director, 1971-73). **Addresses:** Homeoff--Robinhood Farm, 33 Stone Bridge Lane, Georgetown, ME 04548-9801. Agent--McIntosh & Otis, Inc., 310 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10017; and Frost Gully Gallery, 1159 US Rt. 1, P.O. Box 202, Freeport, ME 04032.

#### CAREER:

Artist, dairy farmer, author, and illustrator of children's books. *Exhibitions:* One-woman shows at Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, 1939; Bignou Gallery, New York, 1940; Passedoit Gallery, New York, 1943; Philadelphia Art Alliance, 1944; A.C.A. Gallery, New York, 1946; Wellons Gallery, New York, 1950, 1952; Children's Museum, Oakland, CA, 1956; Dalzell-Hatfield Galleries, Los Angeles, CA, 1970; Delaware Art Museum Library, 1976; Hobe Sound Galleries, FL, 1979; and various museums, galleries, libraries, and colleges in Maine, including Portland Museum of Art, Portland, ME, 2001. Two-person shows at Elmira College, NY, 1962; Hurlbutt

Gallery, Greenwich, CT, 1978; and various galleries and museums in Maine. Group shows at Corcoran Gallery of Art Biennial, 1939; Carnegie Institute, 1941, 1943; Detroit Institute of Arts, 1943; American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, 1980; Payson Gallery of Art, Westbrook College, ME, 1985; and others. Work included in collections at Brooklyn Museum of Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, Newark Museum, Portland, ME, Museum of Art, Colby College Museum of Art, Bates College, Westbrook College, University of Maine, Mary Baldwin College, University of Maryland, Smithsonian Institution, and Kerlan Collection, University of Minnesota, and in various corporate collections, including L. L. Bean Inc., Freeport, ME. Mural installations at U.S. Post Office, Lafollette, TN, 1939; U.S. Post Office, Yukon, OK, 1941; Children's Reading Room, Patten Free Library, Bath, ME, 1978; Shriners Hospital for Crippled Children, Springfield, MA, 1979; Kingfield Elementary School, ME, 1980; Narragansett Elementary School, Gorham, ME, 1981; Poland Springs Community School, Poland, ME, 1982; Georgetown Central School, ME, 1989, Lee-Winn Elementary School, Lee, ME, 1993; Crescent Park Elementary School, Bethel, ME, 1994; and Mid Coast Hospital, Brunswick, ME, 2001.

#### WORKS:

Writings JUVENILE; ALL SELF-ILLUSTRATED

- *Animal Hide and Seek*, Scott (New York, NY), 1947.
- *One Horse Farm*, Doubleday (New York, NY), 1950.
- *World Full of Horses*, Doubleday (New York, NY), 1955.
- *The Wonderful Egg*, Doubleday (New York, NY), 1958.
- *Ten Big Farms*, Knopf (New York, NY), 1958.
- *Brown Cow Farm: A Counting Book*, Doubleday (New York, NY), 1959.
- *I Like Animals*, Knopf (New York, NY), 1960.
- *Stripes and Spots*, Doubleday (New York, NY), 1961.
- *Deep Sea Farm*, Knopf (New York, NY), 1961.
- *Wild and Tame Animals*, Doubleday (New York, NY), 1962.
- *Lobsterman*, Knopf (New York, NY), 1962.
- *Black and White*, Knopf (New York, NY), 1963.
- *I Love My Anteater with an A*, Knopf (New York, NY), 1964.
- *Horses of Long Ago*, Doubleday (New York, NY), 1965.
- *The Calico Jungle*, Knopf (New York, NY), 1965.
- *Bright Barnyard*, Knopf (New York, NY), 1966.
- *The Song of the Day Birds and the Night Birds*, Doubleday (New York, NY), 1967.
- *Whisperings and Other Things* (poetry), Knopf (New York, NY), 1967.
- *The Wild Whirlwind*, Knopf (New York, NY), 1968.
- *The Cat at Night*, Doubleday (New York, NY), 1969.
- *The Marvelous Merry-Go-Round*, Doubleday (New York, NY), 1970.
- *Sir Addlepate and the Unicorn*, Doubleday (New York, NY), 1971.
- *The Cat Came Back*, Knopf (New York, NY), 1971.
- *The Biggest Fish in the Sea*, Viking (New York, NY), 1972.
- *A Flood of Creatures*, Holiday House (New York, NY), 1973.
- *The Land of Flowers*, Viking (New York, NY), 1974.
- *Bug City*, Holiday House (New York, NY), 1975.

- *Hard Scrabble Harvest*, Doubleday (New York, NY), 1976.
- *Bring in the Pumpkins*, Scholastic Book Services (New York, NY), 1978.
- *Lost and Found: A Hidden Animal Book*, Doubleday (New York, NY), 1981.
- *My Wonderful Christmas Tree*, Gannett Books, 1986.

#### ILLUSTRATOR

- Margaret Wise Brown, *The Little Fisherman* Scott (New York, NY), 1945.
- Evelyn Beyer, *Just like You* Scott (New York, NY), 1946.
- John G. McCullough, *Good Work* Scott (New York, NY), 1948.

#### YOUNG ADULT FICTION

- *General Felice*, illustrated by Kenneth Longtemps, McGraw (New York, NY), 1967.
- *The Warlock of Night*, Viking (New York, NY), 1969.
- *The Queen of Spells*, Viking (New York, NY), 1973.
- *A Dark Horn Blowing*, Viking (New York, NY), 1978.

#### OTHER

- (And illustrator) *The Nightmare and Her Foal and Other Stories* (adult fiction), North Country Press (Unity, ME), 1990.
- Contributor to volumes such as *Fishing for a Dream: Ocean Lullabies and Night Verses*, selected and illustrated by Kate Kiesler, Clarion, 1999. Contributor of adult short stories to *Texas Quarterly*, *Yankee*, and *Argosy*; contributor to *Horn Book Magazine*. Poetry has appeared in collections, including *The 20th Century Children's Poetry Treasury*, edited by Jack Prelutsky, Knopf, 1999; *A Thousand Yards of Sea*, Methuen, 1992; and *Talking Tigers*, Mimosa Publications, 1995.
- Ipcar has been featured in films such as the Vision Series, U.S. Information Agency, 1975, Intergenerational Life Planning Series, Maine Committee on Aging, 1988, and Main Masters Series, 2002.
- Author's papers are included at the de Grummond Collection, University of Southern Mississippi and the Kerlan Collection, University of Minnesota.

#### Adaptations

- *Brown Cow Farm* was made into a filmstrip and record by Weston Woods, 1966; *The Wonderful Egg* is available on record from Classroom Materials Co.

#### FURTHER READINGS:

##### Books

- Dibner, Martin, *Seacoast Maine: People and Places*, Doubleday (New York, NY), 1973.
- Hopkins, Lee Bennett, editor, *Books Are by People*, Citation Press (New York, NY), 1969.
- Pohl, William L., *The Voice of Maine*, Thorndike Press (Thorndike, ME), 1983.
- Reef, Pat, *Dahlov Ipcar: Artist*, Kennebec River Press (Kennebec, ME), 1987.
- *Something about the Author Autobiography Series*, Volume 8, Gale (Detroit, MI), 1989.

##### Periodicals

- *Art Gallery*, August-September, 1984, Pat Wilson, "Her Subject is the Jungle."
- *Artists in Maine*, summer, 1986, Susan Ryan, "Artist and Activist."
- *Bittersweet*, January, 1985, Pat Davidson Reef, "The Intricate Vision of Dahlov Ipcar."
- *Bookmark*, summer, 1980.
- *Down East*, April, 1994, Margaret Hammel, "Dahlov Ipcar's Peaceable Kingdom."
- *Horn Book Magazine*, October, 1961; February, 1966.
- *Instructor and Teacher*, May, 1981, Allan Yeager, review of *Lost and Found*, p. 59.
- *Maine Life*, April, 1998, Pat Schrath, "A Pride of Lions in the Midst of Maine."
- *Mythprint*, April, 1998, Eleanor M. Farrell, review of *A Dark Horn Blowing*.
- *Publishers Weekly*, January 16, 1981, Jean F. Mercer, review of *Lost and Found*, p. 80; September 20, 1999, review of *Fishing for a Dream*, p. 86.

- *School Library Journal*, May, 1981, Nancy Palmer, review of *Lost and Found*, p. 56.
- *Young Readers' Review*, March, 1968.

## Other

- *The World of Dahlov Ipcar*, <http://www.exitfive.com/dahlov/> (December 20, 2001).

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