

CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW

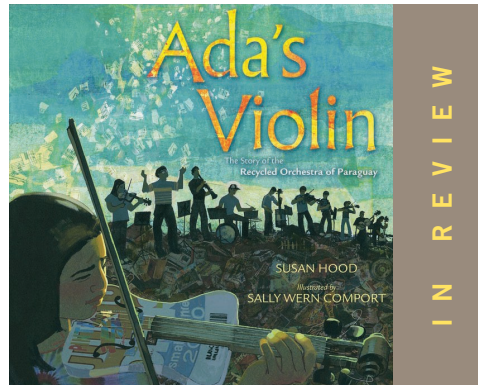
Reviewed by **Lindsey Duncan**

Ada's Violin: The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay

Written by Susan Hood

Illustrated by Sally Wern Comport

Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2016



In this poignant book, Susan Hood relates the true story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay, a tale of human ingenuity and the power of music education in even the most difficult circumstances. Sally Wern Comport's collage-style illustrations bring characters and settings to life and ignite the imagination of readers.

Ada Ríos and other children in the city of Cateura, Paraguay, are offered the chance to learn to play a musical instrument. Soon, however, those interested outnumber the instruments available to share. Additionally, instruments for purchase are more costly than most of the children's homes in Cateura, a slum and landfill for the city of Asunción, the capital of Paraguay. Favio Chávez, the newly arrived music instructor, seeks local volunteers to create instruments out of recycled materials they gather from the landfill. These instruments play well and are safe for the children to take home because they are made from trash, and thieves are not tempted to steal them. Ada selects a violin for practice at home and to play in group classes.

After many hours of rehearsal, the group begins to play well together. Señor Chávez continues to teach musicianship alongside lessons in respect and self-worth. As the original students' skills improve, they teach younger students. Their group also begins to perform

outside of Cateura. The story ends with the Recycled Orchestra touring the world, and with this touching quote: "They had discovered the surprise waiting in the landfill. Buried in the trash was music. And buried in themselves was something to be proud of." An author's note on the final pages of the book provides more detailed information about the group, its participants, and their travels, as well as websites and video links for further study.

Complex content, such as cultural, geopolitical, and economic social studies, the science of sound in the context of STEAM curriculum, and environmental studies connected with consumer waste and recycling, is meaningful and accessible when approached through this story.

After my fourth- and fifth-grade students read this book, we watched a video of the Recycled Orchestra playing their unique instruments. This stimulated curiosity and led to insightful questions about the lives of the people in the story and a discussion of similarities and differences with our life situations. We also used this story to jumpstart a study of the way instruments create sound. Using a guide from the Louisville Orchestra's concert for fourth and fifth graders, each student designed and constructed an instrument. Most were not comparable to traditional instruments other than they could be classified as aerophones, idiophones, membranophones, and/or chordophones.

Ultimately, students worked in groups to create rhythmic ostinati and compose a piece using their instruments.

Ada's Violin: The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay is told in a simple way students can understand, and Comport's illustrations mitigate the destitution of the landfill because it is depicted through the eyes of a child to whom it is home. Occasions abound for implementation in the music classroom and meaningful cross-curricular collaboration with other subject-area teachers. Complex content, such as cultural, geopolitical, and economic social studies, the science of sound in the context of STEAM curriculum, and environmental studies

connected with consumer waste and recycling, is meaningful and accessible when approached through this story. Students and teachers alike will benefit from the refreshing reminder that music and joy can be created in the most unusual and surprising circumstances. ■

LINDSEY DUNCAN began teaching pre-K through Grade 8 music at Saint Agnes School in Louisville, Kentucky, in 2014. She received her bachelor's degree in music education from Asbury University, Kentucky, and her master's degree in music education with an emphasis in Orff Schulwerk from the University of Kentucky, Lexington. Lindsey has completed three levels of Orff Schulwerk Teacher Education and Orff Curriculum Development and serves as a member-at-large for the Kentucky Orff-Schulwerk Association.

Collaboration

Orff Schulwerk is inherently collaborative. Students sing, play, move, and create together—with their classmates, with new friends, across disciplines. Educators, too, learn, play, create, and grow together—within our schools, beyond professional roles and disciplinary boundaries, within and across professional organizations. Look for *The Orff Echo* Winter 2021 issue to celebrate the many rich and diverse collaborations in our work.

