

CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by Sally Trenfield

Colors! ¡Colores!

Written by Jorge Luján

Illustrated by Piet Grobler

Translated by John Oliver Simon and Rebecca Parfitt

Toronto, ONT: Groundwood Books, 2008

Colors! ¡Colores! is a charming book. Beautifully illustrated with simple text, it is a wonderful resource for a bilingual, bicultural community.

Eight colors, as well as beige, black, and white, are included in Colors! ¡Colores! One page is dedicated to each color, accompanied by a beautiful rhyme. Each poem, written in both English and Spanish, elicits a feeling about the color. The poetry cries out to be interpreted through music, drama, and movement to augment the words and pictures. The simple watercolor drawings complement the text like percussive color complements an ostinato.

This book appeals to a variety of age levels. It's fascinating to observe how differently each group of children responds to the poetry as it is read aloud. With very young children, try reading each page and choosing different instrument timbres to represent the various colors. For students in upper grades, try creating compositions to represent the moods of the various colors in small groups or with partners. Children of all ages enjoy responding with movement to the different moods represented by the colors.

I used this book as a final sharing project for an upper-level Orff teacher education course. The book was a starting point to review modes, functional harmony, folk dance, creative movement, unpitched percussion pieces, and canons.

It was amazing how participant-created compositions, combined with folk dances, creative movement, and drama (enhanced with scarves and props), brought the book to life.

Although previous knowledge of Spanish is helpful, the text on each page is short enough that non-Spanish speakers can easily learn to pronounce the Spanish text, while using the English version of each poem to understand meaning. The reverse is also true. If the reader's first language is Spanish, the book is an excellent vehicle for acquiring additional English vocabulary while experiencing Spanish poetry. For teachers who have multi-lingual classrooms, this book is also accessible to those whose first language is neither Spanish nor English. The colors and illustrations combined with text that is short and beautiful make the meanings clear for all.

Colors! ¡Colores! is a wonderful children's book with international and multi-generational appeal. The poet is one of Mexico's foremost authors for children's books and has been recognized internationally. What a wonderful treat for readers that he has teamed up with one of South Africa's most celebrated illustrators for children. This book is an excellent addition to every Orff teacher's library. ■

SALLY TRENFIELD has taught music at all levels, from pre-K to college, for 33 years. She teaches Orff Schulwerk teacher education courses, has presented at state and national music education conferences, and loves Orff Schulwerk. Currently, Trenfield is working as a church musician, and taking time to explore what her next job opportunity will be.

