

CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by Jennifer Sheridan

Harold finds a voice

By Courtney Dicmas

Auburn, ME: Child's Play (International) Ltd, 2013

Bonjour and welcome to the bustling heart of Paris, the home of Harold the parrot. This wonderful debut book by author/illustrator Courtney Dicmas will surely captivate students, impart an important lesson about the value of each individual's voice, and offer opportunities for creativity in the music classroom.

Harold is a master imitator. He echoes the alarm clock, the kettle, the washing machine, and other sounds in his home with great flair. But after a while, he grows weary of the same old noises and takes an opportunity to explore the world of sounds far beyond Apartment 4B. As he soars through the "City of Light," he imitates the "flip-flap" of hanging laundry, the "chop chop chop" of a helicopter, and the "ooh weeeoooh" of a police car, bringing alive the sounds of the city. He joyfully reproduces voices big and small, cheerful and sad, and even sniffly voices. Though he enjoys his adventure, Harold realizes that while everything he observes has its own voice, he does not. Believing that he must have a voice of his own, he takes a deep breath and lets out a boisterous "RAWK." His immediate disappointment in what he heard disappears when parrots from miles away are enthralled by Harold's original sound. In the end, with the help of his new friends, Harold enjoys his newfound confidence and is happiest with the voice he

discovered within himself.

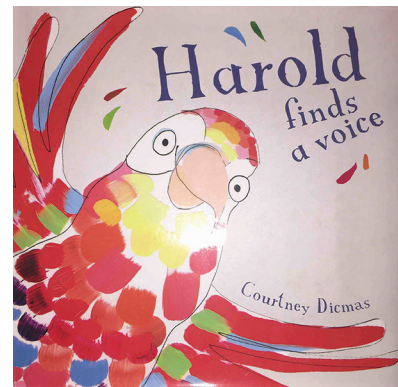
The vibrant and colorful illustrations in the book bring Harold's world of sound alive with onomatopoeic words that accompany each picture. Those words are irresistible to students who want to recreate his sounds themselves. The book also offers a wonderful vehicle

for vocal imitation and exploration. Students can imitate the sounds in the book or sounds they hear from the teacher, instruments, or objects in the music room. They can create original sounds for others to echo. Students can explore the "voices" of the items in Apartment 4B, such as the alarm clock, kettle, blender, cell phone, toaster, vacuum, water, toilet, and washing machine. They might also compose a sound story recreating Harold's tale through their sound effects, or create their own original vocal story.

Dynamics and timbre are other areas to explore through this delightful book. Harold imitates big voices and small voices, promoting work with dynamics. A broader discussion of timbre, with an extension to include the voices of the instruments children play in the music classroom, would be a great pairing with this story.

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Harold's adventure through Paris is an invitation to explore this famous city and the culture of France. He peers out his window at the Eiffel Tower, which could inspire conversation about this and other famous landmarks throughout Paris, including the Arc de Triomphe, the Louvre, and Notre Dame Cathedral. What songs did Harold hear in his travels through Paris? The sounds of *Frere Jacques*, *Au Clair de la Lune*, and *Sur le Pont d'Avignon* could be



a wonderful soundtrack to this French story, even more so when enhanced with performance in round, instrumental accompaniment, and movement in the classroom.

Finally, Harold gives the reader permission to be proud of his or her voice. Teachers can impart the lesson that all students have a voice of their very own—one that is an important part of themselves. As Harold discovered, the world is full of beautiful sounds, but none more beautiful than the sounds that come from within. *Au revoir!* ■

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