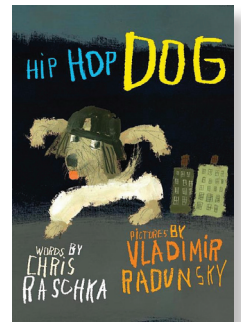


Hip Hop Dog

By Chris Raschka, illustrated by Vladimir Radunsky
Harper, an imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 2010



Readers already familiar with Chris Raschka's playful books depicting jazz styles (*Charlie Parker Played Be-Bop*, *John Coltrane's Giant Steps*, and *Mysterious Thelonious*) know that this author can make word rhythms dance. In combination with Radunsky's lively mixed-media representations of inner-city scenes, this wonderful book will "rap" itself around your heart with a charming mutt's story and his "doggy allegory."

The best way to read this book is out loud so the back-beat rap rhythms, visually accentuated with bold text, come to life: "I was *born* into a *litter* of eight *brothers* and eight *sisters*. Friendly *takers* took the *others*; now I *got no puppy-sitters*." As the Hip Hop Dog says, "...keep your *paws* still if you're *able*" while you learn the story of a pup whose self image goes from "the *lowest* and the *slowest*" to "pure *delight-est*, y'know I'm *right-est*." Along the way this loveable mongrel becomes a great role model as "the *coolest* go to *school-est*" who is also "the *brightest*, no need t' *fight-est*."

Across the pages romp street mutts of every shape and color—along with a few schnoodles and poodles—while

this rising young canine rapper break-dances between rows of apartments turning the heads of "all the *breeders*." Radunsky's loose lines and relaxed brushwork create illustrations that suggest a child's artwork ... the absence of perspective is refreshing. Bits of collage and a textured cityscape create a wonderful background for colorful characters of both the dog and the human kind, including brief appearances by Louis Armstrong and Brünhilda ("now I *bark* it like *Brünhilda*)."

Raschka's musicality comes through in rhythmic unity created with four 4-beat phrases on each two-page spread and in a lilting refrain that the illustrator spirals around the pages like our break-dancing dog. Even when using only onomatopoeia, the text is full of rhythmic energy: "oo oo r r r r wowf wowf wowf."

While the book jacket suggests an age level of four through eight, it will easily interest older children. The text/ lyrics are child appropriate, but not childish, and serve as a wonderful example of how to "... *make it auditory*." Students may take inspiration from the *Hip Hop Dog* and choose to tell their story in rhythm and rhyme with a hip-

hop back-beat. For students who have experience with the speech exercises in Volume I of *Music for Children*, this will offer a different way to play with word rhythms and beat. Creating four-beat rhyming phrases that place the word emphasis on the off-beats will help children begin to organize their words in a hip-hop rhythm pattern. Because rapping is both a language and a musical challenge, classroom teachers may want to collaborate by helping their students create word lists of adjectives, adverbs, alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhymes, etc.

Whether you simply read this book to your students for the delight of an uplifting story told in rhythm and rhyme, or you use it as an inspiration for creating raps in your classroom, this book will be a hit with your students and everyone will get down with the scrappy, canine Snoop Dogg who learns he is "*not some lowly mutt*." ■

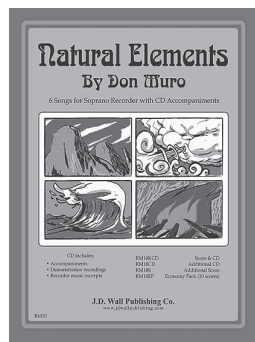
Marjie Van Gunten recently retired after forty years of teaching music from college level through early childhood and has served on The Orff Echo Editorial Board.

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