

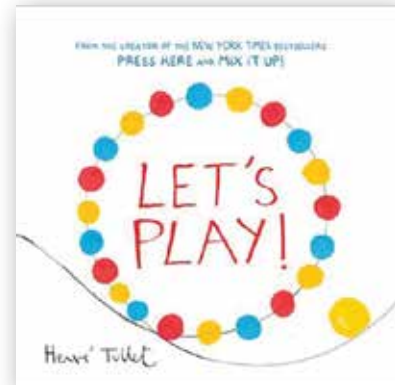
CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by Tiffany English

Let's Play!

Written and Illustrated by Hervé Tullet
Translated by Christopher Franceschelli
San Francisco, CA: Handprint Books,
Chronicle Books, LLC, 2016

timbres should represent particular colors, shapes, lines, background, and so on inspires excitement and results in a truly playful musical experience. Consider “playing” pages from left to right, corner to corner, bottom to top, or any other interesting manner.



“Wanna play?” From the opening page, *Let's Play*, by Hervé Tullet, beckons to the reader, whether child or adult. The journey begins with a friend—an engaging, adventurous yellow dot that confides in the reader and encourages teamwork to get through this playful journey. Readers familiar with Tullet's other works, *Mix It Up!* and *Press Here*, know that Tullet delights in giving the reader a joyous, jaunty, exciting ride complete with color, shape, and motion. In this book, however, Tullet brings in something new—emotion. The courageous yellow dot encourages the reader to explore humor, joy, fear, anxiety, relief, and delight.

At first the little yellow dot is bored. But when the reader cracks open the cover, the dot becomes personified with a delightful point of view that encourages children to join the adventure with their own inventive sounds, ideas, and movement. The initial pages of the story lend themselves to lively vocal and movement exploration. By following the simple twisting lines of the illustrations, children are able to interpret visual information through their own creativity. The beginning pages also spark ideas of composition with line and shape such as an aleatoric composition conceived by the children. These initial pages also bring to mind orchestration. Giving children choices on which

Although this book may initially look like it is for younger primary-age children, consider introducing it to your older students. “Ready?” the yellow dot asks while entering a black, seemingly empty space. The contrast between the beginning of the book and this section begs children to examine those emotions. Consider modal improvisation or composition. Which mode works best for the happier, playful beginning pages? Which mode captures the fear of the dark or the fear of heights? Is there a mode with a sense of humor? Is there a straightforward mode that could help operate the traffic light? The questions keep coming: “Now what do you think we should do?” This perpetual question Orff Schulwerk practitioners ask their students daily appears perfectly in the middle of the book and invites delightful, enchanting, child-centered flights of fancy.

In addition to improvisation with modes, the yellow dot invites—no, he implores—movement. The twisty, scribbly, bumpy shapes invite children to form group statues and traverse pathways. As the pages proceed, the shapes morph. Using these illustrations as a springboard gives students a concrete example that will spark their imaginations. Consider a negative space game where students silently change from shape to shape, from group to group.

For younger children, or perhaps those with less movement experience, Tullet has included an opportunity for creation and experimentation as well. “Turn,” “run,” “flip,” and “fly.” The yellow dot continues the joyful journey and this time with friends! The red and blue dots have joined

the amusing escapade, and it is brilliant.

“Play some more?” The yellow dot has recovered from the fear and anxiety of the dark space and the high red ledge. Now it is time for play—literally. A game of red light/green light ensues. The yellow dot asks the reader to count to 10. “What else can we do?”—yet another perpetual question familiar to Orff Schulwerk practitioners—leads to exploring the numbers. Perhaps the children work with changing meters as they count. Perhaps they create patterns of numbers that translate into rhythmic word chains, or perhaps they focus on the syllables in the number words to shape their own ostinato patterns. “Amazing, right?”

“Oh I have an idea!” The yellow dot beckons the reader to sing, frolic, and explore. From the beginning to the end, this book lends itself to enthusiastic discovery. The author of over

50 children’s books, Tullet excels in integrating the reader into his works. *Let’s Play* is a whimsical journey through a child’s emotions and imagination and the final sentence of the book, “Do you want to come back some time and play some more?” says it all. ■

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