

The Maestro Plays

By Bill Martin Jr.
Henry Holt and Company, New York



Reviewed by
Sarah VanLaan

This delightful book brought a smile to my face from the very first page with these words: "The Maestro plays. He plays proudly. He plays loudly." The fanciful character that the author and illustrator created together makes you want to dance, sing, skip, jump, run, and play all over the music classroom! The possibilities for the exploration of music and expression, in all its forms, are endless.

Bill Martin Jr.'s use of rhyming adverbs to describe the timbre, emotion, and expression of the instruments displayed in the book is masterful. Many words used in the book are of the author's own creation. His innovation would provide inspiration for students to create their own adverbs to describe instrument sounds. His words also provide an avenue from which we, as music teachers, can bridge across the curriculum and dig into grammar and poetry in a musical way.

Illustrated by Vladimir Radunsky, the book's colorful paper illustrations are perfectly paired with the author's love of language. Radunsky's lively illustrations make you feel like you are in the center of a grand performance of a one-man band at the circus. The maestro has the appearance of a jolly clown, wearing a kilt, and he's surrounded by other bright characters, like flying dogs and dancing pigs. In these illustrations, the maestro performs great feats, such as walking a tight rope while playing crash cymbals and playing a bugle while riding backwards on an ostrich. Though the words were written more than twenty years before the pictures were drawn, Radunsky's illustrations are so compat-

ible with Martin Jr.'s artful words that I can not imagine one without the other.

The Maestro Plays could be used in a variety of ways in your classroom. One could use the book to explore movement, instrument timbre, or simply as a catalyst to get your students' creative juices flowing. I highly recommend this book for primary-age students. It would make an excellent addition to any music classroom library.

"The Maestro Plays...ringingly, wingingly, swingingly, flingingly,

tingingly, faster, faster..." and I know this book will play right into your students' hearts and become one of your classroom favorites.

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