

# A-Ticket A-Tasket

by Ella Fitzgerald and Van Alexander, illustrated by Ora Eitan

Philomel Books, 2003



Reviewed by  
Joan Bell Dakin

This illustrated version of the childhood chase game pops and swings with joy and movement. It is based on the 1938 song by the great jazz singer, Ella Fitzgerald, and

tells the story of what happens to the basket after the child drops it. A little girl picks it up "truckin' on down the avenue without a single thing to do." The boy searches all over, asking, "Have you seen it over there? Have you seen it over here?" until he eventually finds the basket again.

The rhythms and rhymes go beyond the staid *ta-ti-ti* of the original song; they hint at the colors and syncopation of jazz. You can explore the language in many ways: how would you say the words on this page? Give me a gesture that shows me how the little boy is feeling. What do you do when you are mad? Musical elements are endless; call and response form, tone color, dynamics and phrase length are just a few.

The cut-paper illustrations are bold and bright. The background on each page is a lively city scene, while the characters are drawn with broad gestures. The details are subtle and delightful. For example, the little boy writes the letter with his left hand; the girl has a mischievous expression on her face.

You don't need the recording of Fitzgerald singing "A Tisket A Tasket" to thoroughly enjoy this book. However it certainly enriches the story, the game, and the song when children hear Fitzgerald sing it. Sing the *so-mi-la* melody, play the game, read the story and then listen to the recording. My first-

graders immediately jumped up and danced! If you want kids to get hooked on Ella Fitzgerald and her unique scat singing style, play the CD.

I recommend this storybook as an addition to anyone's library of children's picture books. It is a welcome addition to the growing collection of books that introduce young children

to the joy of jazz.

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