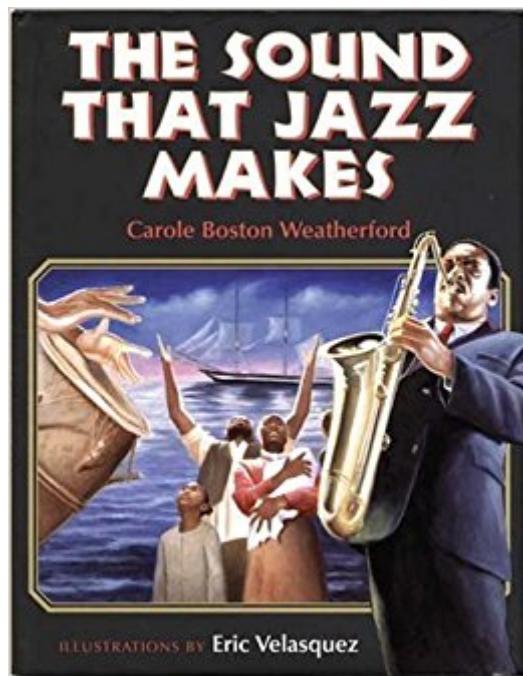


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# The Sound That Jazz Makes



## Synopsis

A symphony of sound and color, *The Sound That Jazz Makes* is an eloquently rendered celebration of a remarkable heritage. Author Carole Boston Weatherford's lyrical stanzas combine with the power of luminous oil paintings by Coretta Scott King New Talent winner, Eric Velasquez (*The Piano Man*) to trace the development of jazz. From African forests to wooden slave ships to Harlem nightclubs, the tragic and joyous legacy of the African-American experience gives jazz its passion and spirit.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Molding her rhymed text to the rhythms and cadences of "This Is the House That Jack Built," Weatherford (*Juneteenth Jamboree*) distills an entire course in music history, tracing the roots of jazz back to its origins in Africa and up to its current incarnation in rap and hip hop. Each spread focuses on a different period and a different musical form, e.g., "This is the field where slaves turned the soil,/ and chanted of freedom while they toiled/ to pass the message, through secret codes,/ of stealing away on pitch-dark roads." Ragtime, blues, Dixieland, gospel, swing and be-bop all receive mention on the way to the triumphant conclusion: "Jazz is a downbeat born in our nation,/ chords of struggle and jubilation,/ bursting forth from hearts set free/ in notes that echo history." Even though Weatherford's language is vibrant, the familiar "House That Jack Built" strains may cause problems: their musicality has little to do with the music at hand, and enforces a simplicity at odds with the references here ("cakewalkers," "Delta bluesman," etc.). Velasquez's portraits emphasize the dignity and pride of his subjects, whether he is suggesting the rage and misery of captives or

re-creating photos of "Duke" and "Lady." But the effect is uneven: the paintings are sometimes moving, sometimes stagy. An ambitious project, not quite realized. All ages. (Apr.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 3-6-This book traces the evolution of jazz in a poem of four-line stanzas that begins with an African drum beat and ends with a rapper who still hears "-the age-old, far-off beat/of Africa drumming on every street." Each stanza accompanies a full-spread oil painting outlined with a crayon line and bordered in white. On many pages, one figure—an African kalimba player, a Delta bluesman, etc.—is featured in front of the painting, breaking the frame and extending into the white space below. The animated African animals and dancers depicted in warm golds and browns contrast sharply with the still figures and somber tones of the scenes on slave ships and in plantation fields. These, too, contrast with the bright colors and movement of the cakewalkers, gospel singers, and swing and bebop musicians with their arms or instruments lifted joyously upward. The final illustration of a young African-American trumpet player with his family against a background that incorporates many elements from the previous paintings is a satisfying synthesis of both the visual and written elements of the book: "JAZZ is a downbeat born in our nation,/chords of struggle and jubilation,/bursting forth from hearts set free/in notes that echo history./This is the sound that jazz makes!" Although some of the rhymes don't scan as well as others, this is still an especially attractive, satisfying pictorial introduction to and celebration of this unique American musical form. Ginny Gustin, Sonoma County Library System, Santa Rosa, CA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I will use this as part of my jazz unit for students who have never had formal music classes. I would gladly pay a little more to have links to excerpts of the great artists mentioned in the text. Loved the illustrations, too,

It offers a clear concise history of African American music with a rhythm that echoes the music itself! Interesting and easy for every level.

This is a great starter book to read to little kids. I bought this for my nephew as a baby so his Mom could read to him at night.

This is lovely book told in a circular format about the history of Jazz. It begins with people from

Africa and their musical history, the slave trade and the continuance of their culture through song and music. As freedom loomed the music developed into ragtime and finally Jazz. I thought the poetry was on target and engaging, the illustrations were perfect for the subject matter and meaningful for the text. I felt moved by the book and it ends with rap, a very important music for today's youth. Inspired book which knows what it is talking about.

Deft, strong hand tapped the rhythm of the sounds of nature around him. The zebras flew like the wind as African cranes glided over the grass huts. The beat moved on. "This is a kalimba chiming for rain / while a high priest chants the same refrain. / These are the dancers who leap and spin / wearing grass skirts and leopard skin." The slave ships came and the chains captured the beat that would live on in those hands, in those heads, and in their hearts. The harbor would be the home of the auctions where mean and woman stood on blocks to be sold. The voices of those slaves came once again to life in the fields, singing and passing messages "through secret codes." Slaves ran toward freedom, but raised their arms high to sing and talk to the Lord. "This is the banjo the farmer plucked / after the corn was picked and shucked / while a young boy clacked a pair of spoons / and folks danced jigs beneath the moon." The song and dance kept moving to the beat of a stride piano in a honky tonk. The music was moving, but just where would it find a home and what would it become? This is a fascinating tale of the origins and history of jazz. It's not a tale that is outlined in a nonfiction manner, but one expressed in a poetic manner accompanied by the music of Eric Velasquez's amazingly expressive artwork rendered in oil. This book has won several awards, including the Carter G. Woodson Book Award. The verse seamlessly moves us from a lone drum in Africa to the sounds of a boombox with a break dancer expressing the beat. The book has been reprinted from the year 2000 edition, but the theme is timeless. Books by Carole Boston Weatherford: Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom (Caldecott Honor Book) Oprah: The Little Speaker Before John Was a Jazz Giant: A Song of John Coltrane Jesse Owens: Fastest Man Alive Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins The Beatitudes: From Slavery to Civil Rights The Sound That Jazz Makes Michelle Obama: First Mom Birmingham, 1963

The colorful illustrations in this book should make Eric Velasquez a household name--FABULOUS artwork--but what a shame that the cheap paperback muddies the colors. I'd be surprised if the original artwork wasn't brighter and more vibrant than the print version. Still, this is an affordable book, at \$8, full color and full sized, so I won't complain too much about the color quality. The text is also good, with a strong rhythm in the well chosen words. Carole Boston Weatherford focuses

exclusively on Africa in this story of the birth of jazz, and she does it with a clever verse structure that makes the story compelling and memorable. E.g., "This is the pulse of countless hearts aboard the slave ships chased by sharks," and "This is the banjo the farmer plucked after the corn was picked and shucked while a young boy clacked a pair of spoons and folks danced jigs beneath the moon." I don't dispute Africa being the single most important inspiration for the genre of music we call jazz, but I wish the contributions of Yiddish musicians to this musical form were better known. Jazz may be hard to define, but when we hear it, we know "this is jazz." And when we say jazz, we usually mean the form of music that was born in New Orleans. "The Sound That Jazz Makes" is a gorgeous children's book that brings to life the drumbeats of Africa, the lamentations of slaves, the spirit of jazz and its power to uplift and entertain us. It is not the scope of this book to describe the musical innovations and freedom to improvise that distinguish jazz from other genres. I'm at least 90% European, mostly German, and about 1/64 Native American (not enough to count), so I'm interested in the contributions of others besides Africans to the marvelous world of jazz. No one ever seems to include Natives in a history of jazz--perhaps their prowess as warriors, hunters and people uniquely adapted to rugged, environmentally conscientious ways of life far exceeded their musical contributions to the world. While Europeans and their accordions may have gotten themselves laughed out of inclusion in anything so sophisticated as jazz, I would argue that Klezmer has a place, somewhere, in the annals of jazz history. In all, this is a gorgeous children's book, not a comprehensive history of jazz, well written, engaging and memorable. Meanwhile, I feel this nudge to write my own book about the contributions of Europeans (Italy's Nicola Conte, for one) and South Americans (Astor Piazzolla and the accordion, any local Brazilian percussionist) to the incredible world of jazz.

This book captures the throbbing rhythm of jazz from its African roots to its modern incarnation in hip hop music. The cadence of the verse captures the emotion of the evolution of the style. The illustrations are beautiful, capturing the despair of the slave ships to the exuberance of a church choir. Although some of the terms like "cake walkers" and the personalities like "Cab Calloway" may not be familiar to the target age group, this is a wonderful introduction to jazz. Recommended.

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