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Sweethearts Of Rhythm



Synopsis

In the 1940s, as the world was at war, a remarkable jazz band performed on the American home front. This all-female band, originating from a boarding school in the heart of Mississippi, found its way to the most famous ballrooms in the country, offering solace during the hard years of the war. They dared to be an interracial group despite the cruelties of Jim Crow laws, and they dared to assert their talents though they were women in a "man's" profession. Told in thought-provoking poems and arresting images, this unusual look at our nation's history is deep and inspiring.

Book Information

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Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

A tenor sax rested on its stand and a trombone quietly lay in its case in a pawnshop. The door to the shop was closed and the instruments began to talk of their "glory years on the road with an all-girl band." They all began to swing and sway in remembrance of a time and a band long since forgotten by most. Decades earlier there was a time when men had gone off to war and jazz musicians were needed. The Piney Woods Country Life School, in Piney Woods Mississippi was founded by Laurence Jones in 1909. Eighteen years later he gathered together some of the girls from the school to form a jazz band. They were predominantly African American, but there were others. There was a "Chinese Saxophonist, a Hawaiian trumpeter, and a Mexican clarinetist." They represented the world as so became known as the "International Sweethearts of Rhythm." They soon began

touring, but later broke from the school. They weren't being "paid a fair wage." They knew how to swing and entrance an audience. They were some of the best musicians the states had to offer. They were hot!
It Don't Mean A Thing
Pauline Braddy On Drums
On some tunes, she'd lash may bass home like a jockey;
On some all she did was high-hat rickle the beat,
Always greacefully making the transitions,
Watching the music and the dancers' feet.
The jitterbug was one way people forgot
The rapidly spreading prairie fires of war.
Man, the house would bounce when her licks were hot!
We gave those people what they were dancing for. (Marilyn Nelson)
Before I read the book, I read the author and illustrator notes in the back of the book. Both were stunning and you won't hear any spoilers here.

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