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Django



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Synopsis

Born into a travelling gypsy family, young Django Reinhardt taught himself guitar at an early age. He was soon acclaimed as the "Gypsy Genius" and "Prodigy Boy," but one day his world changed completely when a fire claimed the use of his fretting hand. Folks said Django would never play again, but with passion and perserverance he was soon setting the world's concert stages ablaze.Ã Â Bonnie Christensen's gorgeous oil paintings and jazzy, syncopated text perfectly depict the man and his music.

Book Information

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Age Range: 5 - 9 years

Grade Level: Kindergarten - 4

Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 2Ã¢â ¬â œ5Ã¢â ¬â •Christensen uses impressionistic oil paintings and lyrical text to introduce readers to Reinhardt in this appreciative tribute. Her subject's youth was marked by poverty; a spread depicts the Gypsy encampment where he was born, the gaily painted caravans in eerie contrast to their icy bleak surroundings. With a natural agility (he caught trout by hand), Reinhardt taught himself to play guitar and found escape. While still a boy, he began to make a living playing music on the streets of Paris and in jazz clubs; he was on the brink of success when a tragic fire left his hand so badly burned that doctors predicted he would never play again. In stark colors, Christensen conveys the hopelessness of the musician's situation, trapped in his iron-railed

hospital bed. He refused to give up, though, and the next page finds him rapt, guitar clasped to his chest, eyes closed in the effort of drawing forth music again. Christensen completes the tale of the guitarist's success with an author's note, a brief paragraph on the Roma people, and a bibliography/discography. She includes enough detail to give perspective, but it is her lush paintings that so effectively give life to the man's effervescent charm and determined courage. This inspiring account of an individual overcoming tragedy and adversity should find a wide audience.Ã¢â ¬â •Marilyn Taniguchi, Beverly Hills Public Library, CA END

Starred Review The story of Django Reinhardt is a natural for younger audiencesÃ¢â ¬â •unlike so many other jazz musicians whose troubled lives and complex music have become the stuff of picture books. In spare, simple, rhythmic verses, Christensen tells the remarkable story of a young Gypsy boy, born in Belgium in 1910, who was surrounded by music as a child, learning violin from his father and later moving on to guitar. After his father abandoned him, young Django found his way to Paris, where he played on street corners, earning praise (Ã¢â ¬Å“Gypsy Genius!Ã¢â ¬Â•) and attracting attention. Soon he was headlining in clubs, but all seemed lost when he was burned in a fire, damaging his left hand so severely that playing the guitar seemed out of the question. But Django developed a way to work around his disability, and his self-made technique for playing chords proved perfect for the syncopated jazz style. Christensen supports the inspirational story with rich, vibrant paintings that capture the texture and tone of the landscapes in DjangoÃ¢â ¬â„¢s life: burnt oranges and various shades of brown bring the Gypsy campfires to vivid life, while bright blues shimmering under the sharp yellows of stage footlights depict the electricity of the guitarist in performance. The art steals the show here, but the text works fine, too, describing the essence of DjangoÃ¢â ¬â„¢s story without overwhelming middle-graders with too much detail. Grades 3-6. --Bill Ott

tender and sweet, beautiful illustration. A story about overcoming adversity---also depicts my people, The Roma, in a way that is not criminal or stereotypical or sensationalized. I bought it for myself and a Romani friend who has kids. Way to go Bonnie Christenson. Thank You for this little gem.

This was a perfect gift for my new grandson so he can learn about the man he was names after. Nice pictures Nice story.

Bonnie Christensen’s Django captures the true story of a young man who experienced prodigious promise as a young guitarist in 1930s Paris, then tragedy as his fretting hand was burned beyond use, then triumph as he re-taught himself to play the guitar. The lyrical text (some syntax sacrificed for the sake of rhythm) is matched with oils that range from smoky, drab, and hazy, to vibrant and captivating - a contrast not unlike Django’s life itself.A poetic biography with informative back matter. Overall, instructive and moving. Makes you want to listen to Django’s music and overcome your own petty setbacks.

Django Reinhardt was born in a horse drawn gypsy wagon in Belgium. It was 1910 and times were hard. It was January and snow lightly coated tree branches and the step of the wagon. The laundry flapped in the breeze and animals stuck close to the wagons. It was not an easy life because the family was constantly "moving place to place, country to country." There was no opportunity for Django to go to school, but there was something that he would learn and learn well. That thing, which would later become a passion, was music. The gypsy dancers would twirl faster and faster to the sound of music, "Heartbeats drumming, breathless singing,/ Float on music to the stars."When he was a boy, his father left, never to return and Django had to grow up quickly. When he was still a boy, he dazzled Parisians when he played his "banjo-guitar." Soon they were calling him the "Gypsy Genius" and "Prodigy Boy." By 1928 he was being asked to join bands and "make the big time." His gypsy wagon beckoned to him and he left to go back to it. It was during the night that a fire started in the wagon. "A scream, a screech, then footsteps running" . . . Django was burning up. His recuperation would be long and arduous. No one thought he would ever dazzle the crowds again, but Django Reinhardt was determined to make his useless hand make music again.This rhythmically related tale was beautifully executed and the bold, vibrant artwork complimented it very nicely. The story seemed to swirl and somehow had an ethereal quality about it. The storyline captured my imagination and I went to listen to clips of Django’s amazing guitar work in ’s music section. If you are a jazz afficionado, you will probably enjoy this light, but beautiful biography about his life!

Django Reinhardt, one of the world’s greatest jazz guitarists, started under extremely humble auspices that held few forebodings of his future prominence. Born into a Roma family with very little money and no permanent home, Django did not go to school and he worked hard to help his family meet their needs. Music and dancing around the campfire helped to ease the difficulties, and Django grew up to earn a living from playing a banjo. Even though a terrible accident left him with

severe burns and partial paralysis in his left hand, Django found the willingness and inspiration to rehabilitate his hand and become an even better musician.This interesting book shines the spotlight on an important jazz musician who children otherwise may not know much about. Closely woven into the story are some clear lessons in economics related to poverty, jobs, and human resources. The bold illustrations and author notes further contribute to the book's high marks on substantive content.

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