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A Treasure in My Garden

Gilles Vigneault
Stephane Jorisch, illustrator
Stphane Jorisch, illustrator
Michelle Campagne, translator
Suzanne Campagne, translator
The Secret Mountain (April 2007)
Hardcover $16.95 (36pp)
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Vigneault, a member of the Canadian Songwriter Hall of Fame, is hailed as one of Canada's most important music figures of the twentieth century, especially as a champion Québécois folksinger. Here he collaborates with various other artists to fuse words, music, and images into a smart multimedia package full of wit and whimsy.

Most of the thirteen song-stories read as brief poems in the book, full of poetry's compressed and luminous language. "My Treasure" reads, "I set aside some clouds one day / In a corner of the sky / These old friends helped me find my way / And then we said goodbye." The DVD opens the thirteen stories into full songs. Each video clip employs a different visual style, from Claymation to computer graphics. The songs are interpreted by founding members of the folk/roots group Hart-Rouge and their spouses and children, all accomplished singers. The effect of the DVD is warm and loving, though the average American child might not be used to lyrics as complex and adult as in "The Man from Leeds" and "Boxes."

The illustrations in the book are magical, realized in richly hued watercolors. For "On the Tip of My Tongue" illustrator Jorisch creates a dreamlike image of a pensive bride carrying the giant red fish which has swallowed her wedding ring. Jorisch is a three-time winner of the Canada Council for the Arts Governor General's Literature Award in Children's Literature Illustration, among many other awards. He also creates designs for Cirque du Soleil.

Released as a book-DVD in French in 2005, the collection of songs has won several awards, including a designation from Paris's City Hall as best disk and cassette for children in 2003. It will undoubtedly be treasured in its English release as it charmingly soothes little ones to sleep.

NAOMI MILLÁN (April 10, 2007)

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