ForeWord Reviews

PICTURE BOOKS

Daddy Played Music for the Cows
Maryann Weidt
Henri Sorensen, illustrator
Windward Publishing
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"Mama always said I was born in the barn while Daddy played music for the cows." Wrapped in the nostalgia of a time not so long past, this delightful, engaging story follows the impressionable growing-up years of a young farm girl in the rural heartland of America. Her fond and vivid memories center upon a loving, hard-working father, the workings of a dairy barn full of Guernsey cows, and the classic Western tunes that pine and yodel from an old-time radio.

Weidt, the author of several notable biographies, including *Fighting for Equal Rights: A Story about Susan B. Anthony*, and *Harriet Tubman*, paints a resplendent account of rural life through a child's eyes. She timelines her growth from the protective arms of an adoring father and the safety of a toddler playpen in the milking barn to her older childhood days, steering the slow-going hay tractor toward the barn and walking the cows home from the grazing fields, all framed in joyful radio refrains, strung and knotted as cultured pearls on a string.

The author invites the reader to experience the music, the livestock, and the familial relationship between father and daughter through her sensitive and perceptive take on details. The reader hears the "bright red can full of seed corn … *kitch-ka-shoo, kitch-ka-shoo*" and the "*yo-del-lay-heeee-hoooo*" from the radio's cowgirl chorus; spies the chickens as they "danced a two-step in the corner of the barn," and stoops to catch a fresh, brown egg in her warm, plump hands; feels the depth of a father's love as he waltzes her through the dairy stalls in his warm embrace; senses his good-natured spirit atop his muscular back when he spontaneously "threw back his head and whinnied" on a pretend pony ride.

The illustrator has created art for numerous children's books, including *Wishes for You* and *The Printer*. The golden hues that mark Sorensen's signature style douse each double-page spread in soft, radiant light, playing off the book's sentimental tone and life's surging rhythm in rural America.

Daddy Played Music for the Cows, written for ages four through eight, is a celebration of

life in its truest sense. Suitable classroom applications might include family ancestry, farm family traditions, and various memory-gathering activities.

Charisse Floyd