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Juvenile Fiction

David Gets His Drum
Bob Reiser
David Panama
Francis Reiser
Cavendish Children's Books
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“In the islands they say everybody must find his own drum. When he finds one that sings for him, he must play it for the world to hear.” These words of wisdom, from the lead drummer of the St. Agnes Band, ring as true to the heart of six-year-old David as the enchanting rhythms of the distant isle of Haiti, the homeland of his father.

Every Saturday night, with every turn of the tabletop record player, the cadence of a regimented marching band fills the air. When young David closes his eyes, he sees himself as the leader of the band, boldly marching through the historical streets of old Miami. He was born to rhythm. He feels it in his bones! Only one thing is holding David back. He has no drum!

This is the passionate story of a young man who always knew he was a drummer-David “Panama” Francis himself, so named for the Panama hat he always wore. Francis, a jazz drummer whose career spanned seven successful decades, tells his story with Reiser, an award-winning author and professional storyteller who has also worked with Pete Seeger.

Francis achieved his fame in the 1930s while playing with the Savoy Sultans at the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, known as the “home of the happy feet.” He played his drums with the best in the music industry—Dinah Washington, Ray Charles, Duke Ellington, Buddy Holly, and many others. Francis was one of the most popular studio drummers on the circuit until the time of his death in 2001.

The illustrator, winner of the Coretta Scott King New Talent Award for his illustrations in The Piano Man, artfully captures the pulse of the South in each double-page spread. The oils are warm and expressive, grounded in the realism of the era, and the brushstrokes are smooth and fluid. As David resolves to achieve his dream, each dynamic illustration stands as a testament to his fearless determination.

David Gets His Drum is a fictionalized account of a true event in a young boy's life. The gift of a shiny metal drum sparks a remarkable career in swing jazz. While the longer text is more suitable for the older reader, the timeless theme will satisfy readers and listeners of all ages.