

The Jubilarians and the Music of the Spheres

Rochelle Storm

Catherine Bassova, Illustrator

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The striking illustrations of this mythic picture book fully embody the mystical magic of the solar system.

Rochelle Storm's gorgeous picture book *The Jubilarians and the Music of the Spheres* tells the origin story of the solar system in rollicking form.

Long ago, up in the sky, ten quirky individuals attended a gala that featured a huge feast and an orchestra led by Maestro Space-Outer. This book tells the story of that night, in which each party guest makes their singular entrance. After their quiet introductions, they spend time milling around the loaded snack table. But before boredom has a chance to set in, the orchestra begins to play. The party guests have never heard music before; they are spurred to awe, uniting in a joyful dance. When Pineapple Sal's pearl necklace breaks and scatters across the floor, the guests laugh and roll through the sky until they become planets dancing among the pearl stars.

Each party guest's appearance correlates to their planetary identity, from rotund, zoot-suit-wearing Jupiter's red stripes to Earth's grass-green dress and rippling blue hair that cascades down like a waterfall. Their limbs flow with elegance as they dance across the pages, swirling through ribbons of radiant color and speckles of light that pop against the dark backdrop of outer space. As they take their places in orbit around the luminous yellow Pineapple Sal, the striking illustrations fully embody the mystical magic of the solar system.

Each word of the story fits with precision into a singsong rhythm that is perfect for reading aloud. The consistency of the rhythmic beats bolsters the classic, fairy-tale feel of the story and contributes to its celebratory themes of music and dance. Delightful rhymes and a diversity of language also engage the ear, with music twanging, strumming, fluting, and trilling as the ten personalities swing, reel, fling, jitterbug, and skid about. Not an action is repeated, flaunting the chaos of the dancers stumbling over the pearls and the inimitable movements of each unique planet. When the partyers hear the music for the first time, analogies of light streaming into a windowless room and someone housing the whole sky inside their head make their awe tangible. Though the text is lengthy and its ten characters (the planets, moon, and sun) could have become a crowd, the unity of its rhythm and language is entrancing.

With dazzling illustrations and prose, *The Jubilarians and the Music of the Spheres* is an awe-inspiring read-aloud picture book that showcases the magic of the cosmos.

AIMEE JODOIN (October 11, 2023)

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