

Curriculum Corner

Viola Desmond Won't be Budged!

Julie Grierson

Jody Nyasha Warner's picture book *Viola Desmond Won't Be Budged* tells the story of the woman celebrated as Canada's Rosa Parks - though her acts of defiance against racism occurred 9 years before her American counterpart's. I won't recount her story here - Nyasha Warner's book does that better than I can - but Desmond and her contribution to the civil rights movement will be recognized in 2018 when she becomes the first woman, other than the queen, to be featured on Canadian currency.

My grade 3 and 4 students were both absorbed and distraught by Warner's recount of the Nova Scotian business woman's treatment when she sat in the downstairs section of a movie theatre, normally reserved for whites. They cheered when they learned she was finally being honoured with her appearance on the ten-dollar bill, all except for Henry, that is. "Why the \$10 bill?" he queried. "She should be on the hundred dollar bill!"

Passions thus aroused, they were easily engaged in the next few music classes as we used the book as a springboard to create our own music and movement piece to share with the community at our Black History month concert. Staged as a demonstration (several students had attended the Women's March with their families, so this environment was fresh in their minds) the performance featured musical concepts familiar to Orffers - singing, chanting, movement, modified rondo form, layered ostinati, and, of course, beat-boxing!

I provided them with the A and B sections you see in the score - though the harmony came from one student's spontaneous improvisation that sounded great, so we used it - and we worked together to create the C and D section chants and actions which expressed the points of view of those against Viola Desmond and those for her.

Here's the form we ended up with:

A (repeated several times, treated as ostinatos layered in one at a time)

B

C (each chant repeated 4 times, one after another)

A

D (each chant repeated 4 times, one after another)

A

C and D (spoken as cumulatively layered ostinati, with everyone gradually joining into the triumphant "Put her on the 10 dollar bill!")

B

Naturally, the movements included some dabs and whips; if you can't beat 'em, join 'em! We tossed in some beat boxing we learned from Siri when the body percussion ideas we were trying proved too difficult. Throw in some protest signs and an enthusiastic audience, and you get a performance and learning experience we will all remember for a long time.

Viola Desmond Won't Budge!

A Section

Part 1
Na, na na, na na na na na

Part 2
Na na na na na na na na

Part 3
Vi - o - la Des mond

3 B Section

P. 1
Vi - o - la Des-mond Vi - o - la Des-mond

P. 2
What's her name? Say it a - gain!

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P. 1
Vi - o - la Des-mond Vi - o - la Des-mond

P. 2
What's her name? Say it a - gain!

P. 1
Vi - o - la Des-mond
Vi - ol - la Des-mond won't budge (dab)

P. 2
What's her name? Vi - ol - la Des-mond won't budge

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C section: Against Viola Desmond

P. 1
You've got a cheap up-stairs tic-ket. Your kind can't sit here!

P. 2
Jail! Jail! Put her in jail!

P. 3
preme court said "No - - way!" Su -

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D section: For Viola Desmond

P. 1
I won't budge! I bought the tic - ket!

P. 2
She in - spired us to stand tall!

P. 3
Put her on the ten dol-lar bill, ten dol-lar bill put her on the ten dol-lar bill, what?