



Picture Books

for Inclusive Music Studios

By Sara M. Ernst, NCTM

Children's literature, specifically fiction and nonfiction picture books, forms a tremendous resource for music teachers, especially for the entire studio community. Through stories and images, readers learn about the world in which they live, hearing about and seeing identification figures and potential role models. This genre can increase awareness of the uniqueness of others and the vast world, historically and in the present. Picture books are thus a potential pathway for exploring facets of identity and seeing oneself represented in the world (Leahy and Foley 2018).

Especially in the last decade, there have been numerous books published with inclusive themes and diverse figures, and

significant action is being taken by organizations to ensure greater representation (Leahy and Foley 2018). Recent publications feature unrepresented musicians, including historical and biographical stories, and fictional stories with positive themes. These books provide a small but significant opportunity to create a library of images and stories that reflect the diverse landscape of music making. A purposeful collection of books can help teachers place diverse musicians and musical traditions in the studio environment to open dialogues and provide connection figures for students of varied backgrounds and interests. Ideally, these books can be integrated into the studio to inspire discussions, studio-wide projects and new musical discoveries.

This poster provides an overview of six ideal picture books. An annotated bibliography expands the list of 14 books, all recommended additions to a studio library. ◀◀

Sara M. Ernst, PhD, NCTM, is newly appointed as director of piano pedagogy and associate professor at the University of Oklahoma. She has served as program director for NCKP: The Piano Conference in 2021 and 2023.



Annotated Bibliography

Picture Books for Inclusive Music Studios: A Select Annotated Bibliography

Sara M. Ernst, PhD, NCTM

An Opportunity for All

Children's literature forms a tremendous resource for the music teacher and for all ages within the studio. Picture books, fiction and nonfiction, present a pathway for exploring facets of identity and seeing oneself represented in the world (Leahy and Foley, 2018). Furthermore, this genre can increase awareness of the uniqueness of others and the vast world, historically and in the present.

- ▶ **Young children** will study the images.
- ▶ **Readers through age 11** will enjoy quiet time reading an illustrated, short story.
- ▶ **Students in middle and high school and adults** may read aloud to young ones and enjoy perusing the pages.

Growth in the Genre

Recent publications feature stories about underrepresented individuals, including historical accounts of notable figures and fictional stories that feature positive themes. These books provide a small, but significant opportunity to create a library that reflects the multifaceted landscape of music making. A purposeful collection of books can help teachers place diverse musicians and musical traditions in the studio environment to open dialogues and provide identification figures for students of varied backgrounds and interests.

Cover Artwork



Anthony Best: A Picture Book about Asperger's

Written by Davene Fahy, illustrated by Carol Inouye (New York: Sky Pony, 2013)
Explores the friendship of a little boy with Asperger's and his neighbor. Anthony gets a piano delivered and discovers his love of music making, while the girl learns to appreciate the unique traits of her friend.

Dancing Hands: How Teresa Carreño Played the Piano for President Lincoln

Written by Margarita Engle, illustrated by Rafael López (New York: Atheneum, 2019)
An historical account of the famous Venezuelan pianist and composer Teresa Carreño. Explores her immense talent, her rise to fame and travel to the U.S., and the effects of the Civil War on the President.

Esquivel!: Space-Age Sound Artist

Written by Susan Wood, illustrated by Duncan Tonatiuh (Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, 2016)
A biographical story of Juan García Esquivel, focusing initially on his intense enjoyment of piano playing as a child in Mexico. Describes how he found his niche as a popular sound artist, composer, and conductor.

King of Ragtime: The Story of Scott Joplin

Written and illustrated by Stephen Costanza (New York: Atheneum, 2021).
Details the history and development of ragtime, focusing on the early life of Scott Joplin. The book includes important historical context, with a focus on Joplin's creative intuition in developing this new style.

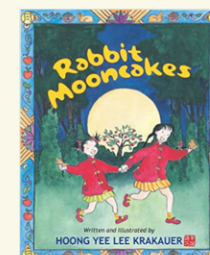
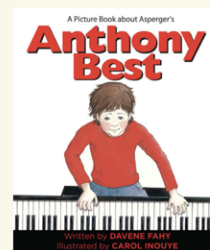
Rabbit Mooncakes

Written and illustrated by Hoong Yee Lee Krakauer (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1994)
A touching autobiographical story about two Chinese American sisters and the Harvest Moon Festival. The young pianists discover how sharing music is a delightful addition to the family celebration.

Who is Florence Price?

Written and illustrated by Students of the Special Music School, Kaufman Music Center (NY: Schirmer, 2021)
A biographical timeline of the life of Florence Price, with a focus on major life events. Begins and ends with the 2009 discovery of her music. Addresses how she had to be persistent to her goals, despite racist views of orchestras.

Cover Artwork



Use these stories to spark ideas and discoveries in your studio community

- ▶ Read and discuss with your students in group and repertoire classes, or as quiet time to prepare for lessons
- ▶ Create a "waiting room library" for families and students to spark independent reading
- ▶ Integrate these stories into your curriculum through themed classes, research initiatives, repertoire exploration, composition ideas, creative artist endeavors, and outreach projects, . . .

See the annotated bibliography for a list of 14 picture books, ideal for the studio.