

hagiography and instead presents a nuanced portrait of the poet. Enthusiastic, gifted, and attractive, Magee was also over-confident, brash, and immature. In a particularly apt phrase, Granfield characterizes him as “a talented teen, not a mature man” (14). Furthermore, he may have given us the most powerful evocation of flight in the English language, but clearly he had a fair bit to learn about flying himself, as his rather spotty training record reveals. Still, Magee’s very human flaws merely make his life story all the more poignant. With keen attention to detail and an obvious affection for the subject, Granfield sketches a life full of potential that was never realized.

“High Flight” is such a lush, almost Imagist poem that it would be a challenge to any illustrator, but Michael Martchenko is more than up to the task. The domestic scenes from Magee’s life are warm and lively, but he really excels at the aviation scenes. Billows of orange and grey hang above London during the Blitz, towering clouds loom over the earth as a single aircraft bursts from the gloom into clear sky above — Martchenko renders the atmosphere very much in the way that Magee must have seen it.

Magee was like millions of other men and women whose lives were cut short by war, although his poem clearly set him apart. As Granfield infers, he bears more than a passing resemblance to his fellow Rugby alumnus, Rupert Brooke, who also left the world with one immortal poem before dying young.

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Rocks in the Stream of Story

Music for the Tsar of the Sea. Celia Barker Lottridge. Illus. Harvey Chan. Groundwood, 1998. 32 pp. \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-328-5.

When artists as accomplished as storyteller Celia Barker Lottridge and illustrator Harvey Chan collaborate, a reader expects a remarkable book. *Music for the Tsar of the Sea* is that — lovely, distinguished and graceful. It is a beautifully-illustrated book. What it is not, however, is a remarkable *picture* book. It lacks the interplay of text and picture essential to any picture book, especially to a tale at whose heart is movement — the fluidity of music, the flow of stream, the surge of waves — and the integration of identity.

Lottridge writes beautifully, makes witty use of liquid metaphors, and drops in details which resonate and expand throughout the book. Her re-telling of the tale of Sadko, a poor minstrel who gains wealth but forgets to keep his word when the tsar of the sea richly rewards him for his talents, emphasizes his need to balance all facets of his identity. Sadko must be both musician and merchant, must not sacrifice his artistic self to distractions resulting from his business acumen. More



*Illustration by Harvey Chan from
Music for the Tsar of the Sea*

important, this is a creation tale, a Russian wonder tale about how the River Volkov came to run from the Volga to the Caspian Sea. What I love most about the story, though, is its inherent recognition of the power of music, its wild potency and soothing gentleness — power so great it can engage, enthrall the sea.

I'm an admirer of Chan's books, at least one of which I consider an almost pure example of a picture book. Yet, however lovely his illustrations (both pastels and monochromes) in *Music* are, they sit in the text as rocks around which the story moves, inside the story's flow yet relentlessly outside it. The pastels are heavy, often dark, ornate, and vaguely "Russian-esque" in style. Still, they're interfused with a wonderful play of light, a movement of line generally associated with the sea world of the book. The play of light within these pictures reminds me of the possibility for play without them, a possibility never realized.

Almost every page spread opens to a page of text and one of illustration — in opposition. The text is further set apart, each page written on a pale sea-green, framed in white. Each pastel illustration is similarly framed. Even the two-page illustration (arguably the most liquid in the book) is a diptych intersected by white. On some pages, oval monochromes accompany the written text. Like all the other illustrations in this book, they accompany rather than complement, extend, or complicate.

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