

ing true to the mysterious and fleeting qualities of the ghosts, but perhaps sacrificing clarity in doing so.

Alex, who dreams about her dead grandfather, is similarly affected by the spirits of those who have died. One of the most memorable and moving moments takes place early in the novel in the city when Alex and her friends "[throw] back their heads and ... howl[ed]. Like feral creatures." It is at this moment that Alex knows that her grandfather has died. She watches as "her own breath rose in front of her astonished eyes, took form and floated like a spirit hand on the crystal air." When Alex's father, whom she has never known, dies and gives her the land formerly belonging to Lonny's stepfather, the reader expects the father-daughter relationship to establish itself through the sharing of the land and its spiritual power. This, however, is not the case. Alex seems to learn more about her father from the inside of the cabin — "a thin trail of her father's life was scattered throughout the cabin" — than from the outside. Although there are many perceptive and effective descriptions of the Manitoba landscape, some of which are extremely evocative, the land itself does not play the integral role expected by the reader.

The relationships between Lonny and Alex and the older generations are very well developed and will have quite an impact on the adolescent reader. It is appropriate that the book is dedicated to the author's daughter and the author's daughter's grandfather. This is the relationship that seems to inspire and move the story forward. Alex's love for her grandfather is very believable and poignant in its intensity. Lonny's relationship with his stepfather, Pop, is based on a remarkable complexity that enriches their lives together. Alex's relationship with her mother also rings true. The two adolescents are drawn together by the dead parents, who, to some extent, are rooted in the land they leave behind, but it is here that the novel begins to lose some of its vibrant and sincere tone. What is certain, however, is that Martha Brooks will touch her readers with the spiritual connections between the younger and older generations, between the recent past and the present, between then and now.

Sharing a Dream of Peace and Harmony

Echoes from the Square. Elizabeth Wellburn. Illus. Deryk Houston. Rubicon Publishing Inc., 1998. 32 pp. \$18.95 cloth. ISBN 0-921156-99-5.

In 1992 Vedran Smailovic played his cello for 22 days in a Sarajevo street amidst the devastation and upheaval of war in order to mourn and honour 22 people killed in that violence. Elizabeth Wellburn, moved by this heroic gesture, researched the event, becoming friends with Smailovic in the process. Wellburn then responded imaginatively to Smailovic's act as she explored its effect on her fictional character, Alen, a young musician growing up in the confusion and terror of war-torn Sarajevo. The story of Smailovic's heroic and passionate act offers to the reader and to Alen a demonstra-

tion of the power of art, in this case music, to give voice to suffering and thus provide the means to heal and inspire. Deryk Houston's illustrations provide a further example of the power of art to convey a story, which, like the music, expresses sorrow, mourns loss and moves forward to the future.

The music in the story brings the individuals in the community together as they gather around to listen to Albinono's "Adagio," the piece played by Smailovic. Vedran explains to Alen that this piece survived as "a small fragment of a music script ... amongst the broken stones and dust" of an earlier war, and was tenderly recreated by Giazotto, a dreamer who "loved the good things of the past." This music, touched by the violence of war and the compassion and imagination of the artist, in turn becomes the inspiration for those in need of the care and healing that it once received. The music also brings Vedran into Alen's life and into the home of his family. The story emphasizes the rather strange and unexpected opportunities provided by war: "In another time and place it might seem unusual to invite a stranger into your home, but a war can change many things."

Wellburn's style is calm and understated, focusing on the child's internal bewilderment, lack of knowledge and quiet fear rather than the external terrors and horrors of war. The changes in the appearance and style of the text provide the structure of the book with movements, reinforcing the musical motif. The city before the war is described in the past tense; once the war arrives, we are faced with the present tense, which provides an immediacy to Alen's experience. Finally, Vedran's words in reddish-brown italics lend his voice the power of a prophet or at least a sage. Houston's illustrations are also grouped into sections or movements. The first two illustrations delineate the colour, light and symmetry of the "well-tended and loved" pre-war city. Subsequent illustrations portray the brokenness of the once vibrant city. A series of three illustrations of Smailovic playing in the square becomes increasingly powerful as it attempts to delineate the inspiration and strength surrounding the man and his music. Material before and after the actual story directs the reader to the factual background of Sarajevo and Smailovic. Although fairly didactic, this information does enhance the story and acknowledges Smailovic as a partner in its creation. Wellburn's intentions for the story to act as an instigator for peace in the minds of its young readers are apparent in the on-line resources she provides to support the study of *Echoes from the Square*. She first read of Smailovic on the internet and continues to use the internet to promote his inspiring story. A search into the author's and artist's websites rewards the reader with links to information on peace, music and art.

Echoes from the Square is a powerful book which attempts quite admirably to celebrate human heroism and the role of art and the artist. The grounding of this story in a true event provides the book with a validity and relevance that will impress the young reader. Alen's story incorporates a personal point of view, giving a name, voice and face to a conflict far from the reader's place and experience. Even though the young reader may not know about the cultural and political background of the conflict in Sarajevo, he or

she will respond to the universal power of music, an act of pure creation set in a place of utter devastation. In addition, the young reader may be inspired to search for more information about Alen's homeland. Wellburn and Houston obviously hope that the story instills in the reader an appreciation for the powerful inspiration of art and a desire for peace, particularly for the world's children. The message and the music echo and reverberate in the reader's mind.

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