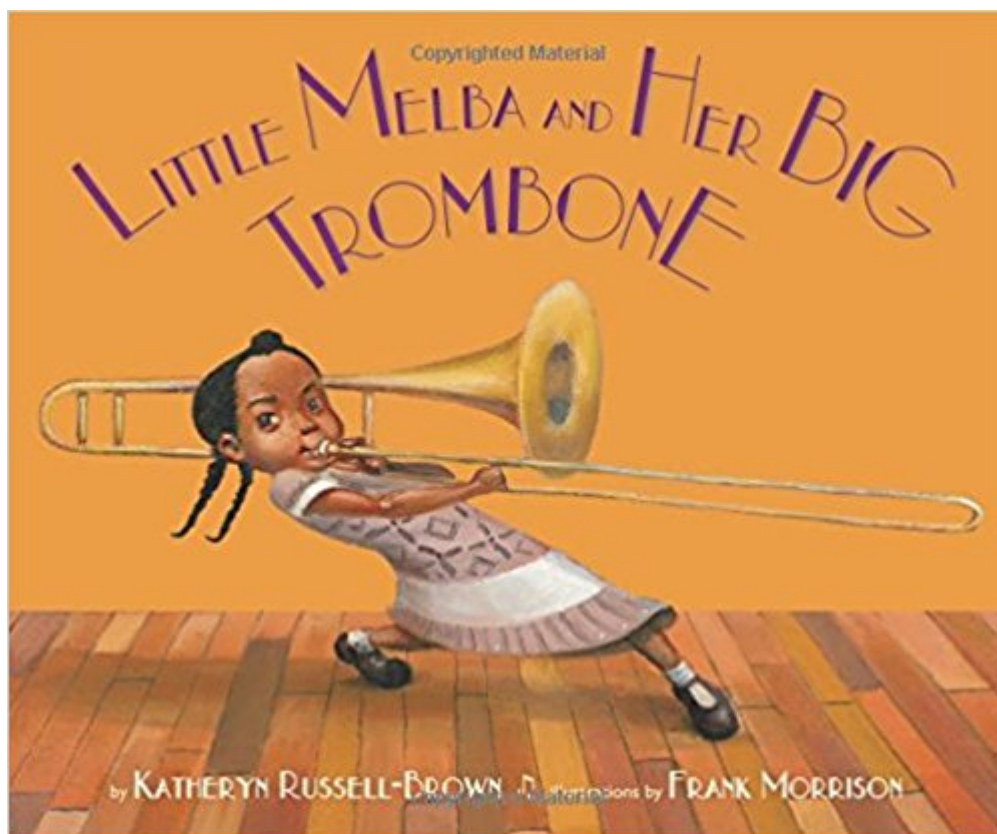


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Little Melba And Her Big Trombone



Synopsis

Melba Doretta Liston loved the sounds of music from as far back as she could remember. As a child, she daydreamed about beats and lyrics, and hummed along with the music from her family's Majestic radio. At age seven, Melba fell in love with a big, shiny trombone, and soon taught herself to play the instrument. By the time she was a teenager, Melba's extraordinary gift for music led her to the world of jazz. She joined a band led by trumpet player Gerald Wilson and toured the country. Overcoming obstacles of race and gender, Melba went on to become a famed trombone player and arranger, spinning rhythms, harmonies, and melodies into gorgeous songs for all the jazz greats of the twentieth century: Randy Weston, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Billie Holiday, and Quincy Jones, to name just a few. Brimming with ebullience and the joy of making music, *Little Melba and Her Big Trombone* is a fitting tribute to a trailblazing musician and a great unsung hero of jazz.

Book Information

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Hardcover: 40 pages

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Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars 30 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #100,955 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #25 in [Books > Children's](#)

[Books > Biographies > Musical](#) #186 in [Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Multicultural](#)

Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

Customer Reviews

"Bewitched by the rhythms of jazz all around her in Depression-era Kansas City, little Melba Doretta Liston longs to make music in this fictional account of a little-known jazz great. Picking up the trombone at 7, the little girl teaches herself to play with the support of her Grandpa John and Momma Lucille, performing on the radio at 8 and touring as a pro at just 17. Both text and illustrations make it clear that it's not all easy for Melba; *The Best Service for WHITES ONLY* reads a sign in a hotel window as the narrative describes a bigotry-plagued tour in the South with Billie

Holiday. But joy carries the day, and the story ends on a high note, with Melba dazzling audiences and making headlines around the world. Russell-Brown's debut text has an innate musicality, mixing judicious use of onomatopoeia with often sonorous prose. Morrison's sinuous, exaggerated lines are the perfect match for Melba's story; she puts her entire body into her playing, the exaggerated arch of her back and thrust of her shoulders mirroring the curves of her instrument. In one thrilling spread, the evening gown clad instrumentalist stands over the male musicians, her slide crossing the gutter while the back bow disappears off the page to the left. An impressive discography complements a two-page afterword and a thorough bibliography. Readers will agree that Melba Doretta Liston was something special. " --Kirkus Reviews, starred review

Music lovers will enjoy this picture-book biography of Melba Liston (1926-99), child prodigy and virtuoso trombonist who collaborated with most 20th century jazz greats. An excellent match of breezy text and dynamic illustrations tells an exhilarating story. Always in tune with music, seven-year-old Melba chose her first instrument from Joe's Music Truck. Self-taught and determined, she survived the gender-based taunts of high school boys while playing in Alma Hightower's after-school music club (using her horn to "turn all those hurt feelings into soulful music" and racial discrimination while touring with Billie Holiday's band. In the end, Liston "[made] her trombone sing" for audiences around the world and was named a Jazz Master by the National Endowment for the Arts. Russell-Brown's text engages the senses: "[Melba] especially loved Fats Waller, with his growly voice and booming piano", while Morrison's distinctive illustrations, stretched out like a slide trombone, draw the eye across each spread to the page turn. Back matter includes a detailed afterword with two photographs and a bibliography of books, articles, interviews, radio broadcasts, and websites, including a Jazz Cafe, where students can view Liston performing with Dizzy Gillespie's band. Pair this book with Jonah Winter's *Dizzy* (Scholastic, 2006) and Marilyn Nelson's *Sweethearts of Rhythm* (Dial, 2009) to explore more fully the jazz culture of the time. A celebration of the talent and success of a little-known African American female musician, this title will enrich library collection. --School Library Journal, starred review

Katheryn Russell-Brown is a Professor of Law and the Director of the Center for Race and Race Relations at the University of Florida. She grew up in a family of music lovers, where jazz was an integral part of the sounds of daily life. A radio broadcast in 2008 about Liston inspired Russell-Brown to research the musician and eventually to write *Little Melba and Her Big Trombone*, her first picture book. Russell-Brown lives in Gainesville, Florida, with her husband and their two children. Visit her online at krbrown.net

We love, love, LOVE this story. The way it's told is brilliant, as the author subtly weaves in terms and expressions that would have been used during that period of the 1930's. The words sing on the page the same as Melba's trombone. I learned something new from reading this and really enjoyed sharing it with my children who continue to ask for it. The illustrations are fantastic, like a collection of colorful, childlike oil paintings and they perfectly convey the feelings of the main character as she grows and faces new challenges from learning to master her trombone, to moving across the country, to being called names, and finally to facing racial discrimination. By the end of the story you want to cheer for her for never giving up on her one, true passion - her trombone. Melba crossed the lines of race and gender to bring her amazing music to the world. There's a fact page at the back of the book that's perfect for teachers who want to use this in their classrooms or for the curious child who wants to know more. I haven't been this impressed with a non-fiction picture book featuring an African American character since Henry's Freedom Box came out. Little Melba and Her Big Trombone is sure to become a classic.

Katheryn Russell-Brown has written a wonderful book for young children about a great but unsung jazz musician. She brings to life the remarkable story of Melba Liston who started playing the trombone as a young child and went on to play with some of the greatest jazz musicians in American history. The book's afterward includes original photographs of Melba Liston and provides interesting details about her extraordinary life. This book will be enjoyed by family members of all ages.

This is an excellent book! A perfect gift for young children. The book gives great examples of how to persevere through challenges and does a great job incorporating historical information in a manner that is easy for kids to digest. The illustrations are captivating. This is a great book for boys and girls of all backgrounds.

Plan to use this when I teach my 2nd graders about Brass instruments of the Orchestra and love that it's a little girl!

This is a cool book with amazing illustrations, and an inspirational and true story historical tale. Little Melba would be perfect to read at home or in a classroom setting. It's a really special book, both the writing and the pictures.

A wonderful story, beautifully illustrated. I was a little embarrassed that I didn't know about this real life amazing woman until reading the book to my 18-month old daughter. She loves the pictures and I love the story of a talented and determined girl.

Love this story. A great way to introduce children to jazz and famous African American women. Melba should be an inspiration to all children who have a desire to be something special.

I met the author at an event in West Palm Beach. The band teacher at our school plays and played the trombone in college. I had it autographed and personalized with her name. The art work is INCREDIBLE!!!!

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