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TITLE INFORMATION

THE YOU-SONG

Otto, Joanne

FastPencil, Inc. (56 pp.)

\$19.95 paperback, \$9.99 e-book

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BOOK REVIEW

A simple, encouraging picture book with a religious message.

Otto's (*Daughter of Jerusalem*, 2013) latest book is best suited to pre-readers or early readers. It emphasizes the importance of being true to oneself, and encourages children to sing their own "You-Song." Each person, the story says, has a You-Song, provided by God, which can be heard whispering or booming in an individual's actions. When the song doesn't sound pretty, "[i]t's just the world's jangle trying to muffle it." When this happens, the book urges children to find a happy place or event to tune back in to their You-Songs. The narrator then notes that although no one can have the song of another person, multiple You-Songs can join together to become a We-Song; that is, children may befriend others and work together with them as a team. By singing You-Songs and We-Songs, the narrator says, children are doing the work of God and sharing his blessing. Otto includes vibrant, full-color photographs of a variety of children engaged in different activities, such as painting or playing outside. The book's simple, repetitious text may make it useful for parents or teachers as a read-aloud, or for beginning readers. Each page has two short sentences or fewer, and the most complicated passage ("Jangle-free, / the You-Song can blend / with lots of songs around you— / one-of-a-kind songs / that God sings in others") is still relatively simple, with many repeated words. The large, easy-to-read, bold type helps emphasize this easy style, while the bright, clean photos will draw listeners and readers in. Educators may use the photos as a way to expand upon the book's message by asking listeners about the different actions depicted. The religious message is nondenominational, mentioning God but no specific religious faiths or texts.

Attractive photos and easy-to-understand prose make a winning combination in this positive picture book.

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