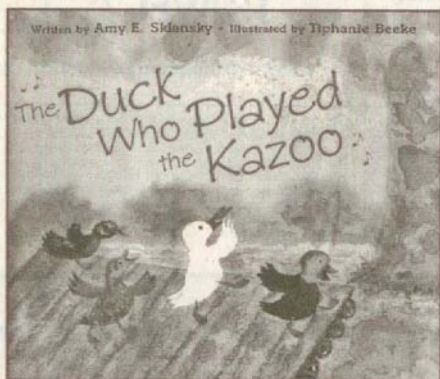


Sklansky creates charming tale starring a duck



MEET THE AUTHOR

Amy Sklansky will sign books Saturday at 11 a.m. at Rock Point Books, 401 Broad St.

FIVE QUESTIONS WITH FORMER CHATTANOOGAN AMY SKLANSKY

Children's author Amy Sklansky says that as a child she used to "sit on a big rock in the backyard and write poems about nature." Those childhood memories combined with the fanciful whimsy of her own inner child are reflected in themes of her five children's books, the author said in an e-mail interview. Mrs. Sklansky is the daughter of Judge R. Allan Edgar and Gail Edgar. She grew up in Chattanooga, graduated from Girls Preparatory School, then majored in English and American studies at the University of Virginia. She now lives in St. Louis with her husband and two children.

When did you begin writing? I tried many different kinds of writing in high school and college: newspaper reporting, poetry, magazine writing and academic writing. I spent a summer working as an intern at SPIN magazine in New York City. While I enjoyed lots of different kinds of writing, I was drawn to the world of children's

books.

What drew you to children's literature? My career began as a children's book editor for HarperCollins in New York City. While I enjoyed working with authors and artists as an editor, I thought that being an author looked like way too much fun not to try it myself. Being an editor for a number of years helped educate me on the history and current trends in children's literature; invaluable knowledge to an author.

What books have you had published? "From the Doghouse: Poems to Chew On," (Henry Holt, 2002); "Skeleton Bones and Goblin Groans: Poems for Halloween," (Henry Holt, 2004); "Where Do Chicks Come From?" (HarperCollins, 2005); "My Daddy and Me," (Scholastic/Cartwheel Books, 2005); and "The Duck Who Played the Kazoo," (Clarion, 2008).

What is the trick to writing a successful children's book? The challenge of writing

for children is finding the right words and striking the right tone for your audience — all within the confines of 32 illustrated pages. What makes a children's book so compelling is the way the words work in tandem with images to tell a story. I punt on the illustrator to tell part of the story with her images.

I like the fact that a good picturebook can pull a child and grown-up together for a few minutes of shared wonder and entertainment.

Do you choose your illustrators? After I have finished a story, the publisher chooses an illustrator. Strange as it may seem, I often do not even have direct contact with the illustrator. The editor and art director really direct each book project, though I do see pencil sketches and sometimes offer suggestions or even rewrite parts of my text based on the artwork. The illustrator for "The Duck Who Played the Kazoo" lives in France and we have not had a chance to meet.

— Susan Pierce

THE DUCK WHO PLAYED THE KAZOO by Amy Sklansky. Clarion Books. 32 pp. \$16.

BY SUSAN PIERCE
STAFF WRITER

Former Chattanooga Amy Sklansky's fifth children's book is an imaginative lark about a kazoo-playing duck.

The lone wildlife left at his lake after a hurricane has blown through, this duck finds solace from loneliness in his kazoo ditties.

But as he flies south for the winter he discovers a new covey of ducks. He reaches out

to make friends the best way he knows: entertaining them with his kazoo melodies.

The charming children's tale is written in lilting rhymes with a repetitive catchphrase that will have children joining in the duck's kazoo music. Sklansky shows a remarkable knack for conveying emotion with minimal use of words, supported by the whimsical illustrations of Tiphonie Beeke.

A delightful tale of lost and found friendship for preschool children.

E-mail Susan Pierce at pierce@timesfreepress.com