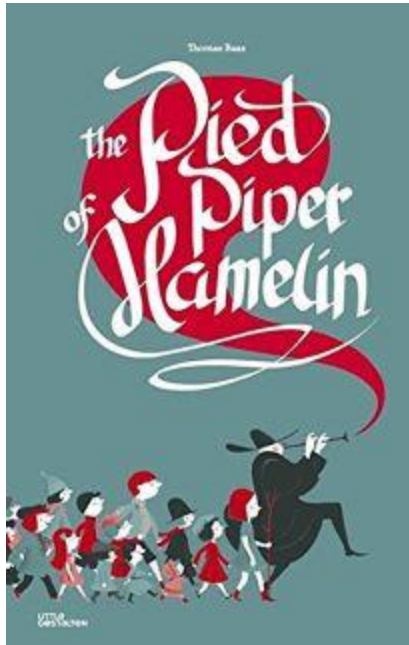


# SPOTLIGHT



December 16, 2016

The Best of 2016 is currently on display at the Yellowknife Public Library, featuring films and books that topped many critical lists of the past twelve months. For children's books, one that definitely should make the list is *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, adapted by Marine Tasso from the German folktale and gorgeously illustrated by Thomas Bass.

Of course, most adults are long familiar with this tragic tale of the mysterious and vengeful musician and would be correct to assume that it may not be for more sensitive youngsters. Tasso's Christmas setting and hint of a happy ending (the missing children's laughter can sometimes be heard on the wind), does little to subdue the sad, even scary story. After a piper leads plague-infested rats out of Hamelin, the mayor reneges on the initially proposed reward and angered by this, the piper leads all of the children out of town with his enchanting tunes. They are never seen again. It's pretty hard to find a positive spin here.

Fortunately Bass chooses not to fight against it, instead using a minimalist palette of dark reds, greys, and blues. The resulting creepy atmosphere plays extremely well with the plot. The characters, meanwhile, have a vintage 1950s look, perhaps not true to the story's original setting, but harkens back to a time when fairy tales were less sanitized, and perhaps enjoyed all the more because of it.

Reviewed by John Mutford, Public Services Librarian