

The Soloist *by* Mark SALZMAN



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Author: Mark SALZMAN

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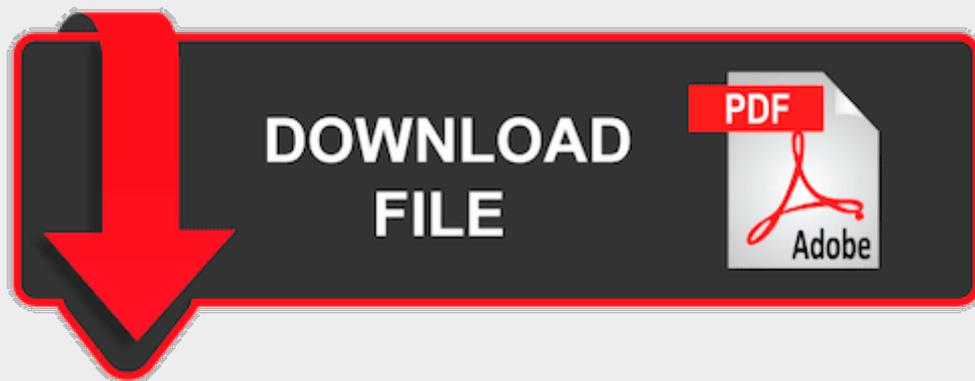
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Reviews of the *The Soloist* *by* Mark SALZMAN

1. Vudogal

This is an enjoyable, well-crafted story with three main facets - musical, judicial and Buddhist. A former musical prodigy confronts an intriguing, life and death Buddhist conundrum during jury duty. What is it like to have a past as a famous child prodigy? What does it mean to "kill the Buddha?" How do you get past being the lone hold-out on a jury?

Concurrently teaching a new, young prodigy draws him out of himself into a professional satori. The story concludes with a promise that romantic failure improves the chances of success to follow. Good book.

2. Marr

"...I've decided that we all crave a sense of dignity in our lives, but most of us find it an elusive goal." This is one of Reinhart Sundheimer's reflections on life and on himself. *The Soloist* is an endearing story that tells the tale of a man who hit his prime as a child. A musical prodigy, Reinhart was a world-class cellist from a young age. He was nurtured and encouraged (albeit a bit harshly when it came to his mother) -- and, sadly, isolated. He was kept away from age-mates so that he could cultivate his talents, and adults had no interest in socializing with him on his level. He faced incredible pressure in the form of promises that all his hard work would only make him better and more desirable and the center of friendships and admiration as an adult. To his utter dismay, the intense pressure only served to stifle him and render him unable not only to form friendships but even to play the cello publicly.

Reinhart's loneliness is both reduced and intensified the summer he is summoned to jury duty and simultaneously is hired to teach a young prodigy. Salzman tells a beautiful story that easily warms the reader's heart toward Reinhart. The storyline follows Reinhart as he teaches his young student, reflects on the murder trial for which he is serving on the jury, and as he forms a tentative friendship with one of the members of the jury. Following Reinhart through these separate but interwoven plot lines lends a degree of depth to the story that leaves the reader feeling satisfied.

The Soloist would have been worthy of five stars in this reviewer's opinion but for one glaring problem. Salzman doesn't appear to have thoroughly researched the issues of the defendant on trial. The man has made an insanity plea. Salzman establishes that he is without a doubt schizophrenic. The question at hand for the jury to decide is not whether the defendant is schizophrenic but whether he can be deemed criminally insane. This could have made for an interesting story; however, it seems as though Salzman is entirely unaware of what schizophrenia actually is. The defendant's behavior is described, experts testify that he has schizophrenia, but, unfortunately, very little of what is portrayed actually relates to schizophrenia.

The portrayal of schizophrenia is indeed poorly done. However, Reinhart is a well-developed character, and Salzman tells the majority of the story in such a way that the reader is likely to be charmed. Reinhart Sundheimer is easy to like, and Salzman tells his story in a satisfying manner.

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3. Capella

I loved it. Wish it were longer.

I followed all plot lines with interest (musical prodigy, relationship difficulties, jury and deliberations and teaching,) but I wish the story of the young Korean student and been further developed. I loved that character... could totally visualise the kid.

There was a cat on the cover. When I finally saw how the cat fit into the story, I was delighted. In so few words, the author described the "comfort-and-be-comforted" aspect of sharing your life with a cat

I loved Reinhart's discovery of the cello's vibrations through his skin, both in the personal, and metaphorical sense.

4. Vishura

This is a beautifully told story about a young man who was a very gifted cellist as a child and has lost his ability to perform. He now teaches in a college and is waiting for life to happen. When he acquires a gifted young boy as a student and is called for jury duty on a murder trial things begin to change for him. Weaving back and forth between his lessons with the boy and the trial would seem like two entirely different experiences with nothing in common. Being an extremely sensitive young man, he attains insights from both experiences that, hopefully, will lead to a more fulfilling life for him. The story is told with some humor and a great deal of insight, not only about himself but also about life and human nature.

5. Rainpick

I cannot recommend this book, although I usually like Salzman. The parts on music and what a musician might feel are fine, if a bit whiny and repetitive - there's an awful lot of "poor me" in it that sound too much like the author's own voice (Salzman gave up the idea of playing the cello himself seriously at one point, after hearing Yo Yo Ma play professionally). But the trial scenes, where a Buddhist novice is on trial for murder, depict Zen Buddhism in a completely inaccurate fashion. I have studied Zen extensively, and here Salzman gives a wrong-headed, almost hostile representation of it, especially as it is practiced in the United States. It made me think that perhaps at some point he'd had his feelings hurt in a Japanese Zen temple, and set out to get revenge. In fact, two of Buddhism's major tenets are based on having compassion for others and seeing the universe as a whole and yourself as part of it, not some personal selfish quest for therapy, as he says. Buddhist monks and priests are not empty-headed navel-gazers and cult gurus as Salzman implies - they are active in charity and peace movements all over the world. Sorry, but the writing on music does not nearly make up for the inaccuracies in the rest of the book.

6. Shomeshet

Easy enjoyable to read. A different, enlightened Author. I started practicing again just for myself after finishing this book. Good thoughts about the mind and music.

7. Yozshubei

The novel was just different enough to catch my interest. The character

development was thorough as the reader sees the man effected by both the trial and the fellow juror he meets. I felt the ending was a bit rushed, but maybe it is the journey.

8. I expected it to be more about the music instead of the trial. But I found it very interesting - both his thoughts of the trial and the other jurors, and the way his musical genius played into how he observed other people and things.

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