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In Mozart's Shadow: His Sister's Story



Synopsis

Nannerl Mozart was a musical prodigy who seemed to have a brilliant future. But once her younger brother, Wolfgang, began composing symphonies at the age of five, her career and talents were utterly eclipsed. Here, at last, is Nannerl's heart-wrenching tale. It's the story of her undying passion for music; her relationship with her "miracle boy" brother; and her life as the "other Mozart," the one forgotten by history. The acclaimed Carolyn Meyer has written a powerful historical novel about a little-known but gifted musician who never stopped dreaming. Includes an author's note.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Grade 8 Up • For many people, knowledge of Nannerl Mozart is confined to the footnotes of her younger brother Wolfgang Amadeus's biography, a fellow wunderkind touring the courts of Europe with her more renowned sibling before fading into the background as an adult. Meyer brings Nannerl to the fore, presenting her as a gifted, sensitive musician whose ambitions for a professional career are thwarted by the restrictions placed on her gender and the demands of her father, who is more interested in promoting his genius son. Her childhood closeness with Wolfgang becomes increasingly strained as his career takes him farther from his family and ultimately to a too-early grave. The narrative occasionally descends into a dry recitation of facts, but Meyer creates

interesting portraits of Nannerl, the impudent Wolfgang, and their tyrannical father. Give this one to music students and historical fiction devotees. —Christi Voth Esterle, Parker Library, CO
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What was it like to grow up the older sister of a genius composer? Meyer imagines the life of Nannerl Mozart from the time she is 13 and Wolfgang is 8. They perform together before rapt audiences across Europe until his extraordinary talent and genius as a composer overshadow her musical gifts. The feminist message is not overdone, but the novel is far too long and detailed, with numerous similar scenarios of the siblings growing up under the eyes of their devoted, autocratic father and of Wolfgang's traveling while Nannerl, furious, remains at home (Why must I be left behind again?). In addition, Meyer gives no information about her sources, so it's hard to know how much is based on fact. Problems aside, Nannerl's first-person narrative still makes for universal drama, especially because her anger and jealousy never subsume her enduring love for her brother, their mischievous bond, or their shared love of music as refuge and joy. Grades 7-12. --Hazel Rochman

Beautifully evoked in every way, this is the story of the forgotten Mozart: his charming, pretty, highly gifted musical sister Nannerl. Beginning in the backwater town of Salzburg in the early 1760's, the father of the family Leopold Mozart (who was a gifted composer himself), realized his six year old son Wolfgang and eleven year old daughter Nannerl were extraordinary musicians and toured them all over Europe to play before royalty and the elite. But the spirited, imaginative boy Wolfgang Mozart soon drew all the attention. Nannerl was a gifted keyboardist and he was a genius in performing and composition. For the rest of her long life she would live in his shadow. As an 18th century woman, Nannerl could have made her way in music as a singer, but she was not a singer and thus her love of music, which she had shared with her little brother and which equaled his, largely lay frustrated within her. All the family energy went to further her brother's career, for as a man and a composer, he could one day support them well. But he grew up and away from his father's possessive hold and Nannerl went on to make her own life. One so loves Nannerl in this sympathetic book as she tries gently to find who she is apart from her brilliant brother and domineering father. The Mozart family, friends and times are warmly, wonderfully drawn. She grows up, tries to find love and to compromise and still, even as her correspondence with her beloved brother who is now famous in Vienna draws to an end, she is determined to keep the music she shared with him as a child alive in her. In the end this novel is not just for someone who wants to

read about the Mozart family, but for any girl or young woman who ever struggled between adoration and envy of a brilliant brother and goes on loving him long after he has left her for a brighter life. I am the author of the novel MARRYING MOZART (Viking Penguin).

I was thrilled to see a new Carolyn Meyer book! I own four other books by her (including the Young Royals Series) and I continue to be huge fan! I thoroughly enjoyed this book. She did a great job describing Nannerl's life while not forgetting about events in Mozart's life. I think it was a great subject to write a novel about and I am thrilled that I gained some new insight into a woman I had never heard of before! It was a great read and Carolyn Meyer did not disappoint me at all. I highly recommend it!

I enjoyed learning about Mozart's life and I did not realize that he had a such talented sister. What I didn't care for was all the whining the main character, Mozart's sister, did pretty much throughout the entire book. I plan to read more books pertaining to the topic.

Kids review: This is a great book to read if you want insight into the Mozart family. It's a story of a talented girl with a passion for music, who is overlooked in favor of her genius little brother, Wolfgang. When I read this book, I was amazed to find that there was another child prodigy in the Mozart family, Nannerl. It's a sad story of a girl's dreams washed away by her brother's brilliance. While her brother gets every chance to be a talented musician (traveling all over Europe), she is constantly in Wolfgang's shadow and being overlooked. While dealing with her jealousy toward her brother's brilliance, her father discourages her not to pursue music. Despite her trials, she continues to show her love of music. Through rejections of marriage by her father, Nannerl continues to find comfort in music. I love this book because In Mozart's Shadow provides the story of another genius Mozart I never knew, and it gives a great insight into Wolfgang Mozart's life. This is book about a girl who had a deep passion for music and whose brilliance was neglected.

I have loved every single one of Carolyn Meyer's books. She draws characters so life-like that we grow to love each and every one of them like we personally know them. Princess Catherine has always been my favorite, yet Nannerl might take her place. Nannerl Mozart is the older and very talented sister of the more famous Wolfgang. She never gives up hope that one day she will be sent to Italy to study, therefore becoming Europe's best female clavier player. However, her control-freak and ambitious father is concentrated fully on young Wolferl, who he believes can bring fame and

fortune to the family. Much of their childhood is spent traveling to the grand courts, but when Nannerl wants to go to Italy with her brother she is denied. She has been left home and abandoned mentally by her father. Throughout the book several love interests pop up, but her true love is an aging captain named Armand, who is by her side all the time even when her father forbids them from marrying. The writing in this book is flawless. Although a little dragging at parts, I found the detail and imagining very accurate. The only comment I have is that characters with no particular significance to the story, like Davey, shouldn't really have been put in as they have nothing to add. As this is a work that has real people in it, I understand why Nannerl didn't have a happy ending, but at the same time I wish she became a big star and married Armand. But that's history, so it cannot be changed for romantics such as me. This new Carolyn Meyer book pleases. Nannerl is a strong and hopeful girl, and she might become your new favorite character. If you enjoyed the author's other books, you will certainly like this one.

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