

The Universe in 3/4 Time

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The Universe in 3/4 Time uses three struggling European musicians and the mysterious appearance of a World War II piano to consider the impact of fate and war on the arts and individual lives.

The story opens with a surreal consideration of the discovery of music in southern Germany by nomads, some forty millennia ago. After a quick historical review that shifts from this to Pythagoras and Mozart, centuries later, readers are moved into modern times through the eyes of pianist and orphan Audrey Nightingale, whose habit of walking the streets of Brussels at night, in search of harmony, leads her to a strange upright piano that suddenly appears on the cobblestones.

It's been years since she played with inspiration after a disaster changed everything. But, somehow, this elegant piano, which makes her own feel more like "a harlot in comparison, with porcelain cameos of nymphs cavorting, clawed feet, and curlicues," brings with its mystery the promise of new life both for itself and her.

If music really embodies the connection between body and soul and can change everything, how can Audrey refuse a gift that leads her to call friend and violinist Florian Lafève, who believes in cosmic harmony as much as music?

As the piano prompts journeys, transformations, and growth for all characters, the blend of spiritual, ethereal, and practical daily life coalesce in a story powered by an effort to uncover the piano's owner and its history.

While readers might expect the mystery to remain in modern times, it actually traverses time to link past and present circumstances. The dance between timelines is an intriguing probe of abandonment, acceptance, and timeless love.

Readers who enjoy stories of intrigue that reach out to embrace spiritual and philosophical as well as artistic sentiments will be especially pleased by the story's attention to emotional reflections and details: "What I want to impart to you is the importance of the journey itself. This can be a literal one, like my family's. Or a spiritual one, like the one I've embarked on with you. Ideally, we should all experience both, for then we're more likely to find enlightenment, as well as the state of being we all seek: the unfettering of our physical selves. A piece of music is a journey, isn't it? It begins with a single note or chord, as a journey begins with a single step. Music (and any artistic expression, really) is also proof that the most profound journeys are more often those taken by the spirit."

The music of inspiration and muse; the challenges of life and death and paying tribute to the past and those passed; and Audrey and her fellow musicians' attempts to unravel the truth and meaning behind the mysterious instrument makes for gripping reading that musicians and historical fiction readers will find hard to put down.

The blend of evocative spiritual and philosophical considerations throughout the narrative provides the perfect balance between mystery and history. The story is cemented by Audrey and her friends' journey between nations, matters of heart and soul, and the influence of music on a changing world.

The story travels full-circle in a satisfying, evocative manner designed to keep readers thinking and delighted long after events conclude, leading Audrey to realize new possibilities from lost melodies that finally are found.

The Universe in 3/4 Time is a delightful artistic dance that readers will find evocative and lyrical with its light peppering of mystery and profound stories of discovery and transformation that operate from and compel on many different levels.

- D. Donovan, Senior Reviewer, Midwest Book Review