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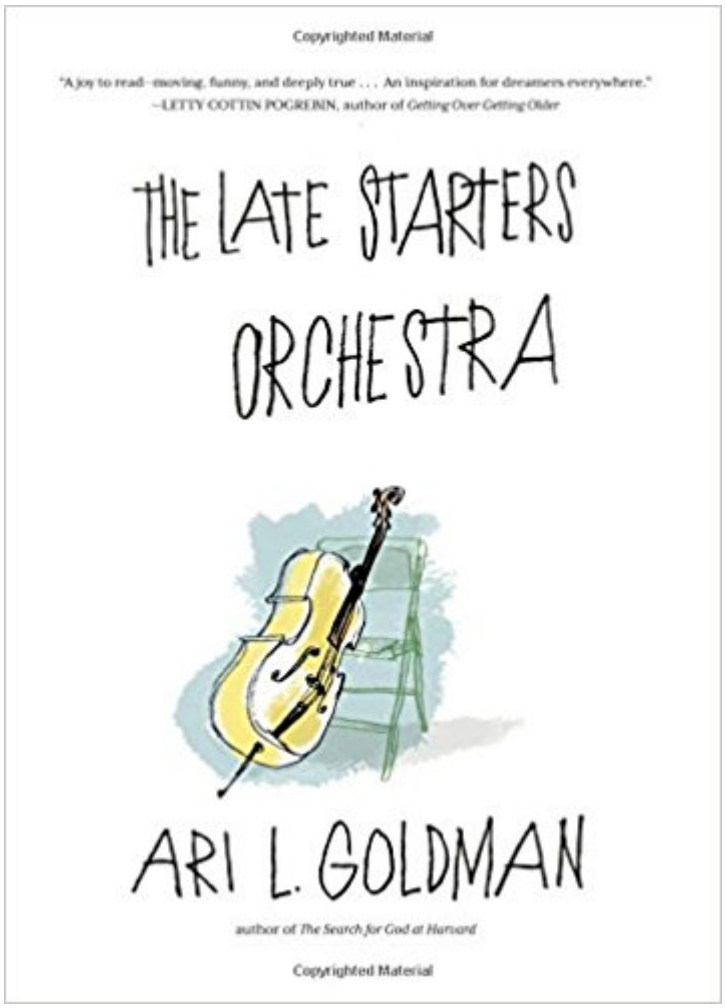
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"A joy to read—moving, funny, and deeply true . . . An inspiration for dreamers everywhere."
—LETTY COTTIN POGREBIN, author of *Getting Over Getting Older*

THE LATE STARTERS ORCHESTRA

ARI L. GOLDMAN

author of The Search for God at Harvard

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Synopsis

In a cluttered room in an abandoned coat factory in lower Manhattan, a group of musicians comes together each week to make music. Some are old, some are young, all have come late to music or come back to it after a long absence. This is the Late Starters Orchestra--the bona fide amateur string orchestra where Ari Goldman pursues his lifelong dream of playing the cello. Goldman hadnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t seriously picked up his cello in twenty-five years, but the Late Starters (its motto, If you think you can play, you can) seemed just the right orchestra for this music lover whose busy life had always gotten in the way of its pursuit.In The Late Starters Orchestra, Goldman takes us along to LSO rehearsals and lets us sit in on his sonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Suzuki lessons, where we find out that children do indeed learn differently from adults. He explores historyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s greatest cellists and also attempts to understand what motivates his fellow late starters, amateurs all, whose quest is for joy, not greatness. And when Goldman commits to playing at his upcoming birthday party we wonder with him whether heÃ¢â ¬â„¢ll be good enough to perform in public. To the rescue comes the ghost of GoldmanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s first cello teacher, the wise and eccentric Mr. J, who continues to inspire and guide him--about music and more--through this well-tuned journey. With enchanting illustrations by Eric Hanson, The Late Starters Orchestra is about teachers and students, fathers and sons, courage and creativity, individual perseverance and the power of community. And Ari Goldman has a message for anyone who has ever had a dream deferred: itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s never too late to find happiness on oneÃ¢â ¬â„¢s own terms.

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Customer Reviews

Goldman led a rich, full life in his late 50s, with family, faith, and career (former New York Times reporter, professor of journalism at Columbia, author of three books, including the best-selling The Search for God at Harvard, 1991). But when he took his cello to his first rehearsal of the New York Late Starters String Orchestra, his Ã¢â ¬Å“middle-aged musical obsessionÃ¢â ¬Â• blossomed. Despite his bad back (a particular problem for a cellist) and everything going on in his life and the world at large, he determined to become a musician and to play at his sixtieth birthday party. Goldman recounts first taking up the cello at 26 after a chance meeting with Mr. J, who became his beloved teacher, and later introducing his youngest child, Judah, to his instrument and watching the boyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s proficiency grow far beyond his own. Brief sketches of GoldmanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s fellow late-starter musicians add interest and make this more than just a memoir about music and all that it offers; it is also a warm and moving testament to the opportunities of aging. --Michele Leber

Ã¢â ¬Å“The Late Starters Orchestra is an anthem for the amateur, and if more people to took up an instrument with GoldmanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s level of commitment, our classical music culture would surely improve.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Washington Post Ã¢â ¬Å“Goldman employs a light touch in The Late Starters Orchestra as he regales us with his quest to master the cello . . . He finds a camaraderie and shared spirit that allows him to accept his limitations as a less-than-perfect cellist whose friends and family will love him, no matter how many notes he misses.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Wall Street Journal Ã¢â ¬Å“Not just a story about re-kindling musical passion, but a bigger, richer tale for anyone seeking happiness at any age, at any stage.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •American Profile Ã¢â ¬Å“I love Ari GoldmanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s The Late Starters Orchestra so much that I can almost hear, taste, touch and feel his musical experiences on every single page . . . The Late Starters Orchestra is, simply, a masterpiece.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The BookReporter Ã¢â ¬Å“The Late Starters Orchestra is a joy to read--moving, funny, and deeply true in its depiction of those aspirations we put aside until, one day, we realize itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s now or never. Ari GoldmanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s quest to master the cello is an inspiration for dreamers everywhere.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Letty Cottin Pogrebin, author of How to Be a Friend to a Friend WhoÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Sick Ã¢â ¬Å“GoldmanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s determination and thoughtfulness in his mature quest are inspiring, and may lead others to take on new challenges, whether playing an instrument, or writing a screenplay, or learning to tango. The book shows that there are many ways to define accomplishment, even if one doesnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t become a star or champion, and may be always the amateur, striving for 'good enough' rather than perfection.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Jewish Week Ã¢â ¬Å“A poignant and witty image of a

middle-aged man on the brink of self-renewal . . . It also nicely synthesizes current research on the brainÃ¢â ¬â„¢s plasticity and the value of music and offers a practicable reminder that we get better Ã¢â ¬Ëœnot by leaps and bounds, but by small, almost imperceptible steps.Ã¢â ¬â„¢ Any reader can welcome its pleasant optimisms.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Boston Globe Ã¢â ¬Å“[A] charming memoir . . . When [Goldman] focuses on the cello itself, and on his personal life and personal mission, the book is absorbing and sweet . . . That sense of rediscovering or reclaiming oneÃ¢â ¬â„¢s voice is an essential human endeavor, as the engaging and uplifting saga of GoldmanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s progress towards his triumphant birthday concert reminds us.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Bookforum Ã¢â ¬Å“With grace, humor, and elegance, Goldman generously invites readers into his tale of picking up that musical thread . . . Through it all, Goldman uncovers the soul of a musician that makes him one with his cello and the music.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Publishers WeeklyÃ¢â ¬Å“More than just a memoir about music and all that it offers; it is also a warm and moving testament to the opportunities of aging.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Booklist Ã¢â ¬Å“WeÃ¢â ¬â„¢re all living longer. What should we do with the time? Ari Goldman has a solution. The Late Starters Orchestra is warm, soulful, sometimes rueful, sometimes passionate--just like his beloved cello. I found myself laughing out loud in places--and unexpectedly moved at the end.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Jonathan Weiner, Pulitzer Prize winning author of The Beak of the Finch Ã¢â ¬Å“A lovely, moving story of personal rediscovery disguised as a book about cello-playing. Part memoir, part cultural study, The Late Starters Orchestra is is candid, wise, and inspiring, a book a rich and true as an open Ã¢â ¬ËœA.Ã¢â ¬â„¢Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •David Hajdu, author of Positively 4th Street

My story is similar to those of Ari and the others he profiled in the book. The basic question is: what makes one a "Musician?" Ari’s journey and the journeys of the others he encountered all come to the same conclusion - a musician is anyone who makes music. Of course, Mr. J., like my teacher, would tell all of us that the notes are on the page and the music is inside you - practice brings them together.Like a similar book "Never Too Late" the reality is that there are lots and lots of Late Starters in the society and when we gather our courage and make the plunge we can, and do, make music. This book is an inspiration, even to those of us still in the process. I’ve even started looking around to see if there is, or if I can start a similar LSO where I live.My path differs slightly because I acquired a student two years ago. A young man who wanted to play and was frustrated by the public school offering. He is progressing and is a member of a youth orchestra already. So, I get a vicarious orchestral experience as well. (I’m the "Master Tuner" for rehearsals and my wife and I are the music librarians as well.)Read the book and then go practice.

If you’re a late starter musician yourself, you’re guaranteed to enjoy this book--there really is something special about picking up (or picking up again) an instrument later in life. Goldman is a wonderful writer and does a lovely job at conveying some of the joys, doubts, and fears of being an amateur musician in middle age or later. If you’re not a late stater musician, well, this book may well convince you to become one! There’s nothing earth-shattering in the book, but it’s a thoughtful piece and a pleasant read that also has much to say about family, community, and the long-lasting impact of good teachers.

An absolutely charming and slyly profound search for meaning in the embrace of the cello. Goldman yearns for proficiency in his haunting instrument and along the way meets profound characters, discovers his limitationsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| and makes peace with them.For Shlomo Carlebach fans there is a special treat. For those who have no clue who he is, you will meet and be touched be the experience.Who could have thought such a diminutive book could be so completely delicious?

As a late-starter violist (who has played cello since age 8), I loved the book! Goldman’s passion for his instrument (a cello named Bill) and playing fear of auditions (that would be many of us non-conservatory types), information on the cello in general, and retelling of the stories of other late starters makes a wonderful read. And I particularly enjoyed the mother-son musical twist at the end. I can’t get enough of playing music, and the book made me smile and go practice.

Mr. Goldman’s journey parallels my journey as a member of two community concert wind bands. I hadn’t played my euphonium (baritone) for almost twenty years, until my son brought one home. I couldn’t believe I could get a sound out of it, along with all of a sudden remembering the fingering and being able to play some very elementary pieces. My friend, a member of the band, encouraged me to try. Thirty some years later, I’m still playing, have played with professionals, and enjoy my Thursday night rehearsals.

This book is a gem. Illustrations reminiscent of James Thurber add a whimsical quality to the book. Recommended for anyone who wants to start anything whether it be music, art,writing or anything else at any time in your life, whether you are a late starter or a restarter. The book is inspirational and is a quick read but it will give you a lot to think about.

The author, Avi Goldman, a reporter for the NY Times before he retired, does a great job writing about what it's like to become an instrumentalist in adulthood. He also talks about the difference between childhood music training and the difference between the two. His writing style makes for easy reading and we get to know how his immersion in music effects not just him but family too.For anyone who has tried to become an instrumentalist after the age of 40, great book, great read.

Reminding us that it's never too late to set goals and start something, Mr. Goldman writes a compelling and inspiring book. The Late Starters Orchestra reveals a man of passion, dedication, faith and an almost indescribable sense of wonder. This is one of the loveliest books I have read in several years.

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