

Of Words & Music

Lynda Fitzgerald

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Reviewed by Olivera Baumgartner-Jackson for Reader Views (10/08)

Music, the universal language. . . transcending the borders of language, culture, religion, and even age. Music has the power to connect and to heal. Music has the power to make us look at ourselves and really see. If one decides to not only listen to the music, but to create it by playing it, one will invariably become more persistent, more disciplined and better equipped to deal with life's challenges.

Lynda Fitzgerald uses music masterly in her new book, "Of Words & Music." When a rather sour widow in her sixties, Lilah Kimball, discovers that her estranged daughter Elizabeth had been killed in an accident, she is also confronted with the existence of a grandchild that she knew nothing about. Bethany Freemont, Elizabeth's twelve-year-old daughter, is an orphan now. Her father died several years ago and Lilah and her son are the only known relatives that Bethany has. Lilah is not keen on taking the child in, but she finally consents to a trial-run during the summer months. She warns her housekeeper and best friend, Marabet, that this is a strictly temporary arrangement, since she has no intent to keep Bethany. Slowly Lilah develops real feelings for Bethany, greatly aided in that endeavor by the music lessons she shares with her granddaughter, lessons that bring back many memories of her daughter Elizabeth as well. As soon as the things seem to be working out for Lilah and Bethany, a secret from Bethany's past surfaces and threatens to shatter the still fragile, barely emerging family ties. Can they overcome this new challenge?

Lynda Fitzgerald wrote a beautiful, very touching story about family, love and healing. Her characters are vibrant and complex; their motivations are always explained in a believable manner. Her insightful approach to them makes the readers feel like they really got to know Lilah, Kimberly, Marabet and even a bunch of side characters, such as Lilah's son Charles and his wife Lesa, Lilah's attorney and friend, Tom, and the social worker Felicity and her beau Elliot. The interactions between the characters are animated and interesting. The challenges they all face are real, and many a reader will find her- or himself in some of them. "Of Words & Music" delivers an important message: life is not fair and bad things do happen to good people, but we all have the power to turn things into something positive, if we only want to do so.