



The Page Turner

By David Leavitt

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At eighteen, Paul Porterfield's dream is to play the piano at the world's great concert halls, yet so far the closest he has come has been turning pages for his idol, Richard Kennington, a former piano prodigy on the cusp of middle age. Then, on vacation in Rome with his mother, Pamela, Paul encounters Kennington a second time. A love affair begins between the two - one that is complicated when Pamela misconstrues Kennington's attention toward her son as a sign of interest in her. Alarmed by the situation, Kennington flees Rome for New York, where Joseph Mansourian, his manager (and lover) of twenty-five years, awaits him; Paul, too, goes to New York to study at Juilliard. They do not see each other. Yet the brief affair will affect their lives in ways that neither could have predicted. "Why can't people have what they want?" It is around this question that David Leavitt's new novel so movingly pivots. By turns comic and heartbreaking, shrewd and intimate, *The Page Turner* testifies not only to the tenacity of the human spirit but to the resiliency of the human heart.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

David Leavitt's *Arkansas* was the surprise of his career: funny, sexy, and thematically adventurous, it was a complete break from his more traditional narratives. Now, in *The Page Turner*, Leavitt returns to the style and type of story that made him famous. Noted pianist Richard Kennington is a former child prodigy now entering middle age. While in Rome he meets and begins an affair with Paul Porterfield, a young man who is poised to follow in his professional footsteps. The affair is complicated by the fact that Pamela, Paul's mother, is also interested in Richard. The affair is short-lived, but the story--which might remind you of an updated version of a sophisticated 1940s Hollywood romance such as *The Seventh Vail* or *Intermezzo*--takes several startling turns when Richard, Paul, and Pamela discover the power of love and eroticism; it is more complicated than any of them imagined. Leavitt's tone, slyly serious and ironically romantic, makes *The Page Turner* a compelling and surprising read.

From Publishers Weekly

This flat novel of music, ambition and love is unfortunately not the enticing work-in-progress by the fictional "David Leavitt" in the far more accomplished and entertaining novella "The Term Paper Artist" (from the collection *Arkansas*). Eighteen-year-old Paul Porterfield hopes for a career as a classical pianist and is thrilled to achieve his "debut" turning pages for his idol, the vaguely van Cliburn-esque Richard Kennington. This would be the only intersection of their careers were it not for a coincidental encounter later that summer in Rome, where Paul and his philistine mother, Pamela, are on vacation. Mutually infatuated, Paul and Kennington carry on an affair unbeknownst to Pamela (who develops her own crush on Kennington). Kennington abruptly leaves because of an emotional crisis at home in New York (the beloved dachshund of his longtime manager and lover dies), but the summer fling spoils in Manhattan, as Paul (now at Julliard) faces his lack of talent and Kennington cracks under the middle-aged pressures of being a former child prodigy. Neither character's sketchy story, however, has much emotional weight. Only Pamela, one of Leavitt's characteristically strong maternal figures, transcends her stereotype. Her farcically frustrated ambitions barely keep up the tempo in this dubiously titled orchestration of tired themes. Author tour. (Apr.) FYI: *Arkansas* will be reissued simultaneously in Mariner paperback. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

Leavitt, in his first novel since the controversial *While England Sleeps* (Houghton, 1995), proves once again that he can accomplish much through his clean, spare narrative style. A master at creating the internal dither we experience when we misunderstand our surroundings, Leavitt relies on irony to explore the world of mismatched characters as they attempt to create, but mostly ruin, relationships. Paul Porterfield is the title character, an 18-year-old would-be pianist who is called upon to turn pages for his musical idol, the fortysomething Richard Kennington. They fall in love a few months later. Add to this mix Paul's mother, who also falls for Kennington, and Kennington's much older male lover of more than 20 years. Mistrust, abandonment, and betrayal abound, and each character knows all too well what those things are. But the hope for love is plentiful, and that is the substance of the novel. With each turn of the page, we uncover the mystery of love in the characters' lives as they experience it. Highly recommended for all fiction collections. ?Roger W. Durbin, Univ. of Akron Libs., Ohio Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Users Review

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Linda Christopher:

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Thomas Hall:

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Ronald Folk:

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