

A Citywide Book Club

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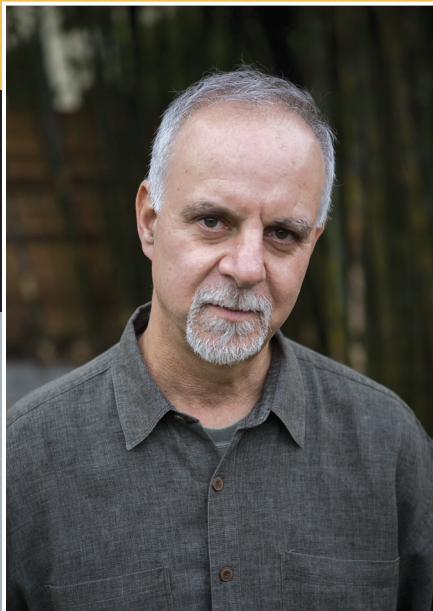
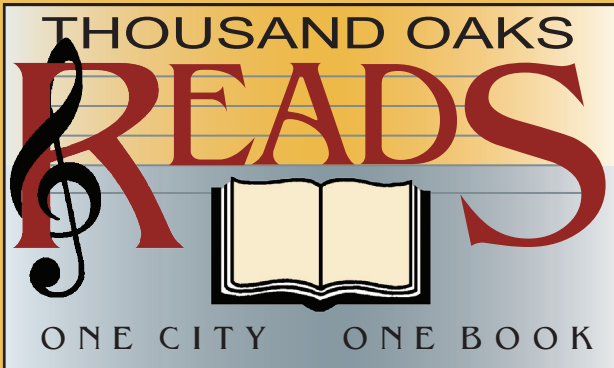
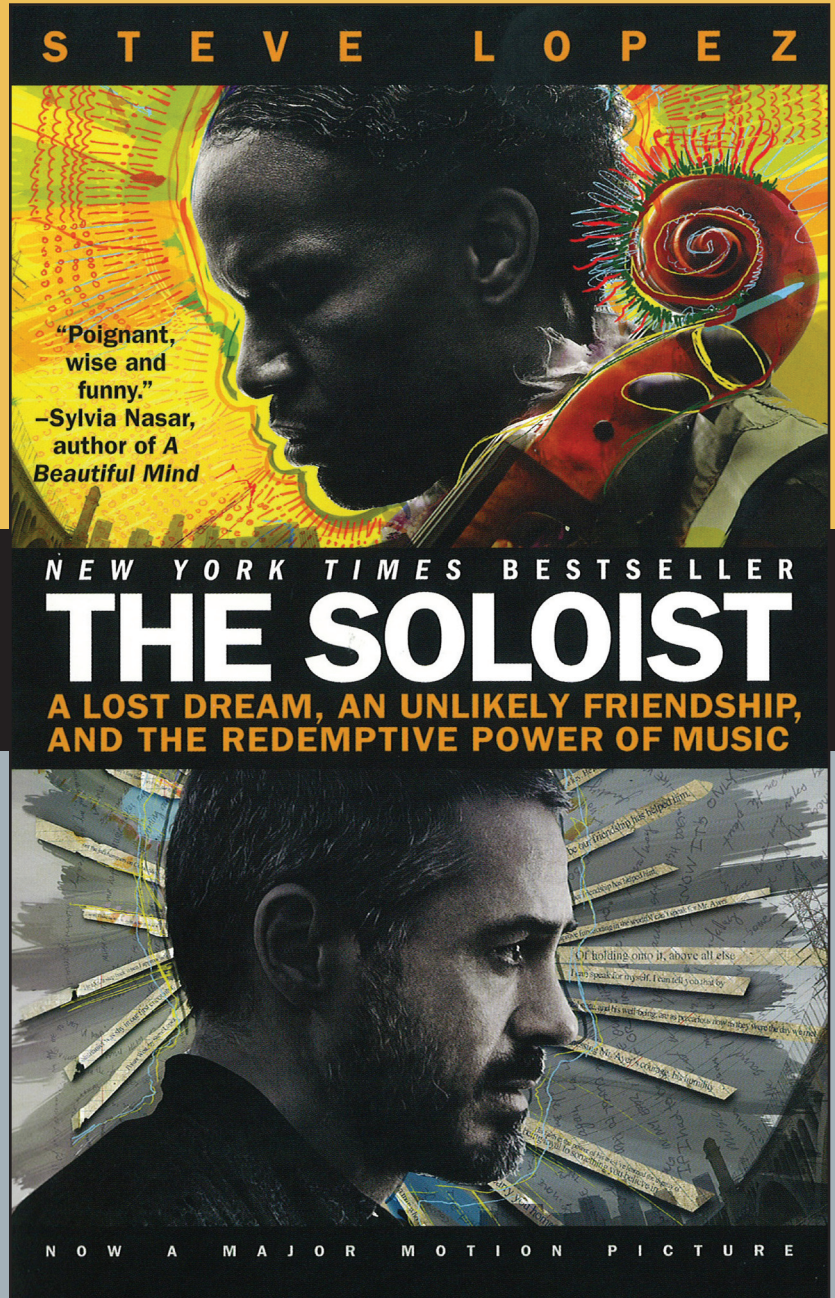


PHOTO BY GILES MINGASSON

Steve Lopez, author

JOIN US
for community book discussions
and other free events.



The Soloist by Steve Lopez

September 26 - November 14, 2009

For more information, visit the Thousand Oaks Library
and www.thousandoaksreads.org

Thousand Oaks Reads is a citywide program sponsored by the City of Thousand Oaks Library
and many generous community partners.

Welcome!

Welcome to the third annual Thousand Oaks Reads — One City One Book!

The enthusiasm for this citywide book club is a testimony to the limitless possibilities inspired by a well-written book. This year, for the first time, members of the community were invited to suggest titles and, also for the first time, the book selected is a work of nonfiction. *The Soloist* by Steve Lopez, describes the developing friendship between the author, a columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*, and Nathaniel Ayers, the “Violin Man” he encounters playing a two-stringed violin not far from Skid Row in Los Angeles. Their chance meeting altered the lives of both men as well as countless others who have been touched by their compelling story.

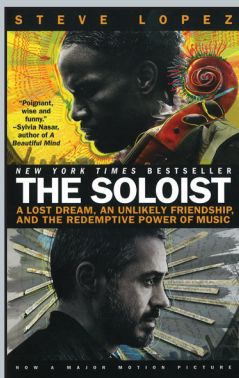
The back page of this guide lists the diverse selection of free programs, special events and book discussions that are scheduled during the seven-week celebration of this book. The much anticipated **Afternoon with Steve Lopez** on Saturday, November 14, jointly sponsored by the cities of Thousand Oaks and Westlake Village, is an exciting opportunity to gather as a community of readers to hear from the author of this inspiring book, and a fitting culmination to the annual Thousand Oaks Reads — One City One Book.

I encourage you to get involved. Read the book. Join one or more of the book discussions; attend the events; enter the essay contest. Enjoy the powerful sense of connection and understanding we all gain from sharing a common literary experience.



Stephen R. Brogden, Director of Library Services

About the Book



The Soloist : A Lost Dream, an Unlikely Friendship and the Redemptive Power of Music, by Steve Lopez

When Steve Lopez, keen observer and chronicler of life in and around Los Angeles, notices the homeless musician intently playing a violin with two strings — oblivious to the roar of traffic and parade of pedestrians — he immediately recognizes potential for his *LA Times* column. His pursuit of a newspaper story leads him on a journey he could never have imagined. Nathaniel Ayers,

now in his mid-fifties, was once a gifted student at the Juilliard School in New York City. A promising musical career was abruptly cut short with the onset of debilitating mental illness. Lopez's initial intrigue and journalistic instincts are replaced by a meaningful friendship and a drive to improve the quality of Nathaniel's life. He skillfully uncovers Nathaniel's story and honestly depicts his own personal frustrations and fears as well as the enormous challenges to getting Nathaniel off the streets and the professional and medical support he needs.

The Soloist has received considerable critical acclaim. It earned starred reviews from *Booklist* and *Publishers Weekly*, which describe it as an “inspiring story of heartbreak and hope.” Daniel J. Levitin of the *Washington Post* writes: “Lopez is a natural storyteller, giving us a close-up view of the improbable intersection of musicianship, schizophrenia, homelessness and dignity.” The editors of *Books for Youth* named *The Soloist* as one of 2008's best personal reading for teenagers among adult books. A film version, directed by Joe Wright and starring Robert Downey, Jr. as Lopez and Jamie Foxx as Ayers premiered in April 2009.

When we open a book together,
we close it in greater harmony.

About the Author

Steve Lopez was born in the Bay Area town of Pittsburg, California. After graduating from community college he studied journalism at San Jose State University and then became a sportswriter.

In 1985 he landed at *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, where he worked as a celebrated, award-winning columnist. Twelve years later he left to be an editor-at-large at Time Inc., writing for *Time*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Life*, and *Entertainment Weekly*.

When he was first offered the job as columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*, he turned it down, thinking “it was too difficult a city to write a local column in.” A year later, in 2001, he decided that he liked the challenge and took the job. Since then he has written columns that are heartwarming and funny, sometimes critical and angry, taking on politicians from the Mayor of Los Angeles to the Governor of California. He says: “I think public ridicule is a great thing in a column. Sometimes straightforward, thoughtful analysis just sails right over their heads. It's like an out for them. But if you embarrass them, make them small, maybe then you can get their attention.”

In 2008 he received the President's Award from the Los Angeles Press Club at the 50th Annual Southern California Journalism Awards. Lopez has also published another non-fiction book, *Land of Giants: Where No Good Deed Goes Unpunished* (1995), an anthology of his *Inquirer* columns; and three novels: *Third and Indiana* (1994), set in Philadelphia; *The Sunday Macaroni Club* (1997), a mystery; and *In the Clear* (2002), also a mystery.

Steve Lopez lives in Silver Lake with his wife and daughter.

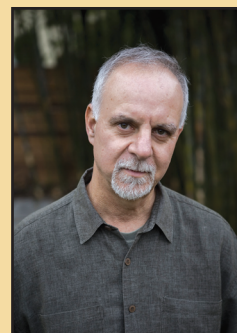


PHOTO BY GILES MINGASSON

Related Resources

These websites provide information related to topics covered in “*The Soloist*”.

- www.thousandoaksreads.org — the library's One City – One Book website.
- www.stevelopezonline.com — Steve Lopez's official website giving access to his blog, recent columns, his calendar etc., and also information on Nathaniel Ayers, including the 60 Minutes report from March 2009.
- www.lampcommunity.org — website for the organization that is helping Nathaniel.
- www.manymansions.org — website for Many Mansions, the organization that provides “well-managed, service-enriched, affordable housing to low-income residents of Ventura County and its surrounding communities”. Includes volunteer opportunities.
- www.tinyurl.com/namiventuracounty — website for NAMI Ventura County, an affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the County's voice on mental illness. NAMI is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to improving the lives of persons living with serious mental illness and their families.
- www.latimes.com — website for the *Los Angeles Times*.
- www.juilliard.edu — website for the Juilliard School for dance, drama and music at the Lincoln Center in New York City.
- www.laphil.com — website for the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and Walt Disney Concert Hall.

Discussion Questions

1. Nathaniel Ayers attended Juilliard during the 1960s, when its students were predominantly white. How much do you think the pressures of being one of the very few African-American students at Juilliard contributed to his breakdown?
2. The book draws from a series of columns in the *LA Times*. Readers began to donate instruments and money almost immediately following Steve Lopez's first article. What do you think compels people to help a stranger? Do you believe that people would have been as eager to help Nathaniel Ayers had Mr. Lopez not written about him and his plights? Why or why not? What do you think this says about human nature in general?
3. What do you think compels Steve Lopez to take on responsibility for Nathaniel Ayers's wellbeing?
4. How does Mr. Ayer's love of music eventually begin to influence Steve Lopez? Have you been influenced by another person's passion for music or other pursuit of the arts?
5. Have you seen the movie based on the book? Do you think it does the book justice? Why or why not?

More discussion questions are available on the Thousand Oaks Reads website: www.thousandoaksreads.org



Companion Books for All Ages

The following titles deal with themes similar to those in "The Soloist". These books offer opportunities for multi-generational reading and discussion. Discover more about these and other titles at www.thousandoaksreads.org.

Recommended for children in preschool through grade 3:

Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin! (jj fiction) by Lloyd Moss
Clever verse and humorous pictures introduce ten musical instruments. Also available on CD and VHS.

Mole Music (jj fiction) by David McPhail
Mole dreams about the power of beautiful music to change the world and make a difference in people's lives.

Recommended for children in grades 4 through grade 7:

The Double Life of Zoe Flynn (j fiction) by Janet Lee Carey
Zoe lives with her family in a cramped old van and struggles to keep her unusual living conditions a secret from her sixth grade classmates.

King of Dragons (j fiction) by Carol Fenner
Eleven-year-old Ian and his father have been homeless for several years when they find a perfect place — the old city courthouse.

Recommended for teens in grades 7 through 9:

The Musician's Daughter (YA fiction) by Susanne Dunlap
In eighteenth-century Vienna, Austria, fifteen-year-old Theresa

investigates the murder of her father, a renowned violinist.

Heck Superhero (YA fiction) by Martine Leavitt

Thirteen-year-old Heck is forced to survive on his own while his mind bounces between the superhero character he imagines himself to be and the harsh reality of his life.

Recommended for adults:

Nola: A Memoir of Faith, Art, and Madness

by Robin Hemley (616.89 H488)

Robin Hemley, a creative writing teacher and author, poignantly recounts the impact of mental illness on his family.

The Center Cannot Hold: My Journey through Madness

by Elyn R. Saks (616.898 S158)

Elyn R. Saks' engrossing memoir carries the reader through her first psychotic episodes to an eventual diagnosis of chronic schizophrenia. Along the way, she fought for the rights of mental patients and came to grips with her own limitations.



Musical Works Mentioned in *The Soloist*

There are many references to musical works in *The Soloist*. The Thousand Oaks Reads website has a full listing of the nearly 50 orchestral pieces, along with the page number where they are mentioned and an informational description of each piece. Check it out: www.thousandoaksreads.org

Essay Contest

Theme: **THE REDEPTIVE POWER OF ART**

Steve Lopez's book *The Soloist* reveals the power of music to heal, transform and inspire. Other forms of creative expression — literature, poetry, dance, drama, painting, drawing or sculpting — can also unleash emotions in both the creator and observer.

Have you ever been emotionally or intellectually moved, or felt transformed, by a work of art?

Contest Rules:

In no more than 800 words, tell how the power of art — be it music, drama, dance, literature or visual arts — has influenced or informed your life. It may be your own story, or that of a family member or friend.

A winner will be selected from each of the following categories: High School (age 14 – 18), College and Young Adult (age 19 – 29), and Adult (age 30 and above). Entries are due by Monday, November 2, 2009.

The winning essays will be presented to the community at the Thousand Oaks Reads — One City One Book author event featuring the author of *The Soloist*, Steve Lopez. This event will take place at the Civic Arts Plaza Fred Kavli Theatre at 2:00 p.m. on November 14, 2009.

For more information, and the essay contest entry form, visit: www.thousandoaksreads.org.

Thousand Oaks Reads would not be possible without the generous support of the following local businesses and organizations.



Grant R. Brimhall Library: 805-449-2660; Newbury Park Branch Library: 805-498-2139

Calendar of Events

Community Book Discussions and other Special Events

Unless otherwise noted, all events are free and open to the public.

The Power of Community: Making a Difference

Throughout the 7-week One City One Book celebration, collection boxes for non-perishable food items will be at the Grant R. Brimhall and Newbury Park Branch libraries. All donations will help the homeless and others in need in our community. Every contribution makes a difference.

SeptemberSeptemberSeptember

Saturday - Sunday, September 26 - 27, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Thousand Oaks Arts Festival

Visit the Thousand Oaks Reads booth and help create murals for display in the libraries. Mary & Richard Carpenter Plaza Park, 2100 Thousand Oaks Blvd., and The Lakes, 2200 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Thousand Oaks. 805-449-2660, ext. 258.

OctoberOctoberOctober

Friday, October 2, 6:30 p.m.

Light Supper & a Movie: *The Soloist*

Enjoy a light supper and the screening of the film (rated PG-13) based on the book. Advance reservations required at either the Grant R. Brimhall Library or the Newbury Park Branch. Film will be shown at Grant R. Brimhall Library, 1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks. 805-449-2660.

Saturday, October 3, 10:30 a.m.

Community Book Discussion

Grant R. Brimhall Library, 1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks. 805-449-2660.

Monday, October 5, 7:00 p.m.

Community Book Discussion

Barnes & Noble Booksellers, 160 Westlake Blvd., (The Promenade), Thousand Oaks. 805-446-2820.

Sunday, October 11, 2:00 p.m.

Music from *The Soloist*, featuring Jackie Petitto

Inspired by music mentioned in the book, musician Jackie Petitto presents a musical afternoon for the whole family. Grant R. Brimhall Library, 1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks. 805-449-2660.

Monday, October 12, 1:00 p.m.

Movie Matinee: *Shine*

A true story of the mystery of music and the miracle of love. Starring Geoffrey Rush. Rated PG-13. Grant R. Brimhall Library, 1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks. 805-449-2660.

Saturday, October 17, 10:30 a.m.

Community Book Discussion

Newbury Park Branch, 2331 Borchard Road, Newbury Park. 498-2139.

Sunday, October 18, 2:00 p.m.

Music Education: *Why It Matters*

Professional music educators highlight the rich variety of music instruction and opportunities in the Conejo Valley. Includes performances by local students. Grant R. Brimhall Library, 1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks. 805-449-2660.

Tuesday, October 20, 7:00 p.m.

Community Book Discussion

Newbury Park Branch, 2331 Borchard Road, Newbury Park. 498-2139.

Wednesday, October 21, 7:00 p.m.

In Conversation with Peter Snyder

Meet Peter Snyder and hear his stories about Nathaniel Ayers as well as his own life as a professional musician. Grant R. Brimhall Library, 1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks. 805-449-2660.

Friday, October 23, 8:00 p.m.

California Lutheran University Concert

The 90+ piece CLU Orchestra performs a program featuring works of Beethoven. Concert is free, no reservations required; donations welcomed. CLU Samuelson Chapel, 60 W. Olsen Rd., Thousand Oaks. 805-449-2660.

Tuesday, October 27, 7:00 p.m.

Community Book Discussion

Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, 2200 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd. (The Lakes), Thousand Oaks. 496-4619.

Saturday, October 31, 2:00 p.m.

Battle of the Air Guitars

Calling all air musicians! Teens ages 11 to 18 are invited to perform on their invisible instruments, either solo or with bandmates. Registration is required; visit www.thousandoaksreads.org for entry form and information. Prizes will be awarded for the best performances. Grant R. Brimhall Library, 1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks. 805-449-2660.

NovemberNovemberNovember

Sunday, November 1, 11:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. (approx.)

LA Philharmonic at Disney Concert Hall

Experience the magic of the LA Phil performing Dvorák, with Eschenbach conducting. \$85.00 per person includes roundtrip transportation, box lunch, concert and pre-concert lecture. **Registration and payment are required by September 17.** Bus leaves from Grant R. Brimhall Library, 1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks. 805-449-2660.

Thursday, November 5, 7:00 p.m.

Community Book Discussion

Borders Bookstore, 125 W. Thousand Oaks Blvd., Thousand Oaks. 805-497-8159.

Saturday, November 7, 2:00 p.m.

The Violin — What Makes a Great Instrument?

Local musician Gary Chandler discusses the beauty and history of extraordinary violins, sharing both his insight and his collection of violins and bows. Grant R. Brimhall Library, 1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks. 805-449-2660.

Monday, November 9, 1:00 p.m.

Movie Matinee: *A Beautiful Mind*

The moving tale of John Forbes Nash, Jr., a math prodigy who suffered with schizophrenia, starring Russell Crowe. Rated PG-13. Grant R. Brimhall Library, 1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks. 805-449-2660.

Tuesday, November 10, 7:00 p.m.

Community Book Discussion

Grant R. Brimhall Library, 1401 E. Janss Road, Thousand Oaks. 449-2660.

Thursday, November 12, 7:30 p.m.

CLU Faculty Panel Discussion

Unique perspectives and thoughtful responses to themes in *The Soloist*. Jim Bond, Associate Prof. of English; Marja Mogk, Assistant Prof. of English; Michael Gerson, Assistant Prof. of Psychology; and Dan Geeting, Prof. of Music. CLU Lundgren Events Center, 60 W. Olsen Rd., Thousand Oaks.

Saturday, November 14, 2:00 p.m.

An Afternoon with Steve Lopez

Presented by the cities of Thousand Oaks and Westlake Village. Free tickets are required and can be picked up at the Grant R. Brimhall, Newbury Park Branch or Westlake Village libraries **beginning Monday, September 28.** For more information, visit www.thousandoaksreads.org or www.wlv.org. Civic Arts Plaza Fred Kavli Theatre, 2100 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Thousand Oaks. 805-449-2660.