



## The Music Room

*Dennis McFarland*

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## **The Music Room** Dennis McFarland

In an incredible novel of devastating beauty, Martin Lambert must come to terms with the aftermath of his brother's suicide. Replaying sad melodies of his affluent youth, Martin embarks on a poignant journey through his family's haunted past--an unforgettable voyage of self-discovery that leads him from a childhood tainted by shocking parental abuse to a present clouded by alcoholic despair and desperate love - and, ultimately, toward a future of understanding, redemption and hope.

## **The Music Room Details**

Date : Published March 7th 2001 by Picador (first published 1990)

ISBN : 9780312274702

Author : Dennis McFarland

Format : Paperback 288 pages

Genre : Fiction, Contemporary, Literary Fiction, Academic, College

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## **From Reader Review The Music Room for online ebook**

### **Ann says**

"The Music Room", a dramatic, compulsive read.

A profound look into childhood and memories that are stored, distorted, imagined, and untrue. A hard look at flawed parenting, alcoholism and its inherent history. A recognition that the human psyche: fragile and sensitive, struggles constantly for power and dominance.

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### **David Saliba says**

A beautifully written book with a wonderful ending. It is hard to believe that this is McFarland's first book. The good news is that he has written more. I will definitely be adding some of his other titles to my to-read list.

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### **steen says**

After his brother's suicide, Marty Lambert is set adrift, lost and lonely and desperately seeking some sort of closure. He backtracks through his brother Perry's life as well as his own while trying to figure out his future. Dennis McFarland presents a trouble cast of characters: Marty's parents are wealthy, depressed alcoholics, Jane Owlcaster is Perry's girlfriend who has fallen for Marty, and Marty is left to pick up the pieces when it all crashes.

Dennis McFarland's prose is beautiful and haunting. While the story was a little too melancholy for me, it's a wonderful look into a dysfunctional family and how the past has lead to each character's internal struggle and guilt with regards to Perry's sad demise.

\*\* I received an ARC from NetGalley.

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### **Lesley says**

More than once during this reading I thought about quitting. Who needs to read a book about a family of rich alcoholics? But the writing was so good I kept plugging away, and now I'm glad I did, for the ending is excellent. Hard to believe this was the author's first book, and not autobiographical. By the end of the book you feel as though, not that you know the characters, but that you have actually lived with them! Actually an interesting book.

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### **Julaine says**

This is a beautifully written book with extraordinary emotional power. I can compare it's overwhelming

ability to move me only with that of the consuming power of a great piece of music. Like a powerful piece of music, The Music Room induces feelings of such depth without a specific, identifiable source. McFarland's ability to express the layers of human emotion is remarkable and makes The Music Room one of those exceptional books in which you can truly become engrossed.

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### **Katherine says**

“She nodded, then said, ‘No note. Boy, is that ever like him. You know, I think I’ll write the story of your brother’s life and call it ‘No Note’’” (45).

“We would never have survived a public school, sheltered as we are by the roomy sanctuary of extreme privilege” (69).

“...her voice of midnight blue (my favorite crayon as a boy” (125).

“Gasser, elderly, bald, a prolific prescription writer of dubious medical skills...” (136-137).

“The bartender’s simple question ‘Lime?’ seemed loaded with implication. What would it mean about me if I said yes?” (142).

“I have said that with Father’s passing, so passed his spirit. Ironically, sadly, it was the impact of his death, not of his life, that endured. His death had fallen on us like a moon falling into the sea whose tides it used to govern—displacing us, setting us loose, sending us thousands of miles apart. And, more or less, we stayed that way” (173).

“I seemed to have found a target for the poison spear of my anger” (182).

“The portions of the liturgy in plainsong were so ardently sung as to seem almost untamed, on the brink” (188).

“Though I suppose I must have been happy to have been allowed to enter the building, as I rode an elevator to the fourth floor it seemed insulting to have been so quickly judged harmless by the security guard” (200).

“I’d been asked to wait—which I did indignantly, next to a planter of dusty plastic delphiniums in a the orange-carpeted lobby...” (206).

“Wasn’t my behavior of the last few hours only the culmination of a lifetime of misguided stupidity? Wasn’t I doomed to bungle things?” (209).

“I don’t know how much I drank, but I did it earnestly, with so grim a sense of purpose that it felt like a punishment” (210).

“Today he plays Beethoven. I will soon turn six, and I know Ludwig von Beethoven, both the music and the man, the deaf composer, though when I was a bit younger I occasionally confused him with the inventor of the light bulb, Thomas Edison, who lost his hearing as a boy when he was pulled by the ears onto the back of a moving train. This did not happen to Beethoven—it happened only to Thomas Edison—but I still have to remind myself of that now and then. I have a child’s artistic impulse to marry the two events, the composition and the moving train. And I am very fond of imagining deafness” (223).

“He’d been telephoning Mother to ask if she knew where to find me, and he hadn’t expected em to answer the phone. Caught off guard, he couldn’t quite correct his tone of repugnance” (234).

“He said, Where the hell are you? I said he should know the answer to that question, considering that he’d just dialed my home in Norfolk” (234).

“...I am filled with the faith and quiet confidence that belongs to those who were given the heart and willingness to survive, to those given the great fortune to have continued” (262).

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### **Carol says**

Had to give this book five stars..McFarland is a brilliant writer. Hard to believe this was his first book (1990). His writings come from the dark side of human nature. Sad but so well crafted you have to keep reading. Or at least I did. I love his style... This story centers around a very strange family wondering the whys of a suicide and of a brother who is lost with his own demons but finds his way to redemption....

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### **Vivian says**

The author does an incredible job of telling the story of a dysfunctional family. In speaking the story through the alcohol blurred mind of Marty, the events unfold, fold and refold in and around each other in such a way that the waves of emotion can almost be felt by the reader. To say that this family drinks too much is a gross understatement. I kept wanting to beg Marty to stop drinking. The struggle to understand his brother's despair and death was so inhibited by his constant inebriated state. But as the story unwinds, all of the pieces, including the root cause of Marty's feelings of failure and rejection make sense. Although deep and dark, I couldn't put this book down.

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### **jennybek says**

I did enjoy the book. I could have done without some of the more graphic scenes. Being a bit more sensitive, I don't enjoy explicit or gory scenes in books or movies. That said, if these things don't bother you, this book would be enjoyable. The story of finding the reason for his brother's death was a good one. Getting flashbacks along the way helps you to get to know the characters involved.

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### **Cynthia says**

Because I thoroughly enjoyed a couple of McFarland's books (Letter From Point Clear and Prince Edward), I thought I'd try McFarland's debut novel, published in 1990. McFarland's writing is lovely from the get-go, but I was not thrilled with this book.

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### **Lori L (She Treads Softly) says**

The Music Room by Dennis McFarland is a recommended novel that focuses on a dysfunctional family of alcoholics.

Marty Lambert's life is already in shambles when he receives the call informing him that his brother, Perry has committed suicide in NYC. Marty, a record producer in San Francisco, and his wife are divorcing and he has already started to reduce his possessions down to 2 suitcases when he receives the phone call that sends him to NYC to try and figure what led his younger brother to apparently commit suicide. When he arrives in NYC, Marty finds no easy answers explaining the reason for Perry's suicide. He does meet Perry's girlfriend, Jane Owlcaster, and inherits his dog.

Perry's death leaves Marty with a mystery that he is determined to solve, although he goes about it in a

befuddled, self-examination kind of trance rather than face his need for mourning. As Marty seeks answers, along the way he also reminisces about the past and recalls the neglectful, turbulent upbringing he and Perry experienced in a family of alcoholics. As can often be the case some of the answers may be found in the past. Or maybe there are no real answers to be found. Marty must also face his own inherited legacy of alcoholism.

McFarland's beautifully expressive prose carries the novel while the narrative itself can be trying. Reading about a family of wealthy, self-centered alcoholics doesn't usually guarantee any great connection with the characters for me. Although I certainly felt empathy for Marty, I grew weary of him wallowing in his unhappiness as he explored his emotions. That said, there are some very poignant scenes with a keen insight into these deeply flawed characters.

Disclosure: My Kindle edition was courtesy of Open Road Media via Netgalley for review purposes.

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### **Suzanne says**

A devastating story of the firewalk of grief, what it does to memories, what it does to identity, and the desperate reach for light at the end of the tunnel. As Martin learns that his only sibling has jumped off a building in NYC, he begins his journey of remembrance thru a horribly dysfunctional childhood, with two raging alcoholic parents , and must face a misunderstanding that has colored his life. Moments of pathos and moments of beauty, this is a skillfully written, and ultimately hopeful narrative.

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### **Valley Haggard says**

in mood and essence the music room reminds me of herman hesse, oddly enough. It's like a surreal dream mixed with a bag of candy you can't stop eating. I loved it. And when I met Dennis McFarland at the JRW festival last year, he was super nice. I bought one of his newer books but haven't read it.

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### **Cindy says**

This book kept my attention from the beginning, which, considering the depressing main character, was quite commendable on the part of the author. I guess the main theme is dealing with devastating grief. This book also touched on how misinterpretations of things we witnessed as children can scar us well into our adult years if they are never spoken of and resolved. I was glad for the up lifting ending for sure!

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### **Evelyn says**

I do enjoy novels that are written like this one. One point of view, but it goes beyond that. Introspective, meandering memories, pieces of the puzzles of past events falling into place with new information. A changing perspective on what was previously assumed and believed. The character learns and grows as a person, old wrongs are righted, or at least understood. There is hope.

In this story Marty struggles to understand what drove his younger brother to suicide, while at the same time Marty's whole life is falling apart and he is battling his alcoholism. I can't think of a scenario more in need of hope than this.

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