



## Songmaster

*Orson Scott Card*

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An SF classic from the author of *Ender's Game*.

Kidnapped at an early age, the young singer Anset has been raised in isolation at the mystical retreat called the Songhouse. His life has been filled with music, and having only songs for companions, he develops a voice that is unlike any heard before. Anset's voice is both a blessing and a curse, for the young Songbird can reflect all the hopes and fears his audience feels and, by magnifying their emotions, use his voice to heal--or to destroy. When it is discovered that his is the voice that the Emperor has waited decades for, Anset is summoned to the Imperial Palace on Old Earth. Many fates rest in Anset's hands, and his songs will soon be put to the test: either to salve the troubled conscience of a conqueror, or drive him, and the universe, into mad chaos.

*Songmaster* is a haunting story of power and love--the tale of the man who would destroy everything he loves to preserve humanity's peace, and the boy who might just sing the world away.

## **Songmaster Details**

Date : Published December 6th 2002 by Orb Books (first published 1980)

ISBN : 9780312876623

Author : Orson Scott Card

Format : Paperback 352 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Science Fiction, Fiction, Science Fiction Fantasy

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## From Reader Review Songmaster for online ebook

### Ryan says

Since this was one of Orson Scott Card's pre- Ender's Game books, I didn't quite know what to expect. It is science fiction in that space travel and multiple worlds are involved but it is nearer to fantasy since, for me anyway, sci-fi/fantasy both share a need for something other-worldly, hi-tech invention or magic respectively. Songmaster's other worldly aspect is the music itself and since it really doesn't count as invention or magic it can safely straddle the two genres.

I didn't care much for the homosexual references; although since homosexuality seems so prominent in musicians (more so in theatre though) I suppose it could be an integral part of the story. Interestingly enough none of the singers in the book are homosexual though.

Part of me wishes I could give the book two-and-a-half stars, since it really is better than two, but not three.

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### Clarence says

This is, hands down, my favorite fiction book of all time. It's unfortunate that it is usually classified (and shelved) as science fiction, which it is not. The occasional travel from one planet to another does not science fiction make. This book alone made me an Orson Scott Card fan for life, and because of it I can forgive him the various other authorial sins which, IMHO, he has committed in his career since.

I'm pretty sure I sought this out after reading "Mikal's Songbird" in a (science fiction!) magazine. Over the years, I've pressed it on several people I thought would be well affected by it. A dear friend, years and years back, wasn't much into reading and I knew I wouldn't be able to get her to read Songmaster, so instead I read the entire novel onto ninety-minute cassette tapes and gave it to her as a present. It was slow going because reading aloud always makes me yawn a lot, but the ending started to get ridiculous -- it took me several days to get the last three or four pages down, because I kept having to pause to let the tears well up, as they always do every time I read it.

I have a much longer review (90% synopsis) on Everything2, from which I want to draw one sentence:

You know it's not your usual story when a sentence  
like this suffices to describe Ansset's life as  
Emperor of the Galaxy:

So Ansset was crowned and reigned for 60 years.

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Hmmm, it must be four or five years now since I read it last. Time to indulge again.

## **Jason says**

Spoiler Alert! Piece of trash. I've gotten more enjoyment from reading the back of a box of cereal. Orson is a homophobe and just proves it with his disgusting treatment of homosexuality in this dank and dark book. Everything in this book is all about pedophiles for the first half. The first supposedly gay character screws a woman first thing (I think Mrs Card is a little confused about the word homosexual). Ultimately, he pays for his abomination with castration and suicide. The main character is a completely unrelatable character who finally gets up the nerve to bang a dude and is punished by pain instead of pleasure at orgasm and then forever rendered impotent. The politics are crude and juvenile. The characters are all either perfect and punished for it or horrible people. There were a few somewhat interesting musical concepts floating around, but Mercedes Lackey and many others have done much more with better style, class and humanity. Also, in case you were wondering, I called him Mrs Card on purpose. Between this and Ender's Game, it has become painfully clear that Orson is a self loathing homosexual with serious emotional damage brought on by his infantile religion. Hope that dude gets laid and gets over himself and his big bag of crazy. I tried to like him regardless of his personal beliefs, but there is nothing there worth respecting and nothing there in his body of work that can't be found elsewhere with better quality ingredients. Two very definite thumbs down.

Icedragons Snowqueen wrote a better love story.

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## **Adrian says**

La Casa de Canto enseña a los niños a cantar las canciones de la gente, de la vida, de la muerte... crea voces que generan sentimientos, moldean ideas y hacen sanar las heridas.

Un libro como Maestro cantor toca temas como el abandono, el poder, la homosexualidad, la bisexualidad, la música, la traición, el terrorismo, la humanidad, el perdón, el amor puro... todo desde el punto de vista de 1 niño que se hace hombre con cada página...

El libro tiene 5 partes:

-la primera es la introducción, y es la peor para mi, larga, lenta, tediosa... pero necesaria para entender que es un Pájaro Cantor y como se "crea" su voz...

- las tres siguientes partes nos hablan de la vida del pájaro en la corte, y en el mundo exterior (la Tierra), para mí las mejores.

-La parte final nos habla de un pájaro cantor que ha vivido toda una vida y regresa al hogar humildemente deseando alcanzar todo para lo que estaba destinado (emotiva y con un final digno).

Si no fuera por el inicio lento y pesado tendría una mejor nota, pero esas primeras hojas me hicieron plantearme dejar la lectura del libro..., por suerte no lo hice y el resto me encantó.

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## **Metaphorosis says**

[reviews.metaphorosis.com](http://reviews.metaphorosis.com)

5 stars

The Songhouse trains singers - such good singers that the House is by custom inviolate. Yet when the tyrant Mikal requests a Songbird, the Songhouse gives him one, risking its long reputation for probity. Mikal's

Songbird Anset, who knows only how to sing, ends up at the focus of change in the Empire.

I first read *Songmaster* in a Futura edition with 23 pages missing out of the middle. Intensely annoying, especially because I thought the book was so good, and because those pages were crucial. It probably helped to highlight the book's impact.

I recently included Orson Scott Card's *Songmaster* in a list of my top five SFF books. When someone asked why, I realized I hadn't read the book in so long that I couldn't answer in any detail. So, I reread it, and I'm happy to say my view hasn't changed

*Songmaster* brings together the separate concepts of "Ender's Game" (youth with talent and control, an impassive master), *Capitol* (needful destruction, tyrants with depth), and "Unaccompanied Sonata" (purity in music). Each of those works was first class, and *Songmaster* proves to be an equally worthy synthesis.

It's hard to point to specific moments in the book that demonstrate its quality. The fact is that, throughout, Card achieves an almost perfect balance of prose and feeling. All the notes are right, all the emotions credible, all of it very human. What takes the story beyond the ranks of merely 'excellent' is Card's ability to follow through. Many writers can bring a story and reader to an emotional crescendo, a satisfying ending. Very few writers are then able to pick up the pieces and keep going. Card achieves this deftly and surely, and with perfect balance.

There are a couple of missteps, of course, and one key plot element that's weakly handled. But overall, this is one of the finest SFF works of the last century. If it's hard to point out exactly why, it's because Card achieves the impact not with gimmicks or clever ideas, but with honest-to-goodness polished, effective prose. It doesn't have the flash of Vance, or the poetry of Zelazny, but it has more human characters than the one, and more emotional depth than the other. Card may not always be good, but this book is among his best.

Note: When I first read *Songmaster*, I knew very little about Card. I took the actions and desires of individual characters as the actions and desires of individuals. On this re-read, I still know very little about Card, but it was impossible not to consider his well-publicized and disagreeable views about homosexuality. It's certainly possible to read this book and come away uncomfortable with the way in which homosexuals are treated. That may reflect Card's worldview; I hope not. Nonetheless, even with this knowledge in the back of my mind, in my re-read, I still took the characters as individuals, and not intended to represent one or another group. Read in this way, the book is excellent. If you go looking for a fight, I think you can find one here, but I don't think you have to.

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## Nancy says

I've read and enjoyed most of Orson Scott Card's books. 'Songmaster' is not an exception. It's funny, though, that although many of Card's novels contain dark elements and portray gentle people who are compelled by circumstances or their own moral decisions to commit acts of great violence, this particular novel was really harrowing to read. Ansett, the novel's protagonist, is similar in many ways to Card's most famous protagonist, Ender Wiggin. Exceptionally gifted, required to bear heavy burdens while still very much a child, asked to forgive more than anyone should ever have to, Ansett is both broken and remade by the circumstances of his life. Although 'Songmaster' was written long before the Ender Saga, Card was more successful with Ansett than he was with Ender in demonstrating the terrible toll Ansett's life took on him and

Ansett's ultimate redemption. A good book, but hard to read.

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### **Rebecca ♥ Warner, Kishan, Magnus ♥ says**

This book was really nothing like what I expected. It's actually a great deal like Ender's Game. A young boy grows up as a prodigy, a genius, and the best of the best among a group of exceptionally talented children. He has a great talent for reading and understanding people, and even loving his enemies. After he has accomplished what is expected of him, he is sent away, and perhaps there is a little bit of Bean mixed in, because he goes on to rule Earth.

What surprised me the most about this book was that the boy, now a teenager, has a brief romance with another man about half way through the book, and it is quite known that OSC is a colossal homophobe. So I was so confused that I had to look into this to try to understand how he could have written this. Not that I wanted to ruin a book that I was enjoying by reading his hate filled thoughts on the subject, but I was just *that* surprised. OSC said about this book, that the two men had genuine love for each other, but that he wanted to depict how being together ultimately destroyed them. Well I say he failed. I would even be so bold as to say that OSC is so skilled at writing complex and realistic characters that, against his will and intentions, he made me love these two men more than anyone else in the book. He created them as 3-dimensional characters who loved each other, but they were destroyed by the world around them, not through any fault of their own. It was their society and the people closest to them that destroyed them, people like OSC himself. I would have not interpreted any of this from the story myself if I had not known anything about the author beforehand. I would have seen their relationship as short, true, and tragic. Happiness does not come to all.

The boy went on to be a man and accomplished great things, but never loved again, had what he thought was a fulfilling life, and died old and happy. But I found the story to be very sad. His life was long, and hard, and lonely. I loved this boy, Ansett, and I was captivated by his life, and by his heart and generosity.

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### **Cmadler says**

This stands easily among the best of Card's works, and although many reviewers have compared the protagonist, Ansett, to Card's best-known character, Ender Wiggin -- the similarities seem to me to be mostly superficial -- I found this to be very much of a piece with Card's two novels that preceded it: *Hot Sleep*, and especially *A Planet Called Treason*

Of all Card's characters, Ansett is surely most similar to Lanik Mueller. Both Ansett and Lanik were raised in privilege, with the expectation of performing some large duty, but each found his life twisted by circumstances beyond his control. Each suffered tremendously, grew through the suffering, and accomplished more than could have been originally imagined. In the end, although each dominates and eventually reshapes his world, both find the greatest satisfaction through quiet servitude.

For as much as this novel has attracted attention for its brief references to man/boy love and child molestation, and the actual inclusion of homosexuality, the principal themes are honor, loyalty, belonging, and non-sexual love. A major secondary theme is political power and great art shaping (and attempting to outright control) each other.

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## Osiris says

De cierto modo este libro me recordó a Let the Right One In, y no porque sea un libro sobre vampiros, en este no hay vampiros, ni porque se desarrolle en Suecia, porqué tampoco es así, de hecho en ambiente y trama no tienen nada que ver el uno con el otro, pero lo que tienen muy similar es el hecho de que, les ambos son historias de amor hechas y derechas y no mafufadas (jojojo, que palabra tan más graciosa) cursis.

El libro trata sobre Ansset, un niño que posiblemente tenga la voz mas hermosa del universo en toda su historia, quien es educado en la Casa de Canto (literalment LA casa de canto de todo el universo, donde aprenden a hablar con el canto y a magnificar los sentimientos por medio de el) y es elegido para ser el Pájaro Cantor del emperador Mikal (quien es ni más ni menos emperador del universo) por lo cual, Ansett deberá vivir desde los 9 años hasta los 15 años con dicho personaje.

Una de las cosas que me gustó mucho es el concepto del canto como un lenguaje, con la capacidad de expresar ideas completas solo con su tono, ritmo y melodía, así como de influenciar en las personas al hacerles sentir emociones, si bien no es posible plasmar como es el canto (puesto que no se puede escuchar al estar leyendo), el hecho de utilizar las reacciones y las emociones de tanto el que canta como el que está escuchando hace que uno sea quien pueda llenar el cómo es dicho canto con su propia imaginación, con lo cual, pues cada quien lo puede imaginar diferente.

Por otro lado, el libro fácilemente podría ser muy malinterpretado y levantar cejas, muchas cejas, por los temas que aborda, principalmente el hecho del amor como un ideal puro, no sexual (algo así como el concepto platónico) sin importar edad y género, y es justamente en eso que me recuerda mucho a Déjame Entrar.

Eso si, este libro se escribió muchos años antes que Déjame Entrar.

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## Seregil says

It's a very touching and amazing story. At least twice the story could have ended - everything was tied up nicely and at a pleasant point - but then the story starts again after a few years have passed and something happens that changes everything. Sometimes it's just about growing up and needing to move forward, other times it's something terrible that changes the character's life. Nothing lasts forever, the book seems to point out, yet, at the very end we are left with hope and happiness because even if nothing lasts, neither does anything truly disappear. The legacy of an individual lives on in the collective mind, in humanity's soul. I liked that the Songmasters valued control, but never forgot how important it is to know how to let it go. Having Control meant being able to chose when and how not to be in control.

A very beautiful book that left me the feeling of reading a myth.

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## Emma says

this is truly my favorite scifi book of all time. it's got orphaned children, gay-questioning sex, weird psychic

powers, enough tragedy to make me cry, and *bards*. How could I not love it? well, I did when I was 14. I really should qualify my sci-fi reviews since many of these are from my teenage years and it could be that if I read them now I'd be like huh what is this crap, like when you watch a cartoon movie like The Last Unicorn as an adult and think now why does that tree have boobs? But I bet that since this is Orson Scott Card and he has so many crown masterpieces in his oeuvre that it is still good even as a jaded older person.

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### **Spider the Doof Warrior says**

But, if you are going to do something to someone that causes them terrible pain should the orgasm shouldn't you TELL them about this? I don't want to read this book again. It's disturbing. But mainly because I'm just not sure gay people WORK like that!

This book is like several books crammed into one. It's Ender's Game with singing instead of laser tag. It has a terrible underlying message about being gay too. OSC does NOT understand how gay people work! Or straight people for that matter. I'm sorry, but most people don't look at a kid that way. If they do, they need help.

Though there are those older women who want Justin Bieber and Taylor Lautner. But they were in their teens at least. High teens. I don't think it's RIGHT, but they were not prepubescent kids. Gay dudes don't go, ooo, look at that kid \*cringes\* when he is 15 and frigging looks 11 OR 12!!!??? It didn't seem like any of the other dudes he harped on were teens except when he was a teen, so WTF was up with this?

It's so insulting on a lot of levels.

In terms of prose it's all tell and no show. I'm not saying books have to be all avant guard but maybe I don't like having everything spelled out to me like I'm a little kid. There's no subtlety. No hints. Nothing you as a read can gather on your own. I like to try to figure things out. I know OSC snubs this kind of writing, but I find it INTERESTING.

So, yeah, this book is frustrating. Anyone remotely gay gets punished for giving in and being gay. They either end up with no penis and kill themselves or they end up getting to be celibate forever while folks who follow the rules get married, have kids and live happily even if it makes no sense to marry someone you barely know and have kids with them.

Ugh.

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### **Allisyn says**

It's been a while since I've read anything by him and I'd definitely forgotten how beautiful how world building is. His prose is so lovely and he'll contrast it by writing in an event or something so horrible or ugly that it sometimes takes another read or two of the passage to comprehend what exactly happened.

Songmaster follows one man from events that make his existence significant to his death. The young man transforms from a gifted young singer in an isolated school to the companion of an emperor to a man of great consequence in his own right and finally his return to the home of his youth. There is love, both familial and

romantic, cut-throat political maneuvering, bold kidnappings, and whirlwind fight scenes. I really enjoyed reading this novel.

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### **Dallas says**

This is perhaps my favorite Orson Scott Card book. It has a richly developed universe and characters and covers the entire lifetime of the main character. I did not want to put it down and when the book was over, I felt as if I had been in the presence of a great person and was happy to have joined him on his journey. This book is a science fiction, but has a similar feel to a lot of epic fantasy, so would probably be good for fans of either genre.

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### **Rachel says**

This is a very, very strange novel. I've been a fan of OSC since I was very young, and since I was a young teen I've been very disturbed by the almost violent intolerance of homosexuality he expresses in his essays. This attitude seemed so at odds with the values woven into the stories of Ender and Bean - stories of children who are different, but good, and catch a lot of crap for it but save their tormentors anyway.

This book answered some of my questions. No spoilers here, but suffice is to say that one of the only truly sympathetic characters in the novel is an openly gay man. OSC's treatment of this character and his associates paints a more complete picture of OSC's views on homosexuality, and I found it very, very interesting.

(This has been a favorite topic of mine for a while - there are explicitly queer characters in much of OSC's fiction, most often struggling against themselves - but there is nothing simple or moralizing in his portrayals, as there is in his essays.)

More study is needed. :)

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### **Lana says**

This was one of four or five books that I started the year with, all reading at the same time, in different spots in my home. Once I got past the first chapter or two, I felt compelled to finish this, to the exclusion of others.

Songmaster is set in a world with Earth, but significantly different from the world we know. Earth is both the armpit of the universe and the home of the Emperor of Everything. What a dichotomy! Earth is a government of continents, not countries, and the US is divided into Western and Eastern America. Some American nameplaces are familiar, and a few references are made to other recognizable places on Earth.

Communication at its best is done by Singers, and Singers are trained in the Songhouse on Tew, which is a planet. People still talk, but Singing communicates at a subconscious or subsonic level and affects people's feelings, attitudes, actions. Frankly, I'd hate to live in a world where I could not sing (I CAN sing, but you really don't want to have to listen to it), even to myself. In this world, only Singers can sing (unless you are very small and don't know better), and you can only become a Singer by being raised in the Songhouse.

OK, enough about that.

The book follows main character Ansett, a supremely gifted Singer, from his beginning as he is separated from his mother, to his death, and slightly beyond, in vignettes, some longer, some shorter. Details are never glossed over, but neither are unimportant things included. I don't need to know the minutiae of his life, endlessly recycled, to know that three years have passed. You understand?

At times I found myself identifying with Ansett. He was by turns pampered and abused, praised and vilified. I was able to get into his skin, so to speak, and memories would scamper across my mind, much too quickly to be conscious, but passing through and leaving food for contemplation. Reading this was similar to reading *Stranger in a Strange Land* by Heinlein many years ago. I find myself mentally chewing on something days after reading, and learning things about myself I did not know.

Orson Scott Card is famous for his Ender books in particular. I've read *Ender's Game*, which left me glad I'd read it, though I was confused throughout. I've tried reading other Orson Scott Card books and been unable to get into them. Without a doubt, he has a way with words, and sometimes, my brain is just not ready for that train yet.

If you've liked other Orson Scott Card books, I recommend this one without reservation. If you've never tried an Orson Scott Card book, this might be a good one to start with.

P.S. Others have tagged this gay fantasy or gay romance, and though it does exist in this book, it's mentioned in passing, in a chapter or two, definitely not part of the main plot. If you're not into that, this shouldn't discourage you from reading this book, and if you are, just remember, it's a very small part of Ansett's life. Personally, I loved that it was so casually a part of the background, and not overthought.

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### **Jamie says**

I wanted to like this book, honestly, I did. I'm a fan of Card's 'Ender' books, and the synopsis to *Songmaster* was one of the most intriguing I've ever come across. While reading however, I found myself constantly questioning the point of the plot. "*Songmaster*" is quite frankly a poor story. Poorly composed, and poorly told. It's little more than a series of uninteresting things occurring, one after the next, with no larger story arc, and virtually no entertainment value.

The various sexual themes/content are also rather unnerving, mainly because there doesn't seem to be any need for it. Anyone who knows anything about Orson Scott Card, knows he's a Mormon, and huge anti-gay whackjob. Why he feels the need therefore, to inject so much homosexuality into this story, is peculiar to say the least. I suspect his purpose was twofold; to make the reader feel uncomfortable about homosexuality, and to portray gays having bad things happening to them. I mean, what would a desperately boring story be, without some unnecessary bronze age preaching to go along with it? This is symptomatic of the puritanical fear/obsession with homosexuality, that small-minded faith-crippled cretins such as himself suffer from.

Despite his preposterous religious beliefs, Orson Scott Card is a very talented writer, and story teller, although you wouldn't know it from reading *Songmaster*. The book showed so much promise, but ended up leaving a sour taste in my mouth, and the knowledge that I'll never get this time back.

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## **Hamster says**

Every time I see an Orson Scott Card book, I think, "Hey, why haven't I read that yet?" There are in fact dozens of his books that I have not delved into, and today I was reminded why I'd lost my enthusiasm for this talented writer.

Songmaster, is one of his earliest novels and I found it disturbing on so many levels. Oh, it starts out benign enough, with life in the song house as Ansset learns to sing. As soon as we get into this story, however, it's over and Scott has begun another plot which at first seems related, and then takes a wild turn into left field. After that plot is more or less resolved, he writes a third story using many of the same characters he used in the first two thirds of the book, but with absolutely no recognizable connection to the first two stories. If this were the only problem I'd had with this book, I would've given it four stars. Although episodic and graphically violent in places (Scott needs to figure out if he's writing a romance, a coming of age, murder mystery, or a horror novel and stick with it) I found the characters deep and interesting and the scenes dramatic (some a little over the top) and full of emotion.

I could have overlooked all that if it hadn't been for....  
(some may consider this a spoiler, but I would've wanted to know this before I picked it up).

(view spoiler)

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## **Lisa (Harmonybites) says**

I can't help but find this a remarkable book in many ways. The characters really live for me, and several are quite complex--certainly not simple to evaluate as good or evil. And I loved the world Card created of the Songhouse. This is a place where even common communications are made by song. I fell in love with Orson Scott Card's writing after discovering his *Ender* books. The theme of those books is tolerance, and trying to understand the "Other." And the theme of this one is love--of all kinds. The children brought to be trained to the Songhouse are orphans; when the young and gifted Ansset, who this novel is centered upon, is brought there, another child comforts him with the house's "Love Song" which is repeated at key moments:

"I will never hurt you.  
I will always help you.  
If you are hungry  
I'll give you my food.  
If you are frightened  
I am your friend.  
I love you now.  
And love does not end."

Including by the way, love between two men, and I don't mean platonic. Especially given this book was published in 1978, the novel is incredibly liberal and accepting in outlook. And yes, you might know that Orson Scott Card is now infamous for public statements against same sex marriage so vehement it's hard to believe it's just a matter of conviction, rather than bigotry. I know some reviewing this novel can see only hostility in its depiction of a relationship between two men--but I suspect they read this book in light of

Card's remarks, and read into it what they were expecting. I only know that when I read this for the first time as a teen, that's far from what I took from it. And it's notable that those reviewers expressing anti-gay sentiments are angry at Card for his depiction, not happy with it. I found a remark of Card's over a decade after the book's publication defending the novel where he claimed:

*What the novel offers is a treatment of characters who share, between them, a forbidden act that took place because of hunger on one side, compassion on the other, and genuine love and friendship on both parts. I was not trying to show that homosexuality was "beautiful" or "natural" -- in fact, sex of any kind is likely to be "beautiful" only to the participants, and it is hard to make a case for the naturalness of such an obviously counter-evolutionary trend as same-sex mating. Those issues were irrelevant. The friendship between [them] was the beautiful and natural thing, even if it eventually led them on a mutually self-destructive path.*

The relationship isn't the central focus of the book. I wouldn't belabor the issue so much in this review, except that Card's views on homosexuality (expressed in ways much more extreme than in the quote above) so shocked me because it seemed so contrary to the spirit of what I had read by him and knowing those views now taint how I read his books. So rereading this--trying to decide whether or not to keep this book on my shelf or not has only deepened my bewilderment. How can he believe *that*, but write *this*? Maybe it's because in the end, Card is too good a writer to write caricatures--that his subconscious can counter even strongly held and expressed views as they're typed on the page. Just as Shakespeare may give us a Shylock that while reinforcing anti-Semitic stereotypes, at the same time has him cry, "Hath not a Jew eyes" demanding us to recognize his common humanity. I only know that I still can't reread *Songmaster* and remain unmoved. So despite feeling a bit embarrassed to admit Card still sings to me, it's true--the man's a bard.

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### **sologdin says**

Nutshell: school for the Euterpean arts involves itself in galactic politics, leading to homophobic crimes, coups d'etat, &c., 20,000 years in the future.

Principal is a pre-Ender *wunderkind*, a victim of child trafficking. Euterpeans know the victim status and the location of the grieving parents, but elect to ignore it all (69). In addition to being scum, they're also stupid, insofar as their constitution selects the new schoolmaster by virtue of whoever finds the corpse of the current schoolmaster; finder picks new boss (32). Principal is hooked up with several galactic emperors in the standard device to place the narration at the center of the entire setting. Yawn.

Focus for the Euterpeans is "Control," a form of mental discipline: the "object of Control was not to remove the singer from all human contact, but to keep that contact clear and clean" (43). Advanced Euterpean arts produce "possession, ownership, dependence, self-surrender" in untrained listeners (80). It's all very Dunyain, especially when used to "read the flickers of emotion in his voice" and thereby know the thoughts of others (116). In addition to mind control, principal acquires superhuman kung-fu. I have therefore found RSB's Hidden Source.

Emblematic of the whole: "The longer [the eels] wiggle the more they pee and the better they taste. This pond's full of them. Connects right up with the sewer system. They live in the sewer. Along with worse things. [The city] produces more turds than anything else, enough to keep a million [eels] alive" (56).

There's FTL transit (no system of FTL rules, though), laser guns, and whatnot. But otherwise, for 20,000

years out, it's looking very 20th century. It's therefore more of a Fantasy of the Present Moment, projecting current facts, including our own science fiction content, into the far future. Not sure if the ineffectiveness is a result of the genre or the specimen.

Bizarre random love triangle. Bizarre random palace intrigues. Love triangle reveals that principal is afflicted with an "orgasm torture" drug (300); his homosexual lover is castrated (312). Principal ends up, also randomly, at apex of imperial power, so, yaknow, there it is.

Recommended for those pretty enough to be catamites, Kinshasans from the southern tip of Africa, and writers of theses and dissertations, feces and defecations.

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