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The Late Starters Orchestra

"Joy to read—moving, funny, and deeply true. . . . An inspiration for starters everywhere."
—LETTY COFFIN FOGGREN, author of *Getting Over Getting Older*

THE LATE STARTERS ORCHESTRA



ARI L. GOLDMAN

author of *The Search for God at Harvard*



Synopsis

In a cluttered room in an abandoned coat factory in lower Manhattan, a group of musicians comes together each week to make music. Some are old, some are young, all have come late to music or come back to it after a long absence. This is the Late Starters Orchestra--the bona fide amateur string orchestra where Ari Goldman pursues his lifelong dream of playing the cello. Goldman hadn't seriously picked up his cello in twenty-five years, but the Late Starters (its motto, If you think you can play, you can) seemed just the right orchestra for this music lover whose busy life had always gotten in the way of its pursuit. In *The Late Starters Orchestra*, Goldman takes us along to LSO rehearsals and lets us sit in on his son's Suzuki lessons, where we find out that children do indeed learn differently from adults. He explores history's greatest cellists and also attempts to understand what motivates his fellow late starters, amateurs all, whose quest is for joy, not greatness. And when Goldman commits to playing at his upcoming birthday party we wonder with him whether he'll be good enough to perform in public. To the rescue comes the ghost of Goldman's first cello teacher, the wise and eccentric Mr. J, who continues to inspire and guide him--about music and more--through this well-tuned journey. With enchanting illustrations by Eric Hanson, *The Late Starters Orchestra* is about teachers and students, fathers and sons, courage and creativity, individual perseverance and the power of community. And Ari Goldman has a message for anyone who has ever had a dream deferred: it's never too late to find happiness on one's own terms.

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Customer Reviews

I'm enjoying this growing genre of books about middle-aged people taking up a musical instrument, either for the first time or decades after last playing. Guitar Zero: The Science of Becoming Musical at Any Age, A Devil to Play: One Man's Year-Long Quest to Master the Orchestra's Most Difficult Instrument, and Play It Again: An Amateur Against the Impossible are a few I've read and liked. The Late Starters Orchestra has its author, Ari Goldman, getting reacquainted with the cello in his late fifties. He's determined to learn enough to play a few songs for his friends at his 60th birthday party. It's difficult, with his job as journalism professor at Columbia University and a lively family. But he sticks with it, as his old cello teacher, now dead, continues to inspire with remembered words of encouragement. Since Goldman lives in Manhattan, he has access to many music groups, including entire orchestras made up of amateurs of all levels of experience. He tries a few of them, as well as several music camps both in New York and in England. His experiences are interesting and amusing, as is the fact that his young son took up cello at age six and quickly passed his father. For a while, Ari and his son were able to play in the same beginner's orchestra.

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