

LoveReading Reader reviews of The Song Collector by Natasha Solomons

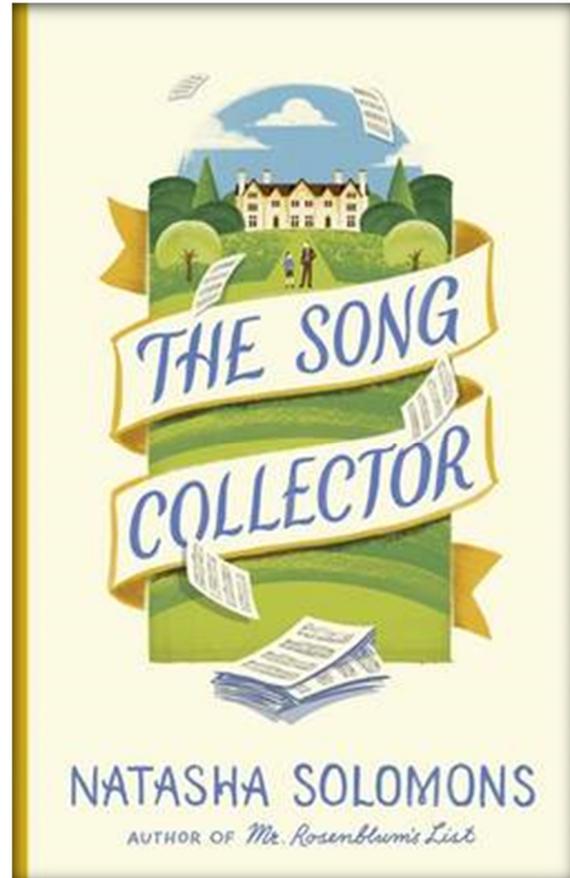
Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.

Ann Peet

A lovely, well written novel suffused with music and human emotions.

This is a lovely, satisfying book. The writing is excellent and it is well constructed but it also has a good story which I didn't want to end. In fact there are two stories here. Harry Fox-Talbot, or Fox as he is known, is a famous composer and collector of folk songs. His wife has died and, since then, he has been unable to compose or enjoy music. When he discovers that his young grandson is a prodigy when it comes to playing the piano, he starts to take an interest in life and music again. This alone makes for an engrossing novel but interwoven with this are chapters set just after the war when Fox and his brothers return to their ancestral home and try to save it from ruin. The arrival of Edie, who has become famous as a singer during the war leads to love, passion and betrayal.

I loved both parts. The story of Fox emerging from his grief and trying to cope with his difficult musical genius of a grandson is warm and captivating. His struggles as a young man with love and family loyalty while he tries to become known as a composer are also beautifully portrayed. Music plays an important part and this is reflected in the musicality and lyricism of the writing. There is also a lot of love and tenderness and humour. Highly recommended.



Edel Waugh

This is the story of one family and it goes back and forth in time from 1946 to present day.

This is about a family who own a large estate in the country but who are struggling to maintain it, they try to maintain this huge estate as best they can but it takes huge effort. Harry, Jack, George, Edie and Sal make up the characters from the past and in present day Fox, Robin and Clara make up the majority of the story. Clara is fox's daughter and Robin is his very young gifted grandson who excels as a pianist from the moment his fingers touch the keys aided by his musical grandfather who finds this young boy's enthusiasm just what he needs as a distraction now that he is grieving for the love of his life.

All characters from the past are liked to those in the present and when you put it altogether we see a story about grief, forgiveness, hope and joy. Simply beautiful!

<http://www.edelwaugh.blogspot.com>

Sharon Lowe

Heartwarming touching a story tracing three people and a love that lasted, of music and a child who was gifted and his grandfather who nurtured his talent and wellbeing.

A heartwarming story of a man who recognized his grandsons gift .of how he fell in love made mistakes, had the love of his life and lost her, how he came thru the grieving process, and nurtured his grandsons gift, told by the gentleman himself in his own words, sometimes funny, sometime touching, sometimes heartwarming, and the development of a child with a unique talent in music.

Sarah Webb

An intriguing family story told in the past and present.

Fox, a composer, is the narrator of this story and we meet him as a young man and then, in the intertwining story, as an old man. He's one of three brothers who return to the family home in Dorset after WWII. He then falls in love with the wife of one of his brothers. We know this from the outset because of the twin storylines, so the hook of this book is not so much what happens but how and what else happens when it does.

It's a lovely story of families, music, old houses and what ties us together and

sometimes keeps us apart. In the modern day story Fox's grandson Robin is a musical child prodigy and their connection through music is well-evoked. I particularly enjoyed the grandparent / grandson relationship.

I'll be checking out her earlier books.

Sarah Hamid

I loved this book and wanted to devour it greedily in one sitting - the best of Natasha Solomons' novels. I would recommend it to anyone who enjoys a good story that spans different generations.

This novel cleverly alternates the chapters between the 1940s/1950s and the early 2000s. This technique can sometimes be confusing and make a story disjointed, but it works brilliantly here. The story is narrated by Harry (nicknamed Fox), the youngest son of a family from the impoverished gentry. Finances are so bad after the war that they have tough decisions to make about their crumbling stately home. The modern day story tells about the now elderly Fox and his relationship with his precociously musically gifted grandson.

The book has a number of eccentric characters, including his brother George and his friend Marcus. It reminded me of 'Brideshead Revisited' and also the novels of Nancy Mitford.

I found the language in the novel beautiful, and the fact that there is a lot the reader is not told about the characters compelling. I think the relationships between the characters and their motives for what they do, and the choices they make are fascinating. Just the kind of thing I like to mull over in the supermarket queue!

This book would make a good film, as the settings would translate well onto the big (and small) screen. The thinly veiled criticism of a certain tv talent show in this novel would also make interesting viewing! I am already looking forward to Natasha Solomons' next novel.

Glenda Worth

The Song Collector by Natasha Solomons - a story of family ties, grieving, and ultimately music. A brilliant tale interwoven with emotion and laughter based around a grieving widower and his grandson.

Fox is a celebrated composer whose wife has died and he has lost the ability to

compose. His grandson helps to reinvigorate him as Fox mentors him to success. Meanwhile we flit back and forth to Fox's younger days when he stole his brother's girlfriend and married her and the collecting of nostalgic songs along the way.

A loving tale which was engrossing and left the reader wanting more as every page was turned.

Jennifer Stewart

Wow! What a fantastic book! Wouldn't have picked this one up but am so glad that I read it. I was instantly drawn to this emotional and absorbing tale of love and betrayal with a musical background.

Harry Fox-Talbot has two loves - his lifelong love of music, recording folk songs and composing and his love of his singer wife Edie. When Edie dies, Harry (known to his family and friends as Fox) is devastated and is unsure how he can carry on without her. But Harry's discovery that his five year old grandson is a musical prodigy gives him a new lease of life and helps him to come to terms with his past.

I loved this book - I was hooked on the past and present day stories right from the start and the author has written such vivid, likeable characters that I felt I knew them personally. The blend of love and betrayal, happiness and heartache, secrets and lies make intriguing and absorbing read. I didn't want this book to end.

Nikki Whitmore

"Home wasn't a place. Home was music."

March 2000. Celebrated composer Harry Fox-Talbot is in mourning for his wife. There appears to be nothing his family and friends can do to convince him that his life can go on without her, until one day his four year old grandson, Robin, sits down at the piano and Fox makes a startling discovery.

November 1946. The war is over but the battle to save Hartgrove Hall has only just begun. As their house crumbles around them, the Fox-Talbot brothers struggle to convince their father that they have what it takes to return it to its former glory. Into their midst comes Edie Rose, a beautiful wartime singer with a secret history all of her own. Her arrival will test the bonds of brotherhood and of love and will lead to a betrayal that echoes through the decades to come.

It seems trite to say that this is a lyrical novel but that's exactly what it is. As a young man, Fox seeks out songs that other people have forgotten: folk songs, melodies hummed by workers in the fields and the songs his long dead mother sang to him when he was a baby. It sounds weird but I felt like I could hear the music all the way through and I think if I'd known some of the classical pieces referenced (shame on me for my lack of musical knowledge!) I'd have felt that even more.

*It is actually a very sad book. **It's a story of love and loss, of wanting something you can't have and of the desperate need for absolution. It is beautiful but also painful which I suppose is true of a lot of music, depending on the context.***

I loved it and I think the thing that sealed that for me was the big surprise I got towards the close of the novel. I really didn't see the ending coming but it was perfect

<https://whitterswitters.wordpress.com/>

Phyllippa Smithson

A sensitive story of a beloved wife lost and how it is possible to find some meaning in life as widowed man seeks to find meaning as a 'half person.'

Switching between the immediate aftermath of WW2 and the more current world of the early 21st century, we meet Fox, a collector of songs and a passionate lover of music. His two brothers, Jack and George exist in the early life. They have disappeared in the life of Fox in the 2000s. Edie is in love with Jack in those early years. Yet it is Fox who is bereaved at the loss of her life in the more modern time having married Edie. Jack did not.

Such disparate worlds that unite as the pages are turned. We learn what occurs between the former and current worlds and the enormity of what Fox has lost having buried Edie. And we witness the slow evolution of Fox the widower, lost in the pain and a meaningless world of life without her. His tentative steps into his future grow in pace as he recognises that his 4 year old grand-child has a musical talent only seen in prodigies. Robin stops being the difficult child whenever he touches a piano and Fox slowly stops being the lost adult, as the two build a future based on their mutual passion for music.

*In 'The Song Collector' we see how it is possible to renew life at whatever age. This is **a motivating and absorbing account of the human spirit.***

Val Rowe

A gently powerful novel which music lovers, and those who enjoy reading about the complexities of human relationships, will particularly enjoy.

Widower Harry Fox-Talbot, a composer and song collector, begins to find meaning in life once more when he discovers the natural musical ability of his four year old grandson.

The story flows successfully between the past and present, introducing us to Harry's family home and he and his brothers efforts to save it from ruin, together with his life after the death of his beloved Edie Rose, a beautiful wartime singer.

Two key factors enabled me to fall in love with this novel. Firstly the notion of song collecting and Solomons' fascination with it, intrigued me and left me eager to learn more. Secondly, the gradual unveiling of the characters, their interaction, reactions and actions conveys so clearly the reality of the depth and complications of interpersonal relationships. I found parts of the novel incredibly emotive and just as I was feeling nicely comfy, something occurred which kept me on the edge of my seat.

A charming and entrancing novel which I recommend highly.

Victoria Goldman

Once again, Natasha Solomons has written a beautiful, heartbreaking novel. 'The Song Collector' is filled with a passion for music and grief for lost loved ones.

'The Song Collector' focuses on the story of composer Harry 'Fox' Fox-Talbot.

In the present day, Fox has lost his inner music following the death of his wife, and is struggling to find ways to pass his time. Neither of his daughters has inherited his musical ability, so he is amazed to discover that his troublesome four-year-old grandson is a piano prodigy. As music fills his life again, Fox seeks forgiveness for past mistakes.

In the late 1940s, Fox and his brothers return to the decaying family home after the war, determined to restore it to its former glory. Then Fox falls in love with a woman who isn't his to love.

The Song Collector tore at my heartstrings with its passion for music and grief

for lost loved ones. The prose flowed seamlessly, with beautiful descriptions of Hartgrove Hall and the surrounding countryside. Natasha Solomons has created believable characters with real emotions - in keeping with all her excellent novels so far. As I read the last 30 pages, my eyes were overflowing with tears.

<http://off-the-shelfbooks.blogpost.co.uk>

Riki Bill

A heartwarming book set in the present and the past of one man's musical and personal life. Written in the first person Ms Solomons novel transports the reader to the aftermath of WWII.

A heartwarming book set in the present and the past of one man's musical and personal life. Written in the first person Ms. Solomons' novel transports the reader to the aftermath of WWII.

The book flits between the present and the past in an evenly paced way that is easy to follow.

The characters are easy to relate to and the author draws the reader into the novel in a gentle way that gives the reader information mixed with fictional settings.

A wonderfully heartwarming novel that is factual fiction and features musical joy by the characters written.

You can follow Riki on Twitter: @riki_gabrielle

Rachael Anderson

'The Song Collector' is a touching, emotionally charged novel. A love story on many levels. Beautifully written and joy to read.

'The Song Collector' is a touching novel, interweaving the story of Harry Fox-Talbot's past and present. In 1946, the Fox-Talbot family, comprising of three sons and their father, return to Hartgrove Hall. During the war, the house had been taken over by the army and on the family's return, it is in a dilapidated condition. Sadly, the family no longer have the funds to restore the house and estate to its former glory.

Harry, known merely as 'Fox', is a talented musician/composer. Unfortunately, he falls for his elder brother's fiancée, Edie Rose, a greatly admired war time

singer, which leads to betrayal and tensions with the once close family unit.

In the present day, Fox is recently bereaved, having lost his dear wife. He finds himself unable to compose, or play a piano, as a consequence of his grief. Fox is only drawn back to the world of music by the discovery that Robin, his four year old grandson, is also gifted musically.

Through Fox, the novel examines the ties that bind people to a certain place, time and indeed together. The central character is forced to confront his past, his wrongdoings and ultimately, ask for forgiveness. The novel is not only a love story between a man and a women, but a person's love of music, his home, tradition and family.

Vanessa Wild

I found 'The Song Collector' a compelling, absorbing and captivating tale about betrayal, forgiveness and the power of music to heal.

An intriguing story about the power of music. Composer Harry 'Fox' Talbot is grieving over the death of his wife and finds he cannot write a note of music. He then discovers that his young grandson has the makings to be a brilliant pianist. As the music starts to take hold of Fox again, he looks back to 1946 when he returns to Hartgrove Hall after the war to find his home nearly in ruin and to an event which leads to a family rift.

This poignant tale is also about betrayal and forgiveness. It touches on how music can bring back memories of a certain person, time or place and how it can heal. The characters are well drawn and believable - I particularly liked Edie, Fox's wife, as she had quite the personality! It's beautifully and lyrically written. It's not fast paced, more of a 'slice of life' story but a thought provoking and engaging one at that.

I very much enjoyed it. Many thanks to www.lovereadings.co.uk for giving me the opportunity to read and review this book.

You can follow Vanessa on Twitter: @Butterflybiblio

Nicola Kingswell

An enchanting literal symphony of love, family, music and home.

Harry Fox-Talbot is a pianist and collector of folk songs. His passion is music, but in post-war England he has to turn his back on studying music at Cambridge to save the family estate in Dorset. When his older brother Jack

brings home England's sweetheart, the singer Edie Rose, Harry falls head over heels in love. When Edie and Jack announce their marriage, Harry leaves the family home to seek his fortune as a composer.

In the present day, Harry is grieving for his lost wife. He discovers that his four year old grandson has a natural gift for the piano. Teaching Robin the piano is a way to pull Harry from his fug of melancholy.

'The Song Collector' is a wonderful novel. It is enchanting, enthralling and delightful to read. We share in Harry's grief at losing his wife to his joy at realising his grandson has a nature aptitude for music. The descriptions of the Dorset countryside and Hartgrove Hall are mesmorising. I enjoyed this novel very much and love Natasha Solomons' writing.

Elisabeth Thomas

Betrayal, forbidden love, family ties, the importance of our roots, music and hope all combine to make a powerful and moving story about one man who after his loss learns that family ties are the most.

Christened Harry Fox-Talbot, the great composer Fox (as he is now known) has just lost his wife. Unable to write music and not wanting to take up any hobbies, he cannot imagine how his life is going to be now Edie, who was a celebrated musician in her own right, is gone.

Nearly 60 years earlier, Fox and his 2 brothers return to Hartgrove Hall, the family estate, after the war. Given that the Hall had been requisitioned by the army during the war the place Harry and his brothers used to call home is a shadow of its former self. On New Year's Eve 1946, the famous and glamorous war time singer Edie Rose arrives at a party the brothers are holding and this chance encounter will change the course of the Fox-Talbot family forever.

Betrayal, forbidden love, family ties, the importance of our roots, music and hope all combine to make a powerful and moving story about one man who after his loss learns that family ties are the most important thing that he has and it is never too late to seek forgiveness from those we have wronged in the past and inspire future generations. The thing I especially loved was that the story was not only poignant but there were parts that were very humorous. A very good read which I would definitely recommend.

www.listhebookworm.wordpress.com

Christine Waddington

*This was an unusual and compelling book. The title was intriguing and the introduction swiftly drew you into the story. The narrative tells of the grief of Harry Fox-Talbot, the song collector and composer, and his inability to write music after the death of his wife, wartime singer Edie Rose. However the discovery of the unexpected musical talent of his difficult young grandson helps Harry come to terms with his grief. There are two stories running parallel – Harry's early life with his brothers and the family home Hartford Hall and his present life in the months following his wife's death. The stories come together in a satisfying climax. **Natasha Solomons writes movingly about music, war-time, family life, grief and resolution. I thoroughly enjoyed this book.***

Allison Batten

Henry Fox Tabot is a famous composer who is grieving the loss of his wife and is unable to write a note of music.

He then discovers his grandson is a piano prodigy leading Fox to re-engage with life and confront past family rifts.

This was an unusual story that I initially thought had a lot of potential but I was disappointed with it.

It started off well, I liked the time period it was set in but I just couldn't get in to it. I found it very slow moving and it failed to hold my attention.

I quickly lost interest in the main characters and as a consequence struggled to finish it!

I have read previous books by this author and have enjoyed them but didn't think this was up to her usual standard.