



## The Musician's Daughter

By Susanne Dunlap

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### **The Musician's Daughter** By Susanne Dunlap

Amid the glitter and glamour of musical and court life in 18th century Vienna, fifteen-year-old Theresa Maria Shurman is trying to solve a brutal mystery. Who killed her father, an acclaimed violinist, and stole his valuable Amati violin? When Haydn himself offers her a position as his assistant, it gives Theresa access to life in the palace-and to a world of deceit. Theresa uncovers blackmail and extortion even as she discovers courage and honor in unexpected places: from a Gypsy camp on the banks of the Danube, to the rarefied life of the imperial family. And she feels the stirrings of a first, tentative love for someone who is as deeply involved in the mystery as she is.

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

A mix of mystery, thriller and romance set in 18th-century Vienna, Dunlap's uneven debut YA novel begins as the body of Theresa Maria's murdered father is brought home. Though he had appeared to be simply a musician caring for his family and passing his love of music to his daughter, Theresa discovers that her father was a spy, investigating the cruelty of Hungarian lords who were persecuting the Gypsies, an intriguing set-up that is not deeply explored. Franz Josef Haydn, the real-life conductor of the orchestra where Theresa's father was a violinist, is losing his eyesight and needs Theresa, his goddaughter, to clerk for him. Like a number of other story points, this one lacks support: why would Haydn trust other musicians with the plot involving the Hungarian lords, but not trust them with the secret of his failing eyesight? While the heady setting and Theresa's determination are enjoyable, the story is a little too ambitious and gets beyond the writer's control. Ages 12– up. (*Jan.*)

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#### From School Library Journal

Grade 7 Up—After Theresa's father is murdered on Christmas Eve, his body is discovered in a Gypsy camp, his precious violin missing. Her mother is with child and not well, so it is up to Theresa to make funeral arrangements and to figure out how their family will survive without Papa's income. Theresa has had an unusual upbringing for a young woman in 18th-century Vienna: she has been taught to play the viola. Even so, it is unlikely that anyone would hire a 15-year-old girl, so she seeks the help of her father's friend and employer, the composer Franz Joseph Haydn. He reveals a secret to her: he is going blind and needs her assistance putting his compositions to paper. While working for him, the teen is also intent upon solving the mystery of her father's death, and she discovers that Haydn's blindness is not the only secret Papa had been keeping. Despite a slow start and an ending that wraps things up a bit too tidily, this book is a rip-roaring adventure with music, murder, and espionage. It's clearly well researched, and the level of detail in the narrative makes readers believe that this story might have actually happened. Theresa's first-person narrative reveals her to be a quick-thinking, courageous, and likable individual. Pair this book with Philip Pullman's "Sally Lockhart" series (Knopf) for some entertaining historical mysteries with plucky heroines.—Heather M. Campbell, formerly at Philip S. Miller Library, Castle Rock, CO

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#### From Booklist

In Liszt's Kiss (2007) and her other novels for adults, Dunlap creates gripping mysteries, awash in European history, that imagine the lives of great musicians. In her first youth title, she builds on that same formula in a suspenseful story set in eighteenth-century Vienna. Fifteen-year-old Theresa Maria is devastated when her father, a court violinist, is murdered. While her pregnant mother is bedridden, Theresa must keep her family afloat, and she finds work with her godfather, Franz Joseph Haydn, who helps her unravel the circumstances behind her father's death and tells her about her father's secret life as a political reformer on behalf of the serfs and the Romany population. Dunlap skillfully builds suspense until the final page, as Theresa follows clues through smoky Gypsy camps and opulent palace halls, sustained by her desire to uphold her father's values: "justice, fairness—and most of all music." Readers will root for courageous Theresa through the exciting intrigue even as they absorb deeper messages about music and art's power to lift souls and inspire change. Grades 8-11. --Gillian Engberg

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#### **Helen McCormick:**

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