

Scott Simon

Q & A About His First Novel *Pretty Birds*



Q: Can you tell us a little bit about this book?

A: It's the story of two teenage girls on the same high school basketball team in Sarajevo when the siege begins in the spring of 1992. Irena is Muslim, Amela is a Serb, but none of that has ever meant as much to them as sports, music, and the antics of Irena's parrot, *Pretty Bird*. They wind up on opposite sides of the city they love. The book is the story of how Irena, her family, and the city struggle to keep going. An old high school teacher who remembers her athletic skills and poise recruits Irena into deadly work. She eventually reconnects with Amela in a set of circumstances you'd call remarkable—under ordinary circumstances.

Features of the story can be grim, but also funny. A sense of humor was

often the only armor left to the people of Sarajevo.

Q: When and where do you do your best writing?

A: Over years in the news business, I have written in hotel rooms and airplanes, by candlelight, flashlight, and in sunlight, on desks, tables, sandbags and crates, on computer, typewriter, and by hand. You learn not to rely on special surroundings.

I took weeks off to devote to the novel, rather than write just in spurts. Therefore much of *Pretty Birds* was written in Paris and London. We had a lovely apartment in Paris overlooking the Musée Picasso, with a sun-washed nook where we set up my laptop. It looked like you could write *Ulysses* in an afternoon in that nook. But it was so

beastly hot that summer, I wound up writing mostly in the smoke and clatter of neighborhood cafés. When it's going well, the commotion is actually comforting. When it's not going well, you just change cafés.

Q: Will people who heard your stories from Sarajevo read *Pretty Birds* and remember certain things?

A: Well, we profiled a teenage girl, Irena, and her best friend, Amela. Our driver and fixer were named Miro. Those are the names of the book's principal characters. But I named those characters in tribute to them. *Pretty Birds* is not their story, except that parts of it are the story of all Sarajeavans.

Several of the scenes in the book derive from my reporting. One of the

continued on page 3

Program Listings for the Months of July & August 2005

All programs are subject to change without notice.

	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
Mid.	Classical Music Overnight					Jazz After Hours	Jazz After Hours
1:00							
2:00							
3:00							
4:00							
5:00	BBC World Service					Hearts of Space	Alternative Radio
6:00	Morning Edition						
7:00							
8:00							
9:00	Classical Music with Barbara Krauss					New Dimensions	Justice Talking
10:00						Weekend Edition	Weekend Edition
11:00						Car Talk	Performance Today
Noon	Classical Music with Michael Cervone					Whad 'Ya Know?	Harmonia
1:00							
2:00						Says You!	Classical Music
3:00	Weekend America						
4:00	Fresh Air					Fresh Air	Living On Earth
5:00	All Things Considered					Weekend ATC	
6:00							
7:00						BBC World Today	
8:00	Performance Today					The Jazz Sofa with Rick Popovich	Thistle and Shamrock
9:00							
10:00							NPR World of Opera
11:00	Classical Music Overnight					Says You!	
Mid.	Classical Music Overnight					Rhythm Sweet & Hot	Classical Music Overnight
						Now's the Time	

Scott Simon

continued from page 1

girls has to let go of her family's parrot—that was from one of our stories. Bosnians trick a Serb artillery unit into bombing their own building, the Bread Line Massacre, burning furniture and eating grass soup, sniper roosts, dark jokes, and references to Michael Jordan—all of that was in our reporting, too.

The scenes at a veterinarian's office are prompted by stories we did about how Sarajevoans struggled to keep their pets. It was the most popular reporting we did. The scenes at the Sarajevo Zoo are also informed by stories my producer, Peter Breslow, and I did from zoos in Kabul and Prishtina.

Q: It was in Sarajevo that you saw a teenage girl who was a sniper for the Serbian Army. You'd covered war stories before, but was this a particular shock to you?

A: A lot more was more shocking. Women turn out to be very desirable snipers. They tend to be meticulous in ways boys often are not. The whole Sarajevo story was a shock. But ultimately, an inspiration, too. The murder going on there every day, and the genocide in Bosnia, was widely reported. Most of the world turned away. Sarajevo shook up my convictions about the world, what I was doing, and what I believed. But the poise, pluck, and ingenuity of Sarajevoans also flabbergasted me. They didn't wail, wring their hands and wait on the rest of the world to rescue them. They helped themselves.

Q: Since reporting this story, you've become a father. Do you have a different perspective on the true story behind this novel now that you have a daughter?

A: When you become a father, you suddenly know there is someone in this world that you would die for, no question or hesitation. Irena, like all daughters, often sees her father as being silly and ineffectual. But she also knows that

ROBERT W. PETERSON SCHOLARSHIP

Congratulations to Athena Dixon of Youngstown, this year's recipient of the Robert W. Peterson Scholarship.

Contributions to the Robert W. Peterson Scholarship are always welcome. Checks should be made out to "Youngstown State University" with "Robert W. Peterson Scholarship" on the memo line. Please mail your check to: University Development, Youngstown State University, One University Plaza, Youngstown, Ohio 44555.

he is loving, kind, and willing to die for his family.

The very day we delivered the manuscript to Random House, we received the first photographs from China of our daughter. I remember feeling that big, fat, 600-page double-spaced manuscript in our laps as we took the taxi over to Broadway and wondering: does this bundle weigh about the same as our baby?

I pray that our daughter will never have to live through a siege like the one that strangled Sarajevo. But we would feel blessed to have a child who faces up to his or her human responsibilities with the courage and poise of Sarajevoans.

Q: It has been 10 years since the end of the siege in Sarajevo. Can you tell us what's happening there today?

A: The city is smaller and duller than it was before the war. The wounds of war are still visible and raw. But it is also a place of culture, diversity, and even joy. My wife and I stayed in the same hotel where our engineer, Manoli Wetherell, and I stayed during the siege. But it was the first time I [had] used the elevator or taken a shower—there was little electricity and no water during the war. When Caroline and I walked through the Old City, or down what had been Marshal Tito Boule-

vard—Sniper's Alley—I kept saying, "This is new. . . this is new. . . this is new. . ." At one point Hamel, our local guide, smiled at a group of school kids running past us. "The children," he pointed out. "They are new, too."

Q: Are you hoping readers will take something specific away from their experiences reading *Pretty Birds*?

A: Maybe some greater understanding about the human cost of war, but also the sacrifice and bravery of which human beings are capable. A vow to never turn away from another genocide—although the world did soon thereafter in Rwanda, and later in Kosovo; and is now in Darfur. And I hope that people will feel a debt of thanks to Sarajevo for giving us a living example of fortitude in the face of brutality. But I also hope people will laugh along with the characters. There is much laughter in this book, as there was in Sarajevo during the siege. You had to make yourself laugh to keep going.

Q: Can we expect more works of fiction from you?

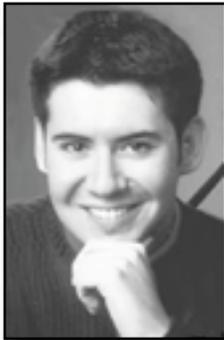
A: I hope. Realistically, it depends on the success of *Pretty Birds*. I've had a rich life as a reporter and I'd like to make creative use of my experiences all over the world.

Join us for an evening of classical music under the summer stars!

WYSU-FM Blossom Festival Bus Trip

This year's Blossom excursion features the music of American icon George Gershwin in three of his most enduring compositions. The program begins with a symphonic recreation of familiar melodies taken from his folk opera, *Porgy and Bess*, brilliantly arranged by Robert Russell Bennett. Next comes the composer's very popular signature work, *Rhapsody in Blue*, one of the first great successes at fusing the elements of jazz and classical music. Ending the program will be an orchestral self-portrait of the composer as a young artist thousands of miles from home, the unflinching crowd-pleaser called *An American in Paris*.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Ian Parker, Featured Artist

IAN PARKER is one of Canada's most gifted and exciting young artists. He won First Prize at the 2001 CBC National Radio Competition, as well as Grand Prize at the Canadian National Music Festival, Corpus Christi International and Montréal Symphony Orchestra competitions. In addition to solo appearances with numerous Canadian orchestras, he has also given recitals across North America, Western Europe and Israel.

Conducting the program will be **LORAS JOHN SCHISSEL**, who is in his seventh year as conductor of the Blossom Festival Band. Mr. Schissel has traveled throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia conducting orchestras, bands, and choral ensembles in a broad range of musical styles. As a composer and orchestrator, Mr. Schissel has created an extensive catalogue of over 400 works for orchestra, symphonic wind band, and jazz ensemble.

Blossom Festival Concert Saturday, August 6, 2005

Hosted by WYSU-FM staff members Barbara Krauss and Michele Grant

- Motor coach departs YSU campus at 6:00 p.m. for the 8:00 p.m. concert and returns between 11:30 p.m. and midnight
- \$45 per person ticket includes:
 - Round-trip transportation
 - Pavilion Seating
 - Picnic dinner en route
 - Complimentary parking at YSU M24 lot on Fifth Street between Arlington and Grant Streets
- Our air-conditioned motor coach departs from the Youngstown State University campus at 6:00 p.m. and arrives in time for the concert
- Our bus fills up quickly, so reserve your tickets now!



Picnic dinner with wine:

Croissant sandwich (choice of tuna, chicken, turkey/ham combo, or vegetarian), fruit cup, brownie, and chips – please specify sandwich choice when ordering ticket

* Bus trip without the picnic dinner will be \$41 per person

**TO MAKE RESERVATIONS CALL WYSU-FM AT 330-941-1777.
RESERVATION DEADLINE IS JULY 8.**





Second Annual Smoky Hollow 5K Run And 1 Mile Family Fun Walk

Saturday July 9, 2005

Time: 5K run will start at 9 AM and the 1 mile family fun walk will start at 9:10 AM. Race day registration starts at 7:45 AM at Harrison Field. Award ceremony & post-race party with brunch at the MVR in Smoky Hollow beginning at 10:00 AM.

Location: Both races start and finish at Harrison Field located on Walnut Street in Smoky Hollow behind Bliss Hall. Free blood pressure screening and bone density scanning provided by Forum Health, plus a PT will be available to answer questions.

Entry Fee: \$10.00 if received by July 1st.
 \$12.00 for late registration and race day.
 \$5.00 for kids 12 and under.
 (T-Shirt Guaranteed To First 300 Registered Entrants)

Awards: Run- Top Three Male and Female; Top Male and Female Runner Over The Age of 40; and Top Three Places In Each Age Group.
 All One Mile Walk Finishers Receive a Ribbon.
 (All Kids 12 and Under Receive a Medal)

Age Groups: Male & Female: 14 & Under; 15-19; 20-29; 30-39; 40-49; 50-59; 60-69; 70 & Over.

More Information: Gary Sexton: 330-941-1778 or Matt Folk: 330-758-8708

Make Checks Payable To:
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Mail To:
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 One University Plaza, Youngstown, OH. 44555

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Age on 7-09-05: _____ Sex: M F

Shirt Size: YL S M L XL XXL

Check Which Event You'll Be Participating in: 5k Run
 1 Mile Walk

Release: I know running a race is a potentially hazardous activity. I should not enter and run unless I am medically able and properly trained. I agree to abide by any decision of a race official relative to safely complete the run. I assume all risks associated in running in this event including, but not limited to, falls, contact with other participants, the effects of the weather, traffic, and the conditions of the road, all such risks being known and appreciated by me. Having read this waiver and knowing these facts and in consideration of you accepting my entry, I, for myself and anyone entitled to act on my behalf, waive and release all those involved with the race, all sponsors, their representatives and successors from all claims or liabilities of any kind arising out of my participating in this event.

SIGNATURE (PARENT IF UNDER 18) _____

Now's the Time

with Martin Berger
Saturday, 11:00 pm

7/2 Louis Armstrong. July 4, 1900 probably wasn't his actual birthday, but he's always worth celebrating.

7/9 Bud Freeman. Supple, elegant approach to the tenor saxophone.

7/16 Johnny Griffin. The fiery Little Giant, now much evolved from the young fastest-tenor role of his 1950s arrival on the scene.

7/23 Benny Carter. Classic voice on alto saxophone, one of our greatest composer-arrangers, etc.

7/30 John Coltrane. To the frontiers of the jazz saxophone, and sometimes beyond.

8/6 Zutty Singleton. New Orleans master, one of the founders of jazz drumming.

8/13 Louis Bellson. A brilliant drummer, always able to assemble formidable groups.

8/20 Phil Woods. The very model of the post-Parker alto saxophonist, in a variety of settings.

8/27 Joe Sullivan. Heavy-duty traditional/swing pianist.

Folk Festival

with Charles Darling
Sunday, 8:00 pm

7/3 Folk Sampler, Part LXIX. A folk sampler month starts with four encore programs featuring songs from Cape Breton to Madagascar, and styles from classic balladry to zydeco.

7/10 Folk Sampler, Part LXV. Features Celtic, country, Hawaiian, blues, and contemporary, with Peggy Seeger, Jimmy Rodgers, Fred Small, and Steeleye Span.

7/17 FOLK SAMPLER, PART LXVI. Stars: Peter, Paul & Mary, Woody Guthrie, Ian and Sylvia, Tom Russell, and Don McLean ("American Pie").

7/24 Folk Sampler, Part LXXVII.

Newer songs mix with old standards sung by Chris Thile, Lehto and Wright, Bruce Springsteen, Patrick Street, and more.

7/31 Folk Sampler, Part LXXXI.

Recent CDs by Bevel Jenny, Joel Rafael Band, and new reissues by Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly.

8/7 Country Cookin', Part LXIII.

Legendary country artists including The Lilly Brothers and Don Stover, Doc Watson, and Uncle Dave Macon; plus some rising young bluegrass groups.

8/14 Folk Groups. Unusual songs by Golden Bough, Solomon's Seal, Banish Misfortune, Mouth Music, and several old-timey jug bands.

8/21 Contemporary Folk, Part XXXI.

With Don McLean, Chris Stuart, Carl Ponder, Pat Humphries, Judy Collins, and the late Jim Ringer.

8/28 The Blues From A to Z, Part III.

Great names in country blues: Elmore James, Lemon Jefferson, Robert Johnson, B. B. King, Leadbelly, Furry Lewis, Mance Lipscomb, etc.

NPR World of Opera

Monday, 8:00 pm

7/4 Verdi: Jerusalem. Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra and Choir; Paolo Olmi, conductor. On the heels of Ridley Scott's spring hit, *Kingdom of Heaven*, it's Giuseppe Verdi's version of a crusader epic—a musical cousin of his earlier opera, *I Lombardi*. Nelly Miricioiu stars in a production from the spectacular acoustics of Amsterdam's Concertgebouw.

7/11 Salieri: L'Europa Riconosciuta. La Scala, Milan; Riccardo Muti, conductor. Salieri's *L'Europa Riconosciuta* (*Europe Recognized*) was the opera performed in 1778 to inaugurate Milan's Teatro alla Scala, the opera house that's become a shrine for opera lovers around the world. Recently, La Scala underwent an extensive, three-year renovation and reopened with that same opera.

7/18 Handel: Imeneo. Glimmerglass Opera; William Lacey, conductor. Handel's oddly affecting opera features an agonizing love quadrangle. A young woman is engaged to one man, but bound to the man her little sister is in love with. The Glimmerglass production gives us an ingenious take on a truly offbeat comedy.

7/25 Leoncavallo: I Pagliacci and Mascagni: Cavalleria Rusticana.

Glimmerglass Opera; Stewart Robertson, conductor. The coming-of-age story of Blanche, a psychologically fragile heroine (Maria Kanyova) fearful of her own shadow. After she joins the Convent of Carmelites, the government forces them to denounce their faith or die. In the end, Blanche decides that her fate lies not in her fear, but in her duty as a Carmelite—in one of the most wrenching ultimate scenes in all of opera.

8/15 Puccini: La Fanciulla del West.

Glimmerglass Opera; Stewart Robertson, conductor. Full-bore Italian verismo meets America's Wild West, in this sizzler from Puccini.

8/22 Debussy: Pelléas et Mélisande.

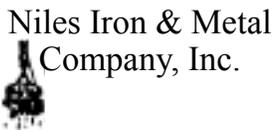
National Opera of Paris; Sylvain Cambreling, conductor. Can an opera be passionate without shrieking mad scenes, rousing marches, and crashing cadences? The answer is yes, and this evocative and emotional marvel by Debussy proves it. This production features an all-star cast from the spectacular Opera Bastille in Paris.

8/29 Wagner: Die Walküre (Act I) and Götterdämmerung (Act III).

Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra; James Levine, conductor. An unusual, Wagnerian double-header from Tanglewood, a festival nestled in the Berkshires that annually serves up a summertime of musical highlights. James Levine leads some of the best Wagnerian singers of the day, in two vivid acts from Wagner's Ring cycle.

All programs are subject to change without notice.

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