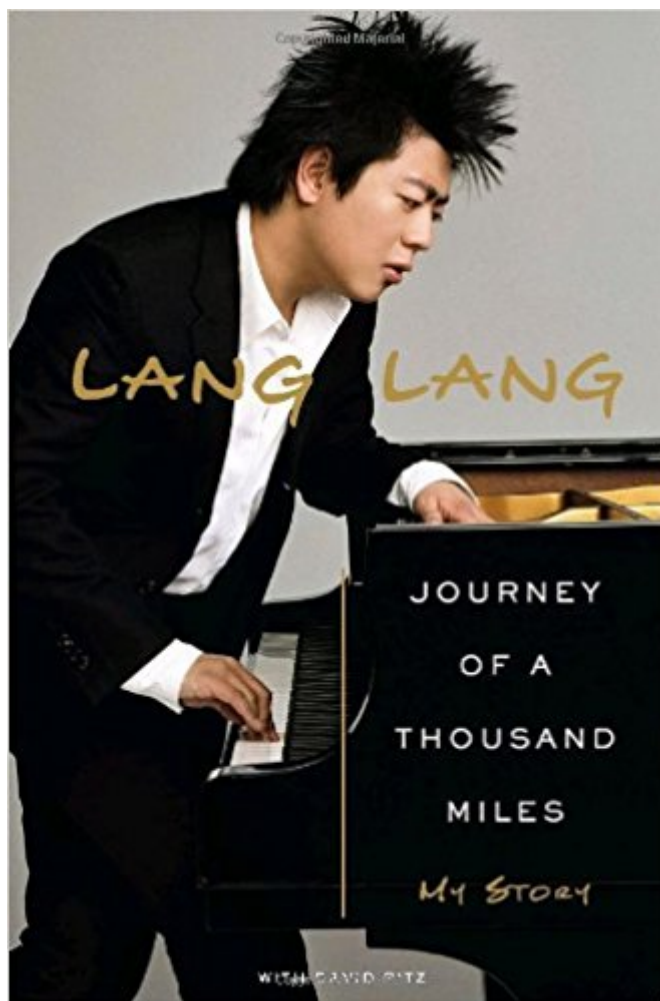


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# Journey Of A Thousand Miles: My Story



## Synopsis

“Number One” was a phrase my father and, for that matter, my mother repeated time and time again. It was a phrase spoken by my parents, friends and by their friends’ children. Whenever adults discussed the great Chinese painters and sculptors from the ancient dynasties, there was always a single artist named as Number One. There was the Number One leader of a manufacturing plant, the Number One worker, the Number One scientist, the Number One car mechanic. In the culture of my childhood, being best was everything. It was the goal that drove us, the motivation that gave life meaning. And if, by chance or fate or the blessings of the generous universe, you were a child in whom talent was evident, Number One became your mantra. It became mine. I never begged my parents to take off the pressure. I accepted it; I even enjoyed it. It was a game, this contest among aspiring pianists, and although I may have been shy, I was bold, even at age five, when faced with a field of rivals. Born in China to parents whose musical careers were interrupted by the Cultural Revolution, Lang Lang has emerged as one of the greatest pianists of our time. Yet despite his fame, few in the West know of the heart-wrenching journey from his early childhood as a prodigy in an industrial city in northern China to his difficult years in Beijing to his success today. *Journey of a Thousand Miles* documents the remarkable, dramatic story of a family who sacrificed almost everything—his parents’ marriage, financial security, Lang Lang’s childhood, and their reputation in China’s insular classical music world—for the belief in a young boy’s talent. And it reveals the devastating and intense relationship between a boy and his father, who was willing to go to any length to make his son a star. An engaging, informative cultural commentator who bridges East and West, Lang Lang has written more than an autobiography: his book opens a door to China, where Lang Lang is a cultural icon, at a time when the world’s attention will be on Beijing. Written with David Ritz, the coauthor of many bestselling autobiographies, *Journey of a Thousand Miles* is an inspiring story that will give readers an appreciation for the courage and sacrifice it takes to achieve greatness.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Adult/High School  
•This world-renowned pianist was born to parents whose lives and aspirations were interrupted by China's Cultural Revolution. Like his entire generation, he was an only child due to his country's population-control policy. This created a kind of perfect storm. In some families, every ambition parents had for their own lives was visited upon their offspring. That was the case with Lang Lang, whose creative and musical parents were delighted when their son showed great interest and talent for piano at an early age. While this is the story of his life, it is also the story of a family's struggle to balance ambition, expectations, and relationships, and it illustrates to the extreme the pressure many young people face to live up to their own and their parents' expectations. The writing is immediate and emotional, drawing readers into a life of hard work, dedication, music, competition, and performance. Lang Lang's life and creative choices demonstrate a willingness to take chances and trust his instincts, honed through years of battling insular established systems.  
•Charlotte Bradshaw, San Mateo County Library, CA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Smith spent much of a tumultuous life in one glamorous endeavor, filmmaking, wishing he were in another, writing. How he evolved from thrill-seeking, drug- and alcohol-besotted low man on the Hollywood totem pole to sober, insightful writer is the subject of this moving, gently written memoir made up of 12 loosely connected personal essays, in which he touches on such diverse topics as love of skydiving, ambivalence about his family, and struggling repeatedly with chemical addiction. As the book's title implies, Smith also spends a lot of time discussing the film industry—how he found work in it, whom he met, the niche he occupied, what a key grip does (rigs lights, prepares dolly shots, does last-minute construction), and why he stayed in the field despite long hours, grueling pace, and exploitative producers. Altogether, a wise, intensely readable autobiography that should please those who enjoy reading about transformation-filled life journeys and those who like a spoonful of gossip to make the life lessons go down. --Jack Helbig --This text

refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Traditionally, iconic musicians arose by winning international competitions and justifying managers like Sol Hurok (who represented Artur Rubinstein) to promote their life-long careers. Lang Lang is a thirty-something concert pianist who has proved his excellence by winning the Moscow Tchaikovsky Competition (like Van Cliburn). He travels the world, gives master classes and plays concerts. Like most modern performers, he builds audiences via YouTube and sells recordings via .Lang Lang's career started almost in infancy and this was, to me, the most interesting part of the book for two reasons: How would you handle a child like this? How did it happen that ordinary Chinese people knew so much about 19th century western music such that there was no problem finding teachers for him? Lang Lang had a demanding father whose only aim was to make him "number one" and a never-present mother who worked to pay the bills. He has never had, and will never have, a normal life. But, neither did other historic prodigies, like Mozart and Artur Rubinstein. This is what we do with our most gifted children and it's a miracle when they become well-adjusted adults.

Having read many of the reviews posted here I must say I'm much more deeply informed about the book and also about the background of musical training in China. I cannot give it five stars for the prose; I will give it five stars for the level of insight the volume brings to all levels of young musician. I strongly recommend it. The posts by the reviews with Asian backgrounds were particularly informative. This remarkable young man was only 22 at the time of publication of this volume. For young musicians it is a must read. The sentence structure is simple, vocabulary is not large. Two thirds of the way through one discovers, while studying at Curtis, he had received virtually no training in Beijing outside of music. History, beyond the confines of the Communist Chinese cannon, was unknown to him. Lang Lang devoured books on military and political history while at Curtis. He knew nothing about the worlds inhabited by Bach, Beethoven, Liszt and the other authors of this non-Chinese musical universe. He had no exposure to Western literature, and minimal exposure to Eastern writings beyond fables of the Monkey King. The concentration on piano must have been exceptionally intense; so far so obvious. What fascinates me is the volume of knowledge that was pushed to the side. The intensity of the study boggles the mind. I was also fascinated by how the spirit of this young man was able to fill so many holes, perhaps a Western term, in his education. Several Asian commentators highlighted the relationship with his father and the cathartic effect writing this book must have had for Lang Lang. He must have intended the volume as a mirror for other families engaged in this process. I must give him kudos for both this intention and the

actual text he wrote. It is powerful. There are probably audiences that badly need this book that won't read it. I'm thinking of parents of those young girls in beauty pageants; these cathedrals of vanity take over lives of any that enter. There seem to be countless other bastions we place around our talented, and untalented young, allegedly to "help them". Lang Lang was most fortunate to break through his to find the shining light of day. Mr. Graffman in later chapters punctures most effectively the vanity of "winning competitions" and "being number one". His advice and world view is most welcome. I am a big fan of Lang Lang. On hearing a concert I could only state that "this young man knows what freedom is". His playing of Liszt exudes energy and a passion for liberty in every bar. If you want reminiscences of a great pianist at the end of life, buy another book. If you want insights into the life of young artists in the current intense global competition, savor this one.

This is a touching and endearing story of a little Chinese boy's journey to become what was expected in the culture of that time, to be "number one", winning competition after competition. Later, when he went to Curtis Institute in the U.S., he was taught that it is the process to greatness that is the most important. Hard work to succeed is vital, but it is balance in a person's life that sustains a career. His father recognizes that he was abusive, and it grieves him. His mother's sacrifices to provide support was hard for a little boy to understand but, as Lang Lang said, once, anything can be endured if a child knows he is loved. He knew his parents loved him. Themes of love, hard work, honesty and healing run throughout this lovely little book. His parents remain an integral part of his career and life, and he is not only a brilliant pianist, but he gives back to society in his home country and abroad. Quite a testimony.

I loved the book. It was well written and inspiring. As a pianist I know the work and heart that goes into playing piano well. I love Lang Lang's cheerful story.

Very insightful and a very heartfelt book. People are often critical of his emotions and gestures when playing. Read this book so you can understand the complex nature of this artist. Thank goodness someone finally took the stiffness out of classical piano! My impression was that he is a very gentle soul and genuine. I met him three weeks ago and he is a very kind and lovely man. The world needs more humans like Lang Lang. If you play like I do his book is also an inspiration. Keep some kleenex close by, you will need it.

Anyone who enjoys playing or listening to the piano will be very touched and amazed at Lang

Lang's journey. It's so interesting that I couldn't put the book down.

A great "rags to riches" life story for a generous genius who creates listening joy and who is dedicated to continually breathing life into classical music for generations who have little opportunity to know it. He demonstrates the value of hard work and dedication to achieve whatever your lifetime dream might be. I enjoyed the book but enjoy even more listening to his "magic" music.

Excellent story of a young boy's passion to master playing the piano. Follows the artist through his teens. There were times of discouragement, but he overcame them. Today he is a musician of supreme talent. The human interest story of his struggle and his personality provide a meaningful insight to this artist. A very good autobiography.

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