

GSP READERS GROUP FOR NOV & DEC

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The Piano Shop On The Left Bank by Thad Carhart

Friday, Nov 9 at 9:30 am in the Bloom Room

“As he escorts his children to school in their Paris neighborhood, longtime American expatriate Carhart notices a piano repair shop. His curiosity piqued but his initial advances rebuffed, he finds a friend to vouch for his character and at last gains entry to the inner sanctum of a piano-lovers’ paradise. Once inside, Carhart and the reader discover a world dedicated to the piano with all of its multi-faceted joys and complexities. Steinways, Pleyels, Faziolis, Stings, Bösendorfers, Yamahas, Bechsteins—the famous brands leap forth as the primary characters of Carhart’s narrative, and each one has a distinct voice, personality, and story. From a Bechstein mistuned by a drunk to a Viennese model that might have been played by Beethoven, from the Stingl which Carhart almost ruins to the Steinway model D reportedly stolen from the great concert halls of every major metropolis, the pianos have stories that serve as means to ponder music’s sway over humanity. In these musings, the simplicity of Carhart’s theme emerges as its chief pleasure: listening to tales of music-lovers and their instruments, the reader witnesses music’s astounding power to build families and communities. Of course, no piano story would be complete without teachers both sweet and terrifying, and the appearance of instructors Miss Pemberton, Madame Gaillard, and Anna round out Carhart’s ode to the piano with rough and tender edges of humanity. Discursive excursions on the piano’s history, tuning, and its other mechanical aspects complement the narrative. Could be dangerous for anyone who doesn’t yet own a piano. Apartment dwellers in particular should approach with caution.” (Kirkus Reviews)

A Tale for the Time Being by Ruth Ozeki

Friday, Dec 14 at 9:30 am in the Bloom Room

“Nao, a 16-year-old schoolgirl, is in a cafe in Tokyo, writing in her diary. She is, she declares, a “time being,” with all the ambiguity that phrase implies. Many months later, after Japan’s devastating earthquake and tsunami, a Japanese-American novelist named Ruth, living on an island off the coast of British Columbia, finds a barnacle-encrusted freezer bag washed up on the beach. It contains, it appears, a copy of Proust’s “In Search of Lost Time” and a broken watch, along with some letters. But Proust’s book is no more than a cover. Inside is Nao’s diary, written in purple ink. Whenever the word “time” comes up — “wasting time,” “about time,” “in time” — the reader must stop and think about the many angles of approach to that subject in Ruth Ozeki’s delightful yet sometimes harrowing new novel, “A Tale for the Time Being.”... Many of the elements of Nao’s story — schoolgirl bullying, unemployed suicidal “salarymen,” kamikaze pilots — are among a Western reader’s most familiar images of Japan, but in Nao’s telling, refracted through Ruth’s musings, they become fresh and immediate, occasionally searingly painful. Ozeki takes on big themes in “A Tale for the Time Being” — not just the death of individuals but also the death of the planet. In doing so, she ranges widely, drawing in everything from quantum mechanics and the theory of infinite possibilities in an infinite number of universes to the teachings of the 13th-century Zen master Dogen Zenji. There’s even a crow with possibly magical powers. All are drawn into the stories of two “time beings,” Ruth and Nao, whose own fates are inextricably bound.” (New York Times)