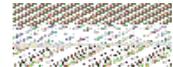


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## Life

Home » Life



### Song in her heart : Author and wife of late acclaimed violinist dedicates new novel to husband

By DAVE MASON, NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

June 17, 2012 6:52 AM

The world of classical music sets the tempo for a novel about a woman's search to learn about her mother.

Author Marianne Langner Zeitlin knows that world firsthand.

Mrs. Zeitlin, 84, is dedicating her new book, "Motherless Child" (Zephyr Press, \$17), to her husband, acclaimed violinist Zvi Zeitlin, who died suddenly from pneumonia in May at age 90. Mr. Zeitlin taught each of the last 39 summers at Music Academy of the West and will be honored at a tribute concert Thursday on the campus.

"Motherless Child" tells about Elizabeth Guaragna, who takes an assumed name and works incognito for Alfred Rossiter, a concert agency head whom she blames for taking her mother away from her father. The mother left her father after an affair with Alfred, who squelched her dad's career as a concert pianist.

"In the beginning, she just wants to learn more about her mother," Mrs. Zeitlin told the News-Press by phone from her Rochester, N.Y., home shortly before heading to Santa Barbara, which has been her and her husband's second residence for 40 years. "Her mother always has been the big secret in her life. She's not seeking revenge."

Elizabeth learns her family's circumstances weren't what they seemed when she was a child.

"She does a 180-degree turn during the course of the novel," Mrs. Zeitlin said about Elizabeth's lifelong resentments against Alfred. "I wanted to write a novel that would grab readers and have some depth to it."

Part of the book has real-life parallels for Mrs. Zeitlin, who worked for concert agencies. She based some of Alfred's background on her boss at a concert agency.

Beyond that, the novel is fiction, but the music in it is real, and Mrs. Zeitlin said she hopes the book will increase readers' appreciation for the classics.

"One of the things (Elizabeth's) father plays for her every night is a short three-minute work by Schumann's 'Traumerei.' That's a theme of the book musically. 'Traumerei' has several meanings. It means a kind of reverie, but in English, it has the added meaning of trauma. She has been traumatized. If the book were ever made into a movie, I suspect it ('Traumerei') would be used a lot. It's a very touching piece."

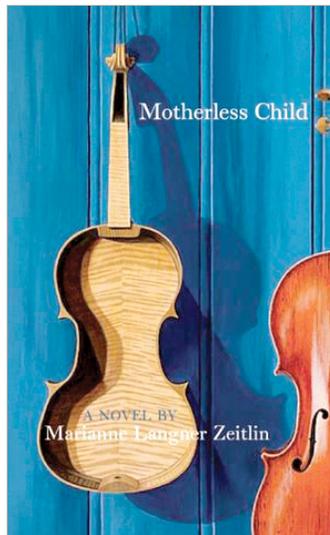
The book also pays homage to one of Mrs. Zeitlin's favorite authors, Jane Austen. Elizabeth falls in love with George Wentworth, who's writing a biography about Alfred, and Capt. Frederick Wentworth was the hero in Ms. Austen's novel "Persuasion."

Mrs. Zeitlin knows the musical world in "Motherless Child" not only from her jobs at concert agencies, but as Mr. Zeitlin's wife. The retiring musician died shortly before a farewell concert in his honor at the Music Academy of the West.

Instead, the concert, part of the academy's Summer Festival 2012, has become a memorial performance featuring violinist Jeff Thayer and pianist Jerome Lowenthal playing Schubert's Fantasie in C Major, D. 934. Mr. Zeitlin was known for his performances of that work.



Acclaimed violinist Zvi Zeitlin and his wife, author Marianne Langner Zeitlin, enjoyed their summers in Santa Barbara.  
PHOTO BY KATHLEEN WINKLER



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They will play at 7:30 p.m. Thursday at the academy's Hahn Hall, and the program will include video of Mr. Zeitlin.

Mr. Zeitlin, who is remembered in countless emails and cards sent to Mrs. Zeitlin, did get to play a farewell concert in February in Rochester, Mrs. Zeitlin said. "They literally turned away hundreds of people. There were lines around the block to get into that concert."

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