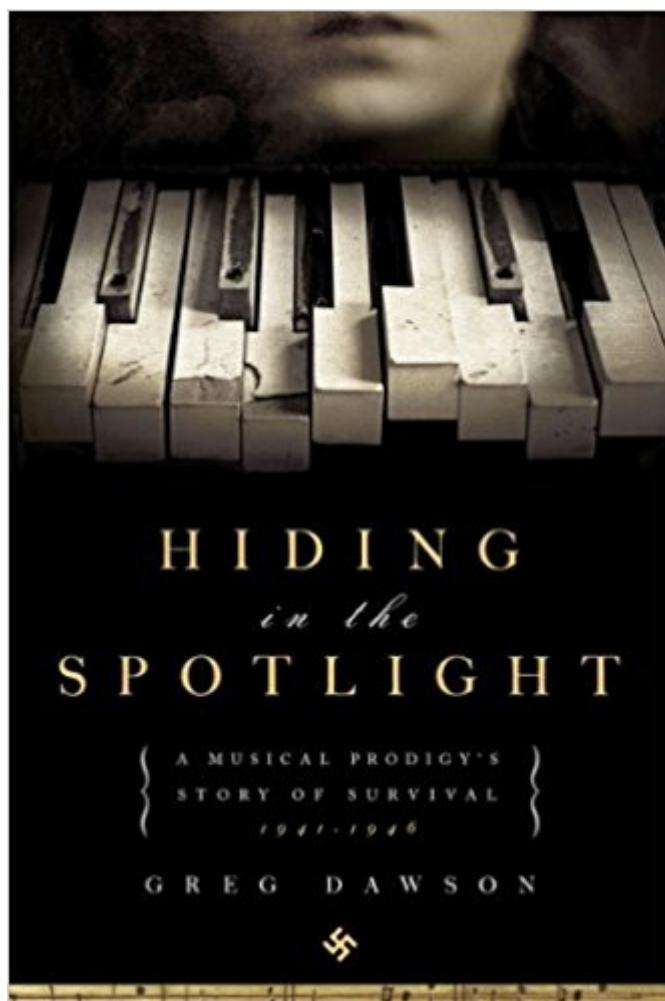


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# Hiding In The Spotlight: A Musical Prodigy's Story Of Survival: 1941-1946



## Synopsis

The extraordinary story of a young girl whose musical genius saves her from the Holocaust. By the age of six, Zhanna had developed a repertoire fellow students twice her age would envy. Scholarships to the most prestigious conservatories in the Soviet Union soon followed—conservatories that had produced legends like Rachmaninoff, Kogan, and Horowitz. In 1941 disaster strikes. The Nazi Army is smashing through the Ukraine en route to Moscow. Zhanna and her family are to be executed alongside thousands of others in the ravines of Drobitsky Yar. A few short miles from certain death, her father bribes a nearby guard, and she escapes into the forest with only the clothes on her back, a copy of Chopin's Fantasy Impromptu in her pocket, and her father's parting words echoing in her head: "I don't care what you do, just live." Adopting a new identity and ever fearful of recognition, Zhanna roamed the ravaged countryside. One lonely evening, the head of a local Nazi battalion hears her play. He is so taken with her exquisite interpretation of Chopin that little Zhanna soon becomes the performing darling of the Nazi forces.

12 black-and-white photographs

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this remarkable recreation of the WWII years, Dawson, a columnist at the Orlando Sentinel, writes about his mother, pianist Zhanna Arkashyna in an account reminiscent of Wladyslaw Szpilman's *The Pianist*. As a child in the Ukraine, Zhanna was offered a scholarship to the Moscow State Conservatory. Her life changed in 1941 when Nazis grouped her Jewish family with thousands

to be executed; Zhanna and her sister, Frina, escaped to roam the countryside as fugitives, hiding and surviving. With a new name and a non-Jewish identity, Zhanna performed for unsuspecting Nazis. Arriving in New York in 1946, the sisters enrolled at Juilliard on scholarships. Zhanna married violist David Dawson, and the couple moved in 1948 to Bloomington, Ind., joining the music faculty at Indiana University. To research his mother's homeland, Dawson traveled to Ukraine, including Dorbitsky Yar, where 15,000 Jews were murdered, among them Zhanna and Frina's parents. On a memorial listing the dead, Dawson was shocked to find his mother's name: I had come that close to nonexistence. With italicized selections from his mother's own writing, Dawson skillfully weaves the story of her life and music into a vibrant tapestry, tattered and torn, yet triumphant. (July) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

• Summoning all the colors of a Chopin prelude, Greg Dawson has painted a vivid picture of his mother from her fairy tale childhood in the Ukraine to her final escape from the Nazis and her triumphant voyage to America. A wonderful, staggering achievement. • - Mona Golabek, Grammy-nominated pianist and host of The Romantic Hours

This fine memoir recounts the odyssey of Zhanna Arshanskaya and her sister, Frina. A true labor of love, it was written by Greg Dawson, Zhanna's son, and a long-time columnist for the Orlando Sentinel newspaper. Born in 1927, Zhanna, the author's mother, was the older of two sisters. The girls' parents were Dmitri and Sara Arshansky, non-religious Jews who were raising a young family in Berdyansk, Ukraine, a resort town on the northern coast of the Sea of Azov. Dmitri, the father, was a candy-maker by day and an amateur violinist by night. Passionate about music, he had high aspirations for his two girls. His early dreams were fulfilled. By the time she was six years old, Zhanna, a prodigy at the piano, was occasionally playing live on local radio. One such performance revealed the level of her skill and poise. As Zhanna played at the radio station, the lights in the studio suddenly went out. But there was no break in the music. Dmitri had always insisted that his daughter not only memorize a number, but that she never so much as look at her hands when she played. Anytime she learned a new piece, her father required Zhanna to perform it with the lights out. For her, a flawless recital in the dark was nothing unusual. But with the Stalinist crack-down in the Soviet Union, followed by the Holocaust, the blissful lives of the Arshanskys were changed forever. *Hiding in the Spotlight* tells the story of how Zhanna and Frina survived the mass execution of more than 15,000 Jews at Drobitsky Yar in December 1941, when their parents and grandparents

were murdered; how they went on to become, of all things, German-sponsored entertainers living in Berlin, literally next door to the Nazis who had marked them and all "their kind" for death; and how, eventually, they became scholarship students at the Julliard School in New York after the War was over. The Nazi regime murdered nearly 6 million Jews. This is the story of two Jewish girls who survived not in a camp or a cellar, but in the spotlight. Riveting stuff.

What a wonderful story ! A hard story, a painful story but Wonderful. I would never have known about this extraordinary woman had it not been for a chance meeting with one of her students. The former student is a 'Storyteller Extraordinaire' and my wife and I were quite sure that he was embellishing and exaggerating the story of Jana Dawson. How wrong we were. Quite a remarkable story of survival (another holocaust terror ), triumph of the human spirit, brute and stubborn determination and courage. Also, it would seem, very Honest and direct. No trumpeting or calling of a human being a haloed saint. I can't recommend it highly enough. Congratulations to her son for writing what must have been a painful and frustrating epic journey of discovering the full story of his Mother ! Superb ! david jay logan

I ordered this book after I read a review somewhere... and I'm so glad I did! I can truthfully say Zhanna's story has made a huge impact on me. I live in Israel, we study the holocaust, I know survivors. But this book has brought the story of WWII and Germany's determination to murder Europe's Jews to me in a way I've never experienced before. It's so very personal. Knowing it's a true story (written by Zhanna's son and peppered with photos) just makes it all the more mesmerizing. If you're a teacher, I highly recommend using this in your history class. If you're a parent, I recommend reading it with your kids. And if you're human, you should read this yourself.

A pianist myself and an avid reader of the holocaust I knew this would be an interesting book. But the level of skill and talent of Greg Dawson as a writer brings this story to a level, the likes of which I have not expected. No adjectives or superlatives can adequately describe the courage, the inspiration, the super-human talent and grace of Zhanna during her ordeal.... and also, the horror, the unmasked pure evil that was Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia!.... the World needs to know these things! and be continually reminded! I first heard of Zhanna on a CNN interview and then listened to an audio clip of her playing Chopin's Fantasy Impromptu (her signature piece). As a pianist, her performance reveals breathtaking virtuosity and is worthy of all the accolades noted in rave reviews of her playing by critics who heard her play. What she and her sister endured and

experienced is really hard to actually believe... but I know its true, all true. You sense this is a true story that must be told! I only hope someone makes a movie of her life.... soon.

Greg, the A captivating story of, Zhanna, a child prodigy and survivor of the holocaust, you will not want to put this down. Written by her son, Greg, who discovered how truly special his mother is, as a young adult. Be sure to read Greg's follow up book, "Judgement Before Nuremberg" to learn about the Ukraine and The First Nazi War Crimes Trials.

I was a little reluctant to choose the book, Hiding In the Spotlight, for my selection for our book club because I had not read it all the way through. But I chose it and can't wait to see if everyone loves it as much as I. I do remember WW II but as a child I did not really realize all the atrocities that were born by the Jews in Germany. I am amazed at the cleverness and maturity of a girl so young and the tenacity she had to follow her fathers last words to her, " What ever happens, just live!" I will be surprised if all the book club members do not also like it

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