



Rhapsody on a Theme

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Although their relationship has been repaired since the disaster that was Cambridge, Darren has not. His depression has worsened over the years until it is no longer an option to watch the illness play out its patterns. Treatment is a must.

Treatment is also a difficult disaster. When the second attempt at medication goes as badly wrong as the first, and Darren is forced through a rapid deterioration of mood swings, insomnia, nausea and increasingly dangerous thought patterns, his partner Jayden begins to fear that the only end to this disease will also be the end of Darren himself.

Apart from a single glimmer of hope: when Darren's best friend asks Darren to play at his wedding, Darren begins to slowly return to the half-forgotten piano. As he slowly sinks back into the music that he deserted seven years earlier, the shadows -- finally -- begin to fade.

Rhapsody on a Theme Details

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Author : Matthew J. Metzger

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From Reader Review Rhapsody on a Theme for online ebook

Libby says

Loved this series so much and read all three books in less than a week. Having been with my hubby since we were 14 I very much related to being in love so young. And having both a child and parent that suffer with depression I was able to understand much of what Darren was going through. It also gave me an additional insight in to what my 18 year has probably experienced. Yes, the subject matter was sad but I feel that Matthew Metzger did such an amazing job conveying a very realistic relationship between Jayden and Darren and I loved seeing it develop through the years and over the three books. I highly recommend these book not just as young adult books but as books all ages would enjoy.

Kaje Harper says

This is the third book in the series, and possibly the most intense. It's also the most adult book, and although most of the sex is off-page it still pushed the boundaries of Young Adult pretty hard. Here we find Darren and Jayden beginning real adult lives together, with a house, a cat, real jobs, Rachel, their asexual roommate and friend, and the ever-loomng threat of Darren's depression. Because although things are going well on the outside, depression is no respecter of actual circumstances. The dark cloud hovers, threatening all they have accomplished, and all they dream of.

This book begins a bit more slowly, as we watch Darren and Jayden trying to build a life on the shifting sands of Darren's illness, at first only from Jayden's viewpoint. But about a third of the way in, the intensity ramps up a notch, and we hear more from Darren. The swings of mood, of affect, of muted glass-walled perceptions, are evocatively described. In fact, I would put a strong trigger warning on this for those who are dealing with their own depression. The descriptions are so achingly familiar, and the hopeless feelings so intense, they pull the reader in and almost under. Darren's experiences with multiple medications, with therapists good and bad, and with loss of self, are very real. Jayden's pain at not being able to make things all right for the man he loves, and the echo of his day to day fears, are equally believable.

Fortunately there is also humor here, especially when things improve for Darren. The guys have a lovely warm playful relationship when Darren is up to it. His childhood friends, Paul and Evan, reappear with insults and caring. And as the book finishes, we leave our guys in a hopeful place that is healing, after the darkness that came before. I very much enjoyed this whole series, and the emotional rollercoaster ride it gave me.

Lea says

Well, it was never going to be easy. The entire series thus far is evidence of that. Some parts of this novel were so dark that it seemed utterly hopeless. I'm sure it alienated a large portion of the audience looking for Jayden and Darren's quick HEA. Their desperate search for not even a cure, more like a search for modicum of hope in the face of bleak future, rang absolutely true for me. The despair and torment they endured while searching for an effective medical treatment for Darren's depression was raw, visceral and authentic. But what I've taken to heart at the end of this series is just how strong and true Jayden and Darren's love for each

other is. How inspiring it was to read their sheer will and strength to see it through to the end together. So I will only look back at this series as something joyous and lovely despite it all.

Tetkaripli says

3.5 stars

Mummy's Naughty Corner says

Book gifted from the author in exchange for an honest review.

Cover :- 3 stars

Sex/steaminess :- N/A

Story line :- 4 stars

Characters :- 4 stars

Overall rating :- 3.666 stars

Personal rating :- 4 stars

Book Pairing:- M/M

Did it give me a book hangover :- No but it did leave me a little emotionally drained.

Is this a review book or personal read :- Review read

Why I chose this book?

I got asked to join the blog tour.

What I liked about this book.

* Emotional.

* The story flowed well from the first two.

* Lots of tough issues address through out the series.

What I didn't like about this book.

I hate to say it but Jayden did annoy me in this book. I can't pin point why but I did want to slap him once at least.

Would I read more from this author?

Yes

Would I recommend this book?

Yes

Jennifer says

I loved this entire series and Rhapsody on a Theme brought it to a wonderful close. Oh, it was not an easy read. This book (and series) is not for the faint of heart. But, the beauty in it, the characters, and the relationship between Darren and Jayden are worth the hardships and heartache. I will miss those two now that the ride is over!

The “boys” are in their twenties in this installment and, appropriately I think, this book has some more mature themes and a bit more explicit language/descriptions in it. I would consider it new adult rather than young adult.

I definitely recommend reading the series in order and all three books are amazing. First two in the series are: Vivaldi in the Dark and The Devil's Trill Sonata. I also listened to the music referenced while reading each one, which I found heightened my experience. So, for this one it was Rachmaninoff. (Yay – played him at my own wedding.)

I was happy that Rachel, Paul and Ethan were back in this book, as well as Jayden’s parents and his new sibling. Along with many rough spots, there was humor, some romance and a bit of steam. And, the ending was so perfect. I will be on the lookout for more from Matthew Metzger.

Mare SLiTsReaD Reviews says

For my review check out:

<http://wp.me/p3NHjQ-1Ri>

Mare~Slitsread

Taintedskyee (Books Books&More Books) says

Review coming soon!!!

Baba says

3.5 stars. Review posted May 23, 2014

Several years have elapsed and Darren and Jayden have grown up. They are twenty-two and twenty-three-years-old now and while Darren was working as a crime scene examiner, Jayden had gotten a job offer from a paper and was now working on the arts and culture sections.

If you are a fan of this series then you know that Darren had been fighting an ongoing battle against his depression since childhood.

Well, let me tell you that I was very excited to read the story arc to the Vivaldi in the Dark series. I liked it but didn't love it and out of the three books Rhapsody on a Theme is clearly my least favorite. Since I checked out Matthew's website I know he's intimately acquainted with depression and I truly don't mean any disrespect, but the subject of severe depression ran like a golden thread through the entire trilogy, and this time around it was simply **too much for me**. Having been 55 % done with the book, I felt exhausted and emotionally drained. I was always saying to myself "How much longer?"

"You're still kind of prudish, you know."

"I am not."

"Please. You still object to me sleeping naked."

"Because maybe I don't want to wake up to being hugged to death, or worse."

"Hugged to worse?"

"Oh, shut up," (...) "You know what I mean."

"I know you're a prude."

There was too much drama, Darren was on the edge of going totally mental and there was also too much crying. Sadness and despair almost smothered the story, IMO. Frankly, this gloomy atmosphere just did me in. What also irritated me was Jayden's tendency to talk in rambling sentences or he would just trail off. All. The. Time. I can't remember IF he spoke that way in the previous books but it made me roll my eyes one too many times. Also, I said it in my review of The Devil's Trill Sonata and I will say it again: There were way too many words written in *italic*. It was annoying and the impact an author wants to generate with italic type falls flat when overused. It's better to stick to the rule 'less is more'.

Here are a few examples of sentences that just trailed off:

It wasn't over--Darren was worse now than he had been when they were kids, unquestionably, but...

It had been hard. Jayden had been terrified that Darren was going to get bad on his own, and Darren had been so out of reach because he'd been working ten-hour days and sleeping ten-hour nights, and...

They were closer. There were less barriers between them. They were...

"I really, really love you, and...and..."

Despite my issues I was glad that Darren and Jayden got their well-deserved HEA. I also enjoyed seeing Paul and Ethan again and witnessing the guys' bickering put many smiles on my face. Plus Jayden's parents made a nice cameo and the little Rosie is a super cute little bean. 'Tisses', anyone? Besides, I still enjoy Matthew's voice and I'm hoping he'll be writing something a bit 'happier' with a 'lighter' theme in the future.

As a side note

The steam level is low and there is no explicit sex.

My ranking (it's also the reading order):

Vivaldi in the Dark 4 stars

The Devil's Trill Sonata 4 stars

Rhapsody on a Theme 3.5 stars

Recommended to fans of the trilogy.

All quotes are taken from the pre-published copy and may be altered or omitted in the final copy

ARC courtesy of Matthew J. Metzger in exchange for an honest review

Mark says

This third and final book in the Vivaldi in The Dark series is Darren's own personal trip to hell, through it and back. A fight to battle his depression demons, a way out of an all consuming darkness and back into light.

Jayden has now finished Uni and is working for a local newspaper for their online site. He has now moved in with Darren after buying a house together and gradually the mature adult game of jobs, responsibilities like mortgages to pay, and coping with everyday things should put their lives into a domestic bliss. Well, for all intent and purposes it does, they are happy together in their house and Rachel is lodging with them just to make ends meet, it should be an ideal situation, but looming on the horizon is Darren's worsening situation with trying to get his depression under control. He has now been through a number of treatments, none have worked and the drugs have only made him even worse at times. Together they seek out a new doctor and are hopeful that he can get Darren sorted out.

For me this book was really about getting Darren sorted out. After admitting to himself he has to get this under control at the end of the previous book he puts himself in the hands of the doctors and therapists. Jayden remains a pillar of strength and understanding, but it does put an unbelievable strain on their relationship. It was gut-wrenching to read how Darren felt. He really does go through hell and back. The new doctor puts him on new meds, but they only exacerbate the whole illness. My God, the poor lad I could never imagine having to go through this, but the way it is described and written takes the reader with Darren on this hell ride and it left me feeling utterly exhausted, mentally and emotionally.

I so felt for Darren and his anger at the sodding therapist who suggested that he should break up with Jayden and have some time alone, to stop depending on him and try and stand on his own two feet. I was so bloody livid! Didn't the silly cow realise that after all this time Jayden is the only person in Darren's world who helps him keep his shit together, sees him through the worst and darkest moments of his depression. The only thing that is really keeping him going. Sorry, for all the expletives but I could have slapped the bloody woman. Lets hope she was a particularly bad therapist, because if it may ever be the case I need one I'm definitely not going. Thank goodness Darren did not take her advice, stormed out of her office and never went back. This for me was one of many very emotionally charged scenes in this book.

However, there is hope on the horizon and light at the end of the tunnel. Evan, Darren's best friend, announces his engagement and makes Darren along with Paul his most important people at the wedding. But even more than this Evan asks Darren to play at the wedding. Here we have the crux of the matter, Darren really sees the music as the root of his depression evil and has all but given up on music altogether. The doctor eventually finds the right combination of meds for Darren and ever so slowly the veil of darkness that has been surrounding him gradually starts to lift. He feels that maybe he can play something at the wedding on the piano. I was so delighted to see Darren making progress, his sense of humour that Jayden and we all love starts to return. He also finds his love for music again and with it himself, but not the violin, never the violin. this time it's the piano. He decides to play Rachmaninov's Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini. This music in contrast to the music before gives hope, is uplifting and I could feel the joy in Darren rediscovering himself and his music. Also the relief and joy for Jayden that he knows they're going to make it.

As always, Jayden's family plays a key role. Darren has a funny relationship with Jayden's step-dad. He has a no nonsense way of talking to Darren which Jayden doesn't and although Jayden is always running scared his father will tip Darren over the edge, in actual fact Darren always seems to respond well and actually seems to thrive off the man's quips and directness. I couldn't help but smile to myself, Jayden's step-dad I reckon is a big bear of a man, but with a huge heart to match. Which I reckon will always remain a mystery for Jayden – lol! But maybe it's exactly that that Darren picks up on. Also Darren's friends Evan and Paul are at his side, supporting and caring for him too. I reckon that Evan new exactly what he was doing in asking Darren to play at his wedding. It was if he was giving Darren a challenge, but at the same time a goal to work towards. Darren's father makes an appearance and I so wanted to give that man a piece of my mind too. Again, no one needs a father like that, but Darren manages it very well and I felt so pleased for him that he could stand up to him and feel no regret.

When the wedding day arrives, Darren gives a sterling performance in front of a very large audience and could feel Jayden's chest bursting with pride and love for Darren. Yes, I shed a couple of tears! It was almost very symbolic that maybe they can have hope for the future. Although they'll never be able to relax completely, but for the moment Darren's depression demon has been beaten and now they can concentrate on making longer term plans than they have been able to up until now.

This book was a marvellous and very fitting end to a superb trilogy. Ending on a note full of hope for the future and I would like to think that the depression demon is now well under control and a thing of the past.

Barbara says

BR with my friend Isabel!

Review

Matthew J. Metzger is an awesome story-teller, the journey for Darren and Jayden was a long one, and mostly in Darren's dark world fighting through an illness very hard to treat...

This last book of the trilogy is the most depressing of them all, but don't get me wrong this **series is well worth the time**. Darren and Jayden will always stay with me! This book felt very real to me, the useless/desperate feelings were intense, and they pull me in to Darren's experiences and Jayden's torment that is not able to make things good to the love of his life.

The steam very low almost none exists, I was a bit disappointed because in the last one I was hoping for some action but nevertheless I have a fertile imagination so ... It stayed in my thoughts.

In the end finally the “dark shadows” begin to fade, and we see a bright future for them!

Isabel says

I knew that this book wouldn't be an easy read... I knew that Jayden and Darren would have a long way before find their really deserved HEA. What I didn't imagine was that this book would be so painful. At half of the book I was emotionally exhausted, always waiting for the worst, since Darren and Jayden were always on the edge! I never doubted their love and how compromised they were with each other, but everyone has a limit, and I was reaching mine.

Eventually, their perseverance on the search for Darren's better treatment gave good results and everything became better! Darren was better, Jayden less tense, they were more relaxed and smiled... and so did I!

The ending was beautiful and sweet! I loved Darren's romantic side and how Jayden melted with his lover's promises!

This series was never about sex... was about friendship, companionship, but most of all, how a young love survived a very difficult path...

BR with my lovely friend Barbara!!!

Lena Grey says

“... When you're standing at the crossroads and don't know which path to choose, let me come along 'cause even if you're wrong, I'll stand by you...I'll never desert you. I'll stand by you.” ~ Pretenders-I'll Stand by You'

Learning to manage mental illness is similar to learning to control an addiction; it is also very different because when addicted, you purge your body of the chemicals which are interfering with your brain. With depression, the chemicals which become unbalanced are part of your brain and, therefore indispensable. At best, you can learn how to manage the beast within, partly by remaining vigilant of triggers which threaten to draw you back into the darkness in. In 'Rhapsody on a Theme' by Matthew J. Metzger, Darren and Jayden

are determined to stay together, but are struggling to find a way to ease Darren's symptoms and give him, and consequently them, a reasonably normal life.

As with any issue, admitting that a problem exists is a huge step in the right direction. Finding a combination of medication and counseling that will allow him to feel more like himself is proving to be a greater challenge than either Darren or Jayden realize. It's one step forward and two back. Darren is understandably discouraged when neither counseling nor medications help in his battle to stabilize his moods. He's losing hope of ever being able to have a normal relationship and wondering if he should let Jayden go. The thing is, Darren loves Jayden so much, he needs him so much, that he can't bear to leave him. Instead of helping, the medication actually makes things worse and makes Darren even less likely to try something else. Things are so dark for Darren that he slips back into thoughts of suicide, which seems like the only relief. When the doctors are finally able to come up with something that helps, Darren begins to feel alive again. Still, he waits for the dark clouds to appear, for his bad mood to turn into a full blown episode. When it doesn't, he actually feels as though he can begin to live again. Darren finds that he needs to leave behind a lot of things in the past, but not everything. There are things he needs to keep such as Jayden, his best friends, and his music. Without those, there would be no happiness in the future.

Jayden is exhausted trying to help Darren, but continues valiantly on, checking on him to make sure he's safe; locking up medicine; holding him when he needs it; basically, doing any and everything possible to help Darren fight the battle raging within his head. Like it or not, even with all the support Jayden can give him, the final resolution is up to Darren and that's hard for Jayden to accept. He wants to shelter Darren from the world and from himself. It's taking its toll on Jayden too. He's tired on so many levels, anxious, and is wearing himself out trying to be positive, especially with so much going wrong. Jayden never loses faith in their love and holds them together with willpower alone sometimes. Whatever it takes, Jayden is in for the long haul. He can't imagine life without his Darren. When Darren begins to noticeably feel better, Jayden can hardly believe it, especially when music becomes a part of his life again. As things continue to improve, Jayden relaxes some, and though he will never be complacent, they will endure.

The descriptions of Darren's episodes were hard to get through without bringing up bad memories of my own which made it almost too real for me. When brain chemistry goes haywire, all reason disappears. Behavior which a non-afflicted person can't even imagine can and does occur, regardless of the consequences. I commend Matthew for dealing with such a difficult and painful topic. Although important advances have been made, there's still a great deal of misinformation and lack of understanding about the subject. Going through the process of recovery with Darren and Jayden was hard to bear, but having them succeed was like the sun coming out on a rainy day. They deserve their happy ending. Fans of the series will, no doubt, be as heartbroken, frustrated, and disappointed as I was, while rooting for Darren and Jayden, but will also rejoice with them on their success. For those of you who have not experienced this informative, moving, intense love story, I recommend that you read it, because, otherwise, you will be missing a unique, special reading experience. Thank you, Matthew, for bringing Jayden and Darren into my life.

Kelsey's Korner Blog says

I'm not really a YA genre lover so this was a challenge for me to read. I took on the challenge easily because the author had been recommended to me from different and reliable sources. I started off with Vivaldi In The Dark where the story begins with two fifteen year old boys dealing with the realisation they were gay. Dealing with puberty, homophobia, parental issues, bullying and depression. The series was very different to what I would normally choose to read but I found it quite intriguing and strangely pleasant considering the issues involved. There were no explicit sex scenes obviously because of the age but the feelings shone through. I felt like this would be an educational piece of literature for any young adult dealing with their sexuality.

As I progressed through the pages and onto The Devil's Trill Sonata Jayden and Darren became like family to me, watching their struggles living apart and going to college felt very real. Watching the test of time between two young lovers and wondering the outcome appealed to me. At times I was conflicted as to who was my favourite. I realised Darren topped the scales because of his suffering, although Jayden needed a medal for his commitment. This was so much more than a M/M romance. The depression that Darren suffered became the root of the story and was incredibly intense, the way the author described his episodes of depression and panic was excellent. It was heartbreakingly sad to see the suffering he lived with every day.

Rhapsody On A Theme was possibly my most favourite as the boys were men now, there was more sexual innuendo but Matthew let the reader mostly imagine what was happening rather than describe it in every little detail. It was very classy and stylish. I like Matthew's writing style, I imagine him to write the way he speaks and loved the dialogue. He doesn't mince his words to appeal to the mass market and seems to stay true to his roots. I went in blind reading this series and I had no idea what to expect but what I got was a beautiful true love story with painful and trying experiences which touch base with everyday life. I without a doubt will read his future work.

Terence says

I really enjoyed this series. It was a sweet, dark read but worth it for the catharsis.

The music theme was a bit tenuous but I think any more and it would have been pretentious or confusing for non-musical readers. It worked much better in the first novel where they were young and Darren was actually a musician, but I think I understand the link for which the author was going. Really though, there didn't appear to be a real link between music and the plot past the first book. I also recall something which made me frown; something about laying something on top of the "minor keys" of the piano in their house. This doesn't make sense, of course.

The writing was overall very effective and engaging to read. I think the constant switching between Darren and Jayden was valuable, especially to have some insight as to how depression manifests in Darren. Obviously just as important was Jayden's way to deal with it, but this was less developed. This was really Darren's story, unlike the previous books which were more evenly split between the two main characters' problems. This is not a bad thing; the theme of depression is the main drive and it might have been too crass, if not realistic, to focus on Jayden's side.

In fact, I found Jayden's character to be much less interesting than in the first two stories. As mentioned, this

makes sense, but feels lacking. I understand that it would have made the book way longer, but Jayden is almost too nice and supportive. It makes him more shallow, but I'm not sure if there was an elegant way to portray a less saintly Jayden (view spoiler).

Darren on the other hand is still my favorite character and is appropriately complex as necessary. I don't mean this in a conventional sense; it feels wrong to say, but his depression is what defined him in this portion of the series. He barely has any character outside of it, and his slow wading in and out of normalcy is what made the story work. His journey through has definitely given me some insight about depression.

I'm really not sure if the relationship between the two is meant to be healthy. *Minor spoilers* During a counsellor's meeting Darren is advised to break up with Jayden. Objectively, I believe this was the correct advice to give; to take some away time from each other, though perhaps not to end it entirely. Obviously however having read the the books and being invested in their relationship, I didn't want that to happen. I guess there was some intention from the author to invoke a sense of wrongness about their relationship, but this was entirely smothered by Jayden's unending support. Never did I feel the danger that they were going to separate, so not sure about author's intention.

I found the plot slower and less dramatic than the first two novels, but more intense and dense. While I found the first two novels' plots more predictable and easy to read, this was notably more adult and I understand the author marks the genre as such. This felt like the natural progression of the plot since the main character's are already 7 years into a relationship and have gone through a whole lot during the first two books. If there were another relationship crisis like in the second novel, then I think this book would have been too repetitive. Much better to focus on the unsolved issue of depression and the potential future. This book managed to do so wonderfully.

A great conclusion to a great series.
