



The Fiddler in the Subway: The Story of the World-Class Violinist Who Played for Handouts. . . And Other Virtuoso Performances by America's Foremost Feature Writer

By *Gene Weingarten*

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GENE WEINGARTEN IS THE O. HENRY OF AMERICAN JOURNALISM

Simply the best storyteller around, Weingarten describes the world as you think it is before revealing how it actually is—in narratives that are by turns hilarious, heartwarming, and provocative, but always memorable.

Millions of people know the title piece about violinist Joshua Bell, which originally began as a stunt: What would happen if you put a world-class musician outside a Washington, D.C., subway station to play for spare change? Would anyone even notice? The answer was no. Weingarten's story went viral, becoming a widely referenced lesson about life lived too quickly. Other classic stories—the one about “The Great Zucchini,” a wildly popular but personally flawed children’s entertainer; the search for the official “Armpit of America”; a profile of the typical American nonvoter—all of them reveal as much about their readers as they do their subjects.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

What happens when you set one of the world's most renowned violinists at the entrance to one of the nation's busiest subway stations during rush hour to play some of the world's most beautiful and haunting music? Will harried commuters, enchanted by the music, linger for a few moments and let the music wrap their souls in peace? Will they appreciatively toss a few coins or dollars in the violinist's case? Conspiring with violinist Joshua Bell, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Weingarten discovers that Bell's virtuoso performance of several classical pieces does little to stop commuters in their tracks, and he reports on this conundrum in the column from which this collection of previously published newspaper columns takes its title. With his incisive wit, Weingarten ranges over other topics, from the possible affair of Woodrow Wilson and Mary Hulbert to the children's entertainer, the Great Zucchini, whose often squalid personal life contrasts dramatically with his life on stage entertaining three- and four-year-olds at Washington, D.C., area birthday parties. Weingarten travels in search of a town worthy of being called the "Armpit of America" and discovers it in Battle Mountain, Nev., a town whose defining image for the journalist is a 40-foot-high neon Shell gas station sign with the "S" burned out. Entertaining and funny, Weingarten's stories depict the poignancy of the human condition.

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From [Booklist](#)

It's no surprise that a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner would have something useful to say about writing, but Weingarten exceeds expectations in his passionate, irreverent, and instructive introduction to this superb retrospective collection. And the essays themselves prove that this former editor and feature writer turned columnist and "investigative humorist" is one helluva storyteller and a master "stunt" reporter. A troublemaking truth-seeker, Weingarten set out to determine which town truly deserves to be designated "the Armpit of America." He tracked down the girl he had a crush on in second grade, rode a bus in Jerusalem to get a sense of what it feels like to live with terrorism, and convinced virtuoso violinist Joshua Bell to pose as a street musician in the Washington, D.C., subway. But Weingarten is more than a provocateur. Each of his cockeyed adventures, thanks to his narrative skills and intellectual ethics, yields genuine feelings and discoveries. And for all his daggered humor, Weingarten never condescends. His curiosity is a form of empathy, his cadenced writing testimony to his caring about life, clear thinking, and beauty. Per Simon & Schuster's Web site, change title and subtitle in bib data to: *The Fiddler in the Subway: The Story of the World-Class Violinist Who Played for Handouts. . . And Other Virtuoso Performances by America's Foremost Feature Writer?* --Donna Seaman

Review

"Gene Weingarten is the best writer in American journalism. He's a master at finding a story that nobody else would have thought to pursue, researching it doggedly, and telling it in such a riveting way that you feel as though you're reading a terrific novel."

--Dave Barry, author, humorist, and columnist

"'The Great Zucchini' is the greatest feature story ever written."

--Erik Wemple, *The Washington City Paper*

"Giving Gene Weingarten the Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing was like giving Martin Scorsese the Oscar

for Best Director: it's not about what he did that year, it's about what he's been doing for decades, better than anybody, even before people started to notice. He's the best non-fiction writer in America, and only a few of us knew it. Now, with this anthology, we get to say: *Told ya.*"

--Peter Sagal, host of NPR's "Wait, Wait ... Don't Tell Me"

"It's no surprise that a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner would have something useful to say about writing, but Weingarten exceeds expectations in his passionate, irreverent, and instructive introduction to this superb retrospective collection. And the essays themselves prove that this former editor and feature writer turned columnist and "investigative humorist" is one helluva storyteller and a master "stunt" reporter. . . Each of his cockeyed adventures, thanks to his narrative skills and intellectual ethics, yields genuine feelings and discoveries. And for all his daggered humor, Weingarten never condescends. His curiosity is a form of empathy, his cadenced writing testimony to his caring about life, clear thinking, and beauty."

--*Booklist*

"Every page is a pleasure. . . . A sparkling collection of features by the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Washington Post* columnist, there are plenty of smiles and laughs scattered throughout the uniformly strong pieces assembled here. But the author is about more than grins and giggles. In even the slightest of the essays—seeing his daughter off to college, honoring the memory of his childhood baseball hero—his storytelling, keen observation and deft reporting startle and amaze. . . . Weingarten reliably delivers the goods."

--*Kirkus* (starred review)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Yolanda Ocasio:

Now a day individuals who Living in the era wherever everything reachable by connect with the internet and the resources within it can be true or not involve people to be aware of each information they get. How many people to be smart in having any information nowadays? Of course the answer is reading a book. Studying a book can help individuals out of this uncertainty Information especially this *The Fiddler in the Subway: The Story of the World-Class Violinist Who Played for Handouts. . . And Other Virtuoso Performances* by America's Foremost Feature Writer book because this book offers you rich information and knowledge. Of course the data in this book hundred % guarantees there is no doubt in it you probably know this.

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Some individuals said that they feel uninterested when they reading a book. They are directly felt the item when they get a half regions of the book. You can choose the actual book *The Fiddler in the Subway: The Story of the World-Class Violinist Who Played for Handouts. . . And Other Virtuoso Performances by America's Foremost Feature Writer* to make your current reading is interesting. Your personal skill of reading skill is developing when you similar to reading. Try to choose straightforward book to make you enjoy to read it and mingle the feeling about book and examining especially. It is to be initial opinion for you to like to open up a book and learn it. Beside that the guide *The Fiddler in the Subway: The Story of the World-Class Violinist Who Played for Handouts. . . And Other Virtuoso Performances by America's Foremost Feature Writer* can to be your new friend when you're feel alone and confuse in what must you're doing of that time.

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