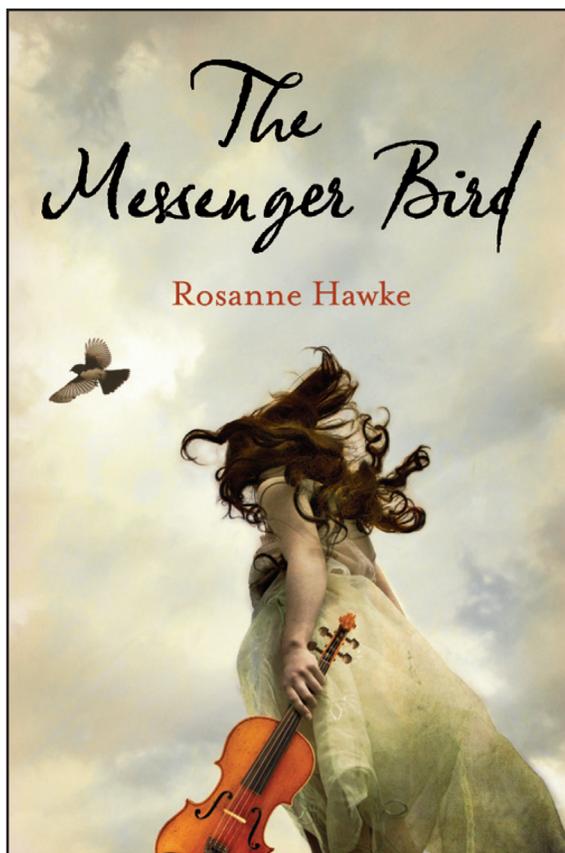


THE MESSENGER BIRD

by Rosanne Hawke

Young Adult Fiction | ISBN: 978 0 7022 3882 6 | March 2012 | B Paperback | 264pp | RRP \$19.95



Award-winning children's author Rosanne Hawke's latest novel, *The Messenger Bird*, is a haunting and gothic young adult story set in rural Australia. Combining the past and present, Hawke tackles wide-reaching issues of underage death and grief, along with drought and isolation in a manner that is both memorable and lyrical.

When you first realise the unfairness and randomness of death it eats into your thoughts like acid.

Never before has Tamar felt so alone. Her much-loved older brother is dead, her mum's away and her dad's so wrapped up in restoring their ancient farmhouse that he avoids talking about the things that really matter. Even new neighbour Gavin can't get through to her, despite his eager attempts.

When Tamar discovers an old handwritten sheet of music and allows herself to play piano again, she meets gifted violinist Nathaniel who may just hold the key to her future. With no one else to turn to, Tamar is unwittingly drawn into a journey through time and music and finally learns that healing involves first walking the long road of grieving.

For Hawke, the initial inspiration for *The Messenger Bird* came from finding 'The Maiden's Prayer' – a unique piece of music that can be played by almost any amateur – in a box

of her father's personal effects. She remembered him playing it when she was a girl. As she began to play the piece of music, she had a warm sense of her father's closeness. 'I began to think about how powerful and moving music is ... and that perhaps it could even bring someone back from the past.' As such, 'The Maiden's Prayer' became the motif tune, weaving character to character, story to place, past to present.

It was while renovating her old Cornish farmhouse in South Australia, that Hawke found the setting for her novel. 'Our house has underground rooms which were shut off when we bought it. My husband pulled up the floor boards to reveal 160-year-old cedar steps and I wondered what would cause a family to close off a whole underground floor.' The true history of Glanville Park also inspired the historical chapters in the novel.

The author drew heavily from her own childhood for the character of Tamar. 'I also played music, sewed long dresses, loved history and folktales and went for long walks.' To help imagine the character of Nathaniel, Hawke used a discarded old photo of a young man she found while fossicking through an antique store.

For the first time in ages I felt something within me stir. The young man in the photo was looking out at me as though he'd just asked a question and was waiting for my reply. I slipped the photo between the scorched music pages. Dad would have put the photo on the wall in the hallway. I could imagine what he'd say: 'If only this house could talk, we'd know all about him.' I didn't show Dad the photo, but I wished there was a way to make the house give up its secrets.

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In *The Messenger Bird*, celebrated author Rosanne Hawke effortlessly weaves together the past and present, creating a moving and mysterious tale that will leave the reader spellbound.

PRAISE FOR *TAJ AND THE GREAT CAMEL TREK*

Winner of the 2012 Adelaide Festival Children's Literature Award

'This novel is a tribute to perseverance and determination ... Highly recommended for middle years readers.'
Reading Time

'This is a must-read historic adventure, which is at times quite grim and at other times warm and charming.'
Good Reading

'This is a gripping adventure and a tribute to the Afghan camel drivers who helped explore Australia.'
Pass it On

'It's great to see novelists restoring balance to a national story that is every bit as exciting as it is diverse.'
Viewpoint



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rosanne Hawke is an award-winning South Australian author. She has lived in Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates as an aid worker for ten years. Her books include *The Keeper*, *Soraya*, *The Storyteller*, *Mustara* and *Taj and the Great Camel Trek*, which won the 2012 Adelaide Festival Children's Literature Award. She is a Carclew, Asialink, Varuna and May Gibbs Fellow, and a Bard of Cornwall. She teaches Creative Writing at Tabor Adelaide, and writes in an old Cornish farmhouse with underground rooms near Kapunda.

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