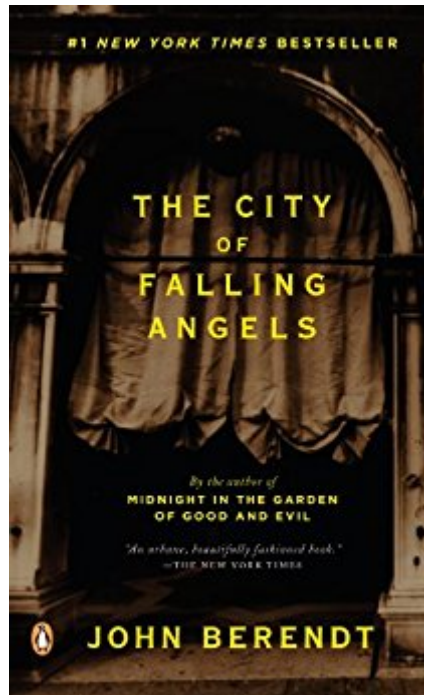




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The City Of Falling Angels



Synopsis

Twelve years ago, *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* exploded into a monumental success, residing a record-breaking four years on the New York Times bestseller list (longer than any work of fiction or nonfiction had before) and turning John Berendt into a household name. *The City of Falling Angels* is Berendt's first book since *Midnight*, and it immediately reminds one what all the fuss was about. Turning to the magic, mystery, and decadence of Venice, Berendt gradually reveals the truth behind a sensational fire that in 1996 destroyed the historic Fenice opera house. Encountering a rich cast of characters, Berendt tells a tale full of atmosphere and surprise as the stories build, one after the other, ultimately coming together to portray a world as finely drawn as a still-life painting.

Book Information

File Size: 901 KB

Print Length: 444 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books (September 26, 2006)

Publication Date: September 26, 2006

Language: English

ASIN: B000SEFKJY

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #60,693 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #7 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > Europe > Italy > Venice #14 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Europe > Italy #18 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Italy

Customer Reviews

Author John Berendt hit on a great formula for a bestseller with his 1994 book *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. He took one of my favorite cities, Savannah, Georgia, added a compelling true story of a murder, and populated the book with some of the quirkiest and most colorful characters he encountered in the city. In *The City of Falling Angels*, he used the same formula, with the story set in Venice, Italy in the months following a fire which destroyed the historic La Fenice

opera house in 1996. The colorful characters were both local Venetians and expatriate Americans and Europeans. It's another superbly readable book. To me, the background story of the opera house's destruction was perhaps not quite as compelling as the murder story in *Midnight*, but the exotic location and the array of fascinating characters more than made up for that. Berendt is just great at getting inside a city and ferreting out some of its most offbeat and interesting characters.

I greatly enjoyed *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* and was therefore quite excited when I found out that he had another book out. Much like his first book this one takes one core story and mixes in quite a few different side stories, most in some way related to the original. The core story is about the burning and rebuilding of the Fenice, an opera house in Venice. Some of the side stories include the interpersonal and business problems of a glass making family that observes the fire and makes a line of glass objects in reflection of it. There is also an interesting side story about an incident similar to that in the book "The Aspern Papers." Overall I found the stories to be quite interesting and entertaining. The one complaint I have about the book is he makes it seem like practically no one lives in Venice except foreigners. Either he is too influenced by all of the expats that he is hanging out with or there is only a very small portion of Italians living in this Italian city! What few people he does mention are all quite wealthy and/or royalty. Therefore I kind of feel like he left out a very large part of the true character and life of Venice. Overall I found it an excellent read.

An interesting book about the town of Venice and the people who actually live there- as opposed to the tourists. The people and places you meet in the book are interesting, but he just couldn't find the quirkiness and the mystery that he found in Savannah. Sorry, John. "Midnight" is one of my favorite books- next time, try New Orleans.

This is an enchanting set of observations about life in Venice at the turn of the millennium. Berendt wrote a brilliant story a few years ago about life in Savannah, and this book gives him another chance to spend time in an intentionally isolated community to chronicle their quirks and celebrate their uniqueness. He does a phenomenal job here, telling stories of high-society socialites, blue-collar electricians, lifelong scholars, artists who work in either glass or rat poison, and an unusual and lonely poet. The characters in the story really come alive as they allow Berendt behind their closed doors and onto their gondolas, and a reader will likely be tempted to plan a trip to Venice to meet them. As far as a structure, Berendt uses the fiery destruction of the Fenice opera house to guide his narrative, giving each character a chance to comment on the fire and what it

means for Venice, and ending with a moving scene with everyone getting together once again at the scene of the fire. This book is informative and emotionally gripping, with textured heroes and villains slipping past each other for hundreds of pages, and I want to loan my copy to all of my friends.

Really brings back memories of Venice to those who have traveled there. Its impressive how Berendt somehow got all these diverse people to talk to him. The one criticism I have is that he spent too much time on one or two of the stories.

I find Berendt's style of writing engaging and his story telling an enjoyable way to explore history from a unique perspective. His access to people who had a front seat to noteworthy events gives a front row seat as mysteries unfold. I'm getting ready for a trip to Venice and this book added to my excitement. Only wish I could meet some of the people he had access to.

We were planning a trip to Venice when I read this book. As it turned out, our apartment in Venice was very close to the Fenice theater, a major topic of the book. The book very much helped to understand the city and to appreciate some of the sights. We ate at the Antico Martini and saw Archimedes Seguso's store. This is a MUST if you are planning a trip to Venice. It is still interesting in its own right, but if we were not planning a visit I would probably rate it a four-star.

This book gets 15 out of 10 from me, after two readings, ten years apart. Berendt is a master writer; clear, non-judgmental and personal enough to remove it from dry journalism. My favourite city in the world is alas no longer like the Venice of the book; it is now a mere theme-park with few of the zany characters he describes able to afford to live there. I wish I'd been there at the time he writes about, or even much earlier. And I wish he had written more books; I have only read 2 and want more...

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