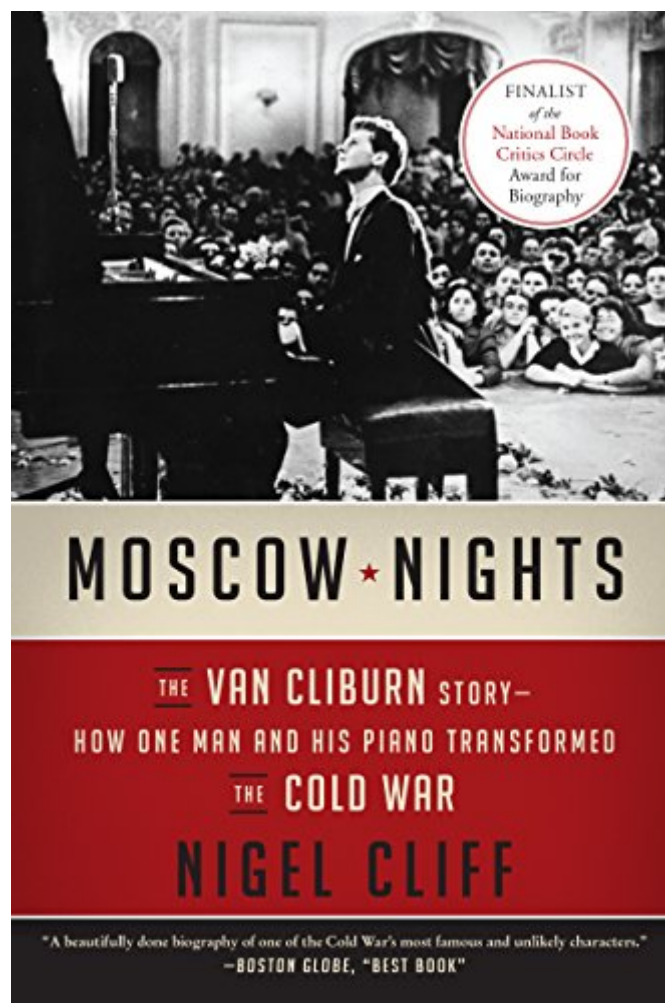




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Moscow Nights: The Van Cliburn Story-How One Man And His Piano Transformed The Cold War



Synopsis

Gripping narrative nonfiction that tells the dramatic story of a remarkable young Texan pianist, Van Cliburn, who played his way through the wall of fear built by the Cold War, won the hearts of the American and Russian people, and eased tensions between two superpowers on the brink of nuclear war. In 1958, an unheralded twenty-three-year-old piano prodigy from Texas named Van Cliburn traveled to Moscow to compete in the First International Tchaikovsky Competition. The Soviets had no intention of bestowing their coveted prize on an unknown American; a Russian pianist had already been chosen to win. Yet when the gangly Texan with the shy grin took the stage and began to play, he instantly captivated an entire nation. The Soviet people were charmed by Van Cliburn's extraordinary talent, passion, and fresh-faced innocence, but it was his palpable love for the music that earned their devotion; for many, he played more like a Russian than their own musicians. As enraptured crowds mobbed Cliburn's performances, pressure mounted to award him the competition prize. "Is he the best?" Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev demanded of the judges. "In that case . . . give him the prize!" Adored by millions in the USSR, Cliburn returned to a thunderous hero's welcome in the USA and became, for a time, an ambassador of hope for two dangerously hostile superpowers. In this thrilling, impeccably researched account, Nigel Cliff recreates the drama and tension of the Cold War era, and brings into focus the gifted musician and deeply compelling figure whose music would temporarily bridge the divide between two dangerously hostile powers.

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Customer Reviews

I guess I've been a Cliburn fan since about age 14. I was one of the originals who got into classical music through his Tchaikovsky concerto recording. During the last decade, I lived in Ft. Worth, Texas -- where he is a favorite son. I never heard him play during those years, but I did hear him speak on a couple of occasions. He had a great heart and was, from my seat, a Texas gentleman. I bought the Kindle version of this book (suggested to me by my musician sister) and have found it to be a fascinating read. It places Cliburn in the political turmoil of the times. I had no idea that Khrushchev loved him so dearly...like a son. Van did for musical diplomacy what Rubinstein, Horowitz, Janis and others could not do because he was virtually owned by the hearts of the Soviet people. He was a good guy who kept his dignity through trying circumstances. It's all very interesting. If you are interested in the most unique chapter of the Cold War...read this book.

A treasure trove of information about both Cliburn and Russia. Impeccably researched and propulsively readable. Wait until you read about Stalin's death! I will be reading other books by this author.

One of the best written books I've read in recent years. A fascinating story about one of the true geniuses of our time. Very entertaining and a fascinating look at the mind of a one-of-a-kind pianist.

This is a well researched and very well written book about a beloved and talented musician. The man came alive on these pages. Besides the details of his life we also read of the times in which he lived. The world of Sputnik and the politics and personalities of that era are detailed in words and pictures. I heartily recommend this book to music lovers and history buffs.

At a certain point, the story repeats itself, and there's lines of filler as the author waits to drop a new fact. However, it's an interesting insight into an extraordinary man and event.

Lots of background information about a subject I barely remember. Reminders of cold war Russia and heartening stories of music's ability to bring hope and understanding to people.

The book is long. I am a musician so I was very interested in the book but I found myself wondering if those without musical training could stay with it. There was a lot of musical detail.

Excellent telling of "the Van Cliburn story." Amazing young man raised in a small East Texas oil town whose gracious ways, genuine charm, and amazing talent affected people all over the world. It is fascinating to read Van Cliburn's personal story interwoven with events of the Cold War. One relives history as well as experiences the making of a world famous pianist!

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