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# Sing For Your Life: A Story Of Race, Music, And Family



## Synopsis

A New York Times bestseller A New York Times Notable Book A Washington Post Notable Book A Publishers Weekly Book of the Year As seen on CBS This Morning, NPR's Fresh Air, and People Magazine A New York Times Book Review Editor's Choice A Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year A Library Journal Nonfiction Pick of September The New York Times bestseller about a young black man's journey from violence and despair to the threshold of stardom. "A beautiful tribute to the power of good teachers."--Terry Gross, Fresh Air "One of the most inspiring stories I've come across in a long time."--Pamela Paul, New York Times Book Review Ryan Speedo Green had a tough upbringing in southeastern Virginia: his family lived in a trailer park and later a bullet-riddled house across the street from drug dealers. His father was absent; his mother was volatile and abusive. At the age of twelve, Ryan was sent to Virginia's juvenile facility of last resort. He was placed in solitary confinement. He was uncontrollable, uncontainable, with little hope for the future. In 2011, at the age of twenty-four, Ryan won a nationwide competition hosted by New York's Metropolitan Opera, beating out 1,200 other talented singers. Today, he is a rising star performing major roles at the Met and Europe's most prestigious opera houses. SING FOR YOUR LIFE chronicles Ryan's suspenseful, racially charged and artistically intricate journey from solitary confinement to stardom. Daniel Bergner takes readers on Ryan's path toward redemption, introducing us to a cast of memorable characters--including the two teachers from his childhood who redirect his rage into music, and his long-lost father who finally reappears to hear Ryan sing. Bergner illuminates all that it takes--technically, creatively--to find and foster the beauty of the human voice. And Sing for Your Life sheds unique light on the enduring and complex realities of race in America.

## Customer Reviews

"Deeply moving.... A testament to the limitlessness of the human spirit, even in the most forlorn and unexpected places.... This is a book of great compassion that traces the contours of a single remarkable life. But Bergner is also doing something more expansive, examining the long and tormented history of black involvement in an elite artistic tradition and in society at large. Ultimately, this is the story that captures the most inexplicable thing--the human will itself."--New York Times Book Review "Written with filmlike immediacy.... This book is so good.... And the key element--highlighted by the book's subtitle 'A Story of Race, Music, and Family'--is Bergner's tackling of issues of race. With sensitivity and candor, he shows the subtle and not-so-subtle challenges the opera world poses to singers of color.... [A] vital, compelling and highly

recommended book."--Washington Post"An amazing, inspiring story, a beautiful story."--Trevor Noah, The Daily Show"SING FOR YOUR LIFE is about the hard legacy of history and family, and its transcendence through art. This book is Daniel Bergner's masterpiece and puts him at the top of American literary journalism." -- George Packer, National Book Award-winning author of The Assassins' Gate and The Unwinding"Sing For Your Life is certain to be billed as a book about race. And it is that, and also a book about art and hope and resilience. But this is not a book about abstractions. It's a story that is suspenseful in the deepest sense, and very moving - a story about a fascinating human being. I am grateful to Mr. Bergner for having introduced me to him." -- Tracy Kidder, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of The Soul of a New Machine and Mountains Beyond Mountains

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