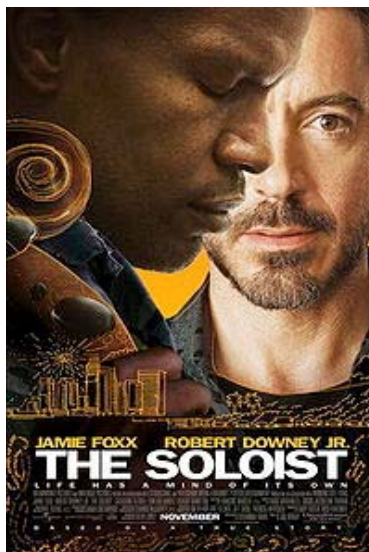




Presents

GlenVIEWINGS: Triumph or Tragedy *The Soloist*

"Do you think I can be good again?" – Nathaniel Ayers



Director:

Joe Wright

Producers:

Gary Foster
Russ Krasnoff

Writers:

Susannah Grant (screenplay)
Steve Lopez (book + articles)

Starring:

Robert Downey Jr.
Jamie Foxx
Catherine Keener

Music:

Dario Marianelli

Cinematography:

Seamus McGarvey

Editing:

Paul Tothill

Studio:

StudioCanal
Working Title Films

Distributor:

Dreamworks/Paramount

Release date:

April 24, 2009

Running time:

117 minutes

Budget:

\$60,000,000

Box Office gross:

\$31,720,158

Based on a series of articles written for the *Los Angeles Times* by Steve Lopez about his relationship with the homeless, mentally ill musical prodigy Nathaniel Ayers, *The Soloist* is as much an exploration of the mind of a musical genius overwhelmed by schizophrenia.

It is also a story about an unlikely, complex friendship. The film charts the journalist's journey from initial, exploitative interest in the story of the odd "violin guy," to genuine compassion, through frustration and desperation, and ultimately to acceptance. Lopez's final realization that just because there will always be an inherent barrier that will stop them connecting, it shouldn't stop him trying, is both moving and profound.

The Soloist is about more than just these two men, making strong points about our collective failure to adequately address mental illness, homelessness, class and race. The film's symbolic aerial views of chaotic traffic mixed with a cacophony of voices suggest a wider societal schizophrenia and a breakdown in meaningful communication. These scenes enhance the film's questioning of our ability to feel compassion for some but not others, and its continual probing of the question of to what extent one individual has the right to influence another.

In contrast, the film's focus on the redemptive power of music is most evident when displaying the rousing beauty and serene synchronicity of the city as Nathaniel Ayers plays the cello for the first time, or in the dazzling light show we experience as they listen to Beethoven's Third Symphony during a rehearsal by the LA Philharmonic. In these moments a higher, more triumphant form of connection and communication becomes clear. The tragedy of the film is that we as viewers know just how fleeting these moments of grace and peace are, and that the social failures depicted in the film remain just as consistent.

Did you know?

- The majority of homeless people in the film are actual members of the Los Angeles transient community.
- The real Nathaniel Ayers does not watch films or television because he has a distrust of two-dimensional images. However, he and his family did attend the film's premiere in Los Angeles.
- In real life Steve Lopez is still married. However, he stated that he doesn't object to the film's portrayal of him as recently single.



Presents

GlenVIEWINGS: Triumph or Tragedy ***The Soloist***

"I've never loved anything the way he loves music." - Steve Lopez

Things to Explore

- Why drives Steve Lopez to continue to pursue writing about and helping Nathaniel Ayers? How do these reasons change over time?
- Does Steve Lopez's involvement with Nathaniel Ayers do the musician more harm than good?
- Why do people send Steve Lopez instruments for Nathaniel Ayers, when they might not have generally helped a homeless man in this way? What compels someone to help a stranger?
- How effective do you find the film's portrayal of madness compared to other cinematic treatments of the subject?
- How effective did you find the film's visual portrayals of music?
- How fair is the portrayal of homeless people in the film? How does the film echo our general societal views of the homeless through Steve Lopez's character?
- In what ways is *The Soloist* a political film? Do you find the points it makes about the treatment of the homeless add to or detract from the story?
- Does the film suggest that Nathaniel Ayers' life will change, or will he always be 'the soloist'? Is it a tragedy, or a triumph?

Themes

- Social neglect
- Mental health and madness
- Compassion
- Friendship
- Ambition
- Genius and creativity
- Selfishness
- Journalism
- Redemption through music



Presents

GlenVIEWINGS: Triumph or Tragedy ***The Soloist***

"I said some terrible things to you Mr. Lopez. I hate myself!" - Nathaniel Ayers
"Sometimes friends piss each other off, right? That's part of the deal." - Steve Lopez

Library Resources

1) *The Soloist : A lost dream, an unlikely friendship, and the redemptive power of music*, Steve Lopez.

Lopez's acclaimed and inspirational novel, based on his articles for the *Los Angeles Times*.

Copy	Material	Location
787.2 AYERS	Book	Nonfiction

2) *Sounds of Healing : A physician reveals the therapeutic power of sound, voice, and music*, Mitchell L. Gaynor

A leading oncologist at the Strang-Cornell Cancer Prevention Center describes how he has used sounds, vibrations and music to heal a number of patients.

Copy	Material	Location
615.85154 GAY	Book	Nonfiction

3) *Surviving schizophrenia : A manual for families, consumers, and providers*, E. Fuller Torrey

The standard reference book for over twenty years on this complex illness.

Copy	Material	Location
616.8982 TOR	Book	Nonfiction

4) *The Soloist [sound recording (CD)] : Music from the motion picture, Dario Marianelli*. The Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra plays Marianelli's choice original score, which also includes excerpts from Beethoven Symphonies, concertos and Sonatas, and Bach's Prelude no. 1 for cello.

Copy	Material	Location
CD 781.542 SOL	New Compact Disc	Audio-Visual - Music

5) *The Soloist [videorecording (DVD)]*

The DVD contains an audio by director Joe Wright, and featurettes on the making-of the film, the problems of addressing homelessness in LA, and an interview with Lopez and Ayers.

Copy	Material	Location
DVD SOL	DVD, Fiction	Audio-Visual



Presents

GlenVIEWINGS: Triumph or Tragedy ***The Soloist***

**"A year ago, I met a man who was down on his luck and thought I might be able to help him.
I don't know that I have." – Steve Lopez**

Online Resources

<http://www.soloistmovie.com/>

The film's official website contains videos, photos, and extensive background on the film, including a series of video conversation between Steve Lopez and Nathaniel Ayers.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0821642/>

The film's page at the Internet Movie Database, where it currently has an average rating of 6.8 out of 10 from over 11,159 users.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7ovt3vSFj8>

Nathaniel Ayers and Steve Lopez celebrate Beethoven's birthday with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in this essential video, providing great insight into where Nathaniel Ayers is now, both in terms of his mental recovery and his music.

<http://www.stevelopezonline.com/>

The official website of *The Soloist* author Steve Lopez, containing many original reviews of the book and a link to his blog.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-lopez-skidrow-nathaniel-series,0,1456093.special>

Features *Los Angeles Times* columnist Steve Lopez's original articles on his relationship with Nathaniel Ayers.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=907pVLbXdHg&NR=1>

Video of a *60 Minutes* special about the pair taken from March 2009.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQhERzpZP5s&feature=related>

A behind-the-scenes look at the making of the film, featuring interviews with all the main crewmembers and also Steve Lopez and Nathaniel Ayers.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7I11-T3Fw>

In this video Robert Downey Jr. and Jamie Foxx discuss the emotional toll it took researching their roles for *The Soloist* and the difficulties of creating on-screen rapport while staying true to a realistic depiction of mental illness.

<http://spartanpodcast.com/?p=521>

Steve Lopez discusses his relationship with Nathaniel Ayers during a wider conversation on the state of the mental health system in the US in this podcast.

<http://libwww.library.phila.gov/podcast/?podcastID=90>

A 2008 interview with Steve Lopez on the Free Library of Philadelphia website.



Presents

GlenVIEWINGS: Triumph or Tragedy

The Soloist

"I apologize, sir, for my appearance." - Nathaniel Ayers
"I'm glad you said that! Me too!" - Steve Lopez

IF YOU LIKED *THE SOLOIST*...

A Beautiful Mind

(Ron Howard/134 min/PG-13/2001)

--Based loosely on the book of the same name, this is the true story of mathematician John Forbes Nash Jr.'s (Russell Crowe) long fought battle with schizophrenia as he struggles to gain control of his mental state. With the enduring help of his wife Alicia (Jennifer Connelly) he ultimately triumphs and wins a Nobel Prize.

Reign Over Me

(Mike Binger/124 min/R/2007)

--Tale of friendship and understanding in post 9/11 New York as two former college roommates become catalysts for healing one another. Charlie Fineman (Adam Sandler) and Alan Johnson (Don Cheadle) are in very different places in their lives when fate brings them together again. As Charlie reels from the sudden loss of his wife and children, they discover they each need a trusted friend to overcome tremendous challenges in their lives.

The Visitor

(Tom McCarthy/104min/PG-13/2007)

--From the director of *The Station Agent* comes the story of 62-year-old Walter Vale (Richard Jenkins), a professor who has lost his passion for writing and teaching. When he travels to New York City for a conference he discovers talented musician Tarek (Haaz Sleiman) and his Senegalese girlfriend Zainab (Danai Gurai) squatting in his barely used apartment. A friendship blooms as Walter finds his spirits revitalized when Tarek offers to teach him how to play African drums.

Son's Room

(Nanni Moretti/87 min/R/2001)

--Powerful and somber family drama by Italian director Nanni Moretti. Depicts psychiatrist Giovanna's (played by director Nanni Moretti) struggle when his family is shattered by the loss of teenage son, Andrea. An unexpected visit from one of Andrea's former girlfriends forces the family to confront their feelings about their lost son.

Pursuit of Happyness

(Gabriele Muccino/117min/PG-13/2006)

--Set in San Francisco in the early 1980s, this is the true story of single dad Chris Gardner (Will Smith) who overcomes living on the streets to become a successful broker and eventual self-made millionaire. Directed by Italian Gabriele Muccino at the behest of Will Smith, this biographical drama features a performance by Smith's own son Jaden.



Presents

GlenVIEWINGS: Triumph or Tragedy
The Soloist

"Mr. Ayers, I am honored to be your friend!" - Steve Lopez

Fisher King

(Terry Gilliam/138min/R/1991)

--Mythical tale of redemption as radio shock jock Jack Lucas (Jeff Bridges), dismayed and depressed over a former listener who murdered innocent people in a diner at the behest of his misanthropic radio tirades. Jack's life takes a fascinating turn when he meets a homeless--but full of life--man named Parry (Robin Williams).

Shine

(Scott Hicks/105min/PG-13/1996)

Nominated for seven Oscars with an Oscar winning performance by Geoffrey Rush, *Shine* tells the true story of David Helfgott, a brilliant musician with a history of debilitating mental problems. Helfgott is reduced to playing in bars as an adult until he meets astrologer Gillian who helps him master the 'Rach 3'.

Also Directed by Joe Wright:

Atonement (123 min/R/2007)

Pride and Prejudice (2005/PG/126 min)

Also Starring Jamie Foxx:

Dreamgirls (130 min/PG-13/2006)

Ray (2004/PG-13/152 min)

Also Starring Robert Downey Jr.:

Sherlock Holmes (134 min/PG-13/2009)

Zodiac (156 min/R/2007)