

"Every Good Boy Does Fine," a conversation with pianist and author Jeremy Denk

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Financial assistance for this project has been provided
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**"Every Good Boy Does Fine," a
conversation with pianist and author
Jeremy Denk**

In conversation with
Todd Decker, Paul Tietjens Professor of Music

(Please help yourself to refreshments.)

A special thank you to our co-sponsors David and Melanie Alpers, Center for the Literary Arts, and the Missouri Arts Council.

We are also grateful to our friends at Left Bank Books for providing copies of Mr. Denk's books at our events.



In *Every Good Boy Does Fine*, renowned pianist **Jeremy Denk** traces an implausible journey. His life is already a little tough as a precocious, temperamental six-year-old piano prodigy in New Jersey, and then a family meltdown forces a move to New Mexico. There, Denk must please a new taskmaster, an embittered but devoted professor, while navigating junior high school.

At sixteen he escapes to college in Ohio, only to encounter a bewildering new cast of music teachers, both kind and cruel. After many humiliations and a few triumphs, he ultimately finds his way as a world-touring pianist, a MacArthur “Genius,” and a frequent performer at Carnegie Hall.

Many classical music memoirs focus on famous musicians and professional accomplishments, but this book focuses on the everyday: neighborhood teacher, high school orchestra, local conductor. There are few writers capable of so deeply illuminating the trials of artistic practice—hours of daily repetition, mystifying advice, pressure from parents and teachers. But under all this struggle is a love letter to the act of teaching.

In lively, endlessly imaginative prose, Denk dives deeply into the pieces and composers that have shaped him—Bach, Mozart, and Brahms, among others—and offers lessons on melody, harmony, and rhythm. How do melodies work? Why is harmony such a mystery to most people? Why are teachers so obsessed with the metronome?

In *Every Good Boy Does Fine*, Denk shares the most meaningful lessons of his life, and tries to repay a debt to his teachers. He also reminds us that we must never stop asking questions about music and its purposes: consolation, an armor against disillusionment, pure pleasure, a diversion, a refuge, and a vehicle for empathy.

For Mr. Denk’s full biography go to <https://www.jeremydenk.com>

Exclusive Management for Mr. Ax:

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Todd Decker is the Paul Tietjens Professor of Music at Washington University and the author of five books, including *Astaire by Numbers: Time & the Straight White Male Dancer* (Oxford University Press, 2022).

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