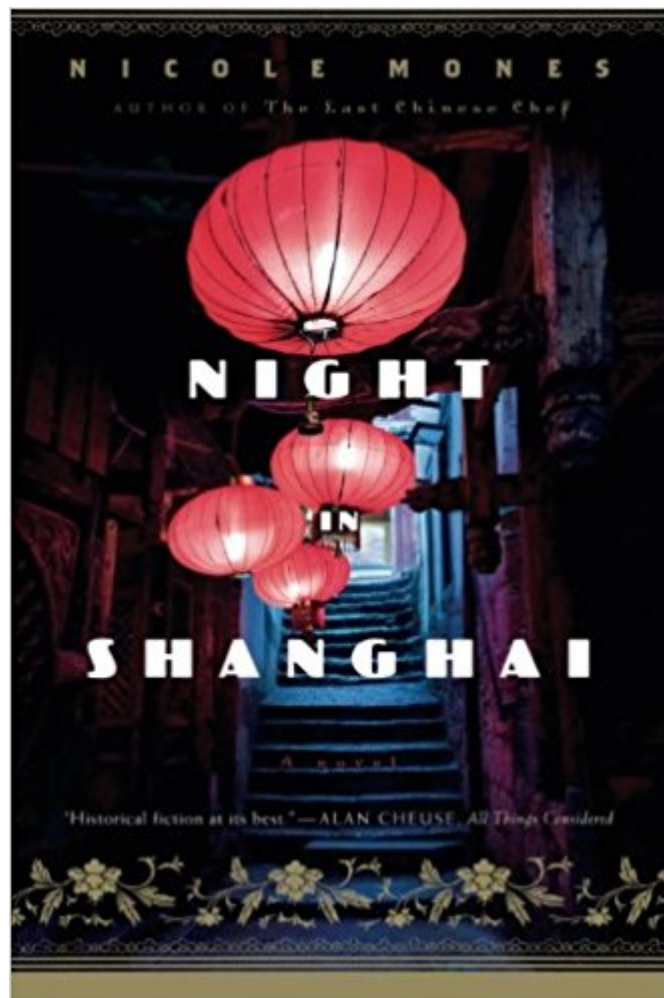


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# Night In Shanghai



## Synopsis

In 1936, classical pianist Thomas Greene is recruited to Shanghai to lead a jazz orchestra of fellow African-American expats. From being flat broke in segregated Baltimore to living in a mansion with servants of his own, he becomes the toast of a city obsessed with music, money, pleasure and power, even as it ignores the rising winds of war. Song Yuhua is refined and educated, and has been bonded since age eighteen to Shanghai's most powerful crime boss in payment for her father's gambling debts. Outwardly submissive, she burns with rage and risks her life spying on her master for the Communist Party. Only when Shanghai is shattered by the Japanese invasion do Song and Thomas find their way to each other. Though their union is forbidden, neither can back down from it in the turbulent years of occupation and resistance that follow. Torn between music and survival, freedom and commitment, love and world war, they are borne on an irresistible riff of melody and improvisation to Night in Shanghai's final, impossible choice. In this stunningly researched novel, Nicole Mones not only tells the forgotten story of black musicians in the Chinese jazz age, but also weaves in a startling true tale of Holocaust heroism little-known in the West. Â

View the Trailer: [nicolemones.com](http://nicolemones.com) "Nicole Mones conjures up the jazz-filled, complex, turbulent world of Shanghai just before World War II. A rich and thoroughly captivating read."--Gail Tsukiyama, author of *The Samurai's Garden*

Sailing to Shanghai in 1936 to lead a black jazz orchestra, Thomas Greene goes from being flat broke in segregated Baltimore to living in a mansion with servants of his own, and from the classical piano pieces he was trained to play to the toe-tapping swing of the big band era. Song Yuhua is refined, educated, and bonded since age eighteen to Shanghai's most powerful crime boss in payment for her father's gambling debts. Outwardly submissive, she burns with rage, longs for escape, and risks her life spying on her master for the Communist Party. With Shanghai shattered by the Japanese invasion, Thomas and Song find their way to each other and forge a bond from which neither can back down in the turbulent years that follow. Torn between music and survival, freedom and commitment, love and war, they navigate the dangers leading to world war until the moment when they must cast their lots in Night in Shanghai's final, impossible choice.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In the early 1930s, as the world teeters on the brink of war, struggling musician Thomas Greene leaves the South's racial prejudices behind when he accepts an offer from a Chinese nightclub owner to headline a jazz band in Shanghai. Though the classically trained pianist is uncomfortable with this new style of music, he is ecstatic to be free of the Jim Crow laws that have impeded his success at home. As Greene embraces the relative freedom that life in this cosmopolitan city affords, he becomes increasingly embroiled in both the criminal and Communist underworlds that are threatened by the imminent Japanese invasion. Through his love for party sympathizer Song Yuhua and friendship with protector of Jews Lin Ming, Greene finds himself at the epicenter of world-shattering events. Based on true episodes and peppered with the lives and experiences of actual characters from the worlds of politics, music, the military, and the government, Mones' engrossing historical novel illuminates the danger, depravity, and drama of this dark period with brave authenticity. --Carol Haggas --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

"I LOVED Night in Shanghai. I held hope for the characters even after I finished, I was so deeply connected to them--to me, the sign of a great book." --Ben Harper, Grammy Award-winning singer/songwriter. "Historical fiction at its best." --Alan Cheuse, All Things Considered, NPR "Keeps the suspense mounting until the end." --Kirkus Review "Historical fiction fans will not be disappointed." --Library Journal "Mones' beautiful prose and sense of place never loses momentum until the final page and its dramatic surprise ending." --The Chronicle, Toowoomba, Queensland "Both of them young and awkward, but gifted and smart, [Thomas and Song] make for an odd but brilliant pair of lovers. They light up the pages of this novel.... Night in Shanghai, an intelligent historical romance, shows off with forceful insight, terrific characters, and a telling sense of detail. And, folks, it swings." --Alan Cheuse, All Things Considered "You read Night in Shanghai impressed by its meticulous research and drawn in by its sweep those crowded, humid Shanghai

streets seem to live and breathe. • "Seattle Times" "This thrilling, sexy novel reveals some little-known facts from that time. The strands of the story weave together as the themes and rhythms of the jazz her protagonist plays. • "Christian Science Monitor" "With a magician's sleight of hand, Nicole Mones conjures up the jazz-filled, complex, turbulent world of Shanghai just before World War II. Mones has re-created a feast for the senses, transporting us to the rich, decadent city in which the lives and loves of expatriate musicians intertwine with the growing tensions between the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party, while the ominous threats from the Japanese stir the winds of war. A rich and thoroughly captivating read." • "Gail Tsukiyama, author of *The Samurai's Garden* and *A Hundred Flowers*" "Every page in Mones's compelling, sexy and richly textured novel reveals some custom, some costume, some trick of language that exposes a fascinating moment in history—the Japanese invasion of Shanghai on the eve of World War II. Mones weaves the multiple strands of her story much the way themes and melodies are woven into the jazz her protagonist plays, with subtle and suggestive undertones of human greed, power, and passion." • "Marisa Silver, *Mary Coin*" "I loved *Night in Shanghai*. I held hope for the characters even after I finished, I was so deeply connected to them—to me, the sign of a great book." • "Ben Harper, Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter" "Mones's vivid account is animated by the real historical personalities it digs up and resurrects. More than ghosts, they're born again protagonists at the vanguard of a musical movement too brilliant to be made up. • "TimeOut Beijing" "Comparisons to James Clavell's epic Asian sagas are appropriate. Never has history sounded so good." • "Arizona Republic" "Mones works seamlessly with a large and disparate group of characters—gangsters and Communists, jazz men and diplomats—always with a sympathetic hand. Music jumps from every page; even if the reader doesn't know quite what it means to flat the 7th, the sound comes through just fine in Thomas Greene's voice. A touching story and highly recommended. • "Historical Novel Society" "Night in Shanghai is a riveting, entertaining and illuminating look at a moment that has largely been lost from history. • "January Magazine" "The novel excels in its flamboyant portrayal of Shanghai as a Noah's Ark of musicians, gamblers, drug addicts, poets, triad members and prostitutes. Page after page, the multiple faces of Shanghai's nights are outlined; the worlds of the underground and entertainment tango provocatively. • "Asian Review of Books" "Mones's engrossing historical novel illuminates the danger, depravity, and drama of this dark period with brave authenticity. • "Booklist" "Breathless and enlightening" "[An] ambitious book. • "Kirkus" "

The story of Shanghai on the eve of the second world war is one of those stories that was just waiting to be told, and in Nancy Mones, it found the perfect person to tell it. At first, the story seems to be about a black classically trained musician who takes a job with a jazz group in Shanghai despite the fact he can't improvise and doesn't know the repertoire. Over time the story's focus expands as events overtake the characters and shape them as they struggle to survive forces that threatened to crush them. Only at the end do we learn that much of *Night in Shanghai* is based on real people and real events. To her credit, Mones seamlessly weaves those complex events into the lives of her characters while displaying not only a mastery of history, of cross-cultural relationships, but also an ability to describe the complexities of the jazz scene and the structure of performance. Events do threaten to overwhelm Mones' characters, but they survive without leaning too heavily on suspended disbelief as in real life reason often can't explain how things turn out. *Night in Shanghai* is not to be missed.

China presents both a lure and a peril for fiction authors. Many writers struggle in vain to achieve the elusive balance between romanticizing its extraordinary achievements, tracing its complex heritage, and bemoaning the tragic missteps and vast human costs of its recent history. In her three previous novels, Nicole Mones has deftly avoided these pitfalls, creating evocative portraits of China by exploring specific aspects of Chinese society, history, and culture. Rich in character development and sensory details, her books are also laden with subplots, insights, and resonances that take them far beyond their ostensible subjects—from the rugged challenges of the search for Peking Man to the most exquisite nuances of Chinese porcelain and cuisine. The people whose lives unfold in such unpredictable ways in these milieus—whether they are Chinese whose identities are profoundly influenced by tradition or adventurous Americans adrift in a strange land; whether their motivations are altruistic or avaricious, whether they're seeking sheer survival or personal expression—are brought to vivid life. Mones's artistry and understanding of China are on abundant display in *Night in Shanghai*. Set squarely yet imaginatively amid real characters and little-known historical events in this vibrant, chaotic, and surprisingly generous city on the eve of World War II, the story contrasts the human desire for love, survival, and self-expression with war's heedless, devastating destruction. Thomas Green, the young African-American pianist at the center of *Night in Shanghai*, has a professional need, and a more profound personal one, to evolve from a skilled performer to a confident artist whose music serves as a language to convey what otherwise could never be expressed. His long struggle to open that door is sensitively depicted, and the memorable moment when he is at last able to do so lends the book its

name. Mones compassionately follows the interwoven stories of her characters—lives to a poignant yet fitting conclusion. For me, the book ultimately evoked Dr. Zhivago in its portrayal of the upheavals and aftershocks of lives brought together, then wrested apart by forces far beyond their control—and yet, amid it all, the enduring optimism and resilience of the human spirit.

For Thomas, an American pianist, Shanghai is a wonderland, a place where he is accepted for what he is. For Song, it is a prison where she is using her language skills as a slave to the leader of a Shanghai gang. For all of Shanghai, it is a time of wonder and decadence, a time when many cultures exist side-by-side, but all that changes when the Japanese attack and take over the city. And then it changes again as Japan prepares to attack Pearl Harbor. I enjoyed this novel: nice, well developed characters, plot that ebbs and flows in a natural pace. And I learned a lot about China and its political changes. Though, to be honest, some of the historical pieces felt inserted, rather than flowing naturally from the characters and their interactions. Nevertheless, I would recommend this book: a pleasant read.

If you have ever wondered what happened when Japan's invading forces reached Shanghai -- then known for its wide open community -- this is a good book to begin your journey. While it is a novel, many of its characters happen to be real (as I discovered in the afterward). It is real-world events surrounding an ill-fated romance of a young woman indentured to a gang lord and a black jazz player. It is through their experiences that you see the broader scale of all that was happening in China leading up to Japan's attack at Pearl Harbor. The characters development is slow and quietly builds. While I wouldn't say that they are fully three-dimensional, they are not flat. Much of their background is left for the reader to fill in. While I would not rush out to read other books by this author, I had no problems reading this to the end and no regrets once I did so.

Loved this book! I've read everything by Nicole Mones and this is one of my favorites. Beautifully written and very well researched. Filled with historical figures and spans a part of history with which I lacked much familiarity. A glimpse into the international city of Shanghai in the late 1930s and early 1940s with a focus on the black Americans in the jazz scene. This story soon intertwined with Japan invading China, the German and Austrian Jews escaping to Shanghai and the divisions between the Nationalists and the growing Communist movement. And some surprising parts of history. I was shocked to learn that America had imported its race laws to the American and British Concessions in Shanghai, that a plan to resettle 100,000 Jews in China was scuttled by Chiang Kai-Shek and that

Japan had stood up to the German request to murder the Jews of Shanghai. Love when I learn a little history as part of a good read.

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