



The Metropolis Case

Matthew Gallaway

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From the smoky music halls of 1860s Paris to the tumbling skyscrapers of twenty-first-century New York, a sweeping tale of passion, music, and the human heart's yearning for connection.

Martin is a forty-year-old lawyer who, despite his success, feels disoriented and disconnected from his life in post-9/11 Manhattan. But even as he comes to terms with the missteps of his past, he questions whether his life will feel more genuine going forward.

Decades earlier, in the New York of the 1960s, Anna is destined to be a grande dame of the international stage. As she steps into the spotlight, however, she realizes that the harsh glare of fame may be more than she bargained for.

Maria is a tall, awkward, ostracized teenager desperate to break free from the doldrums of 1970s Pittsburgh. When the operatic power of her extraordinary voice leads Maria to Juilliard, New York seems to hold possibilities that are both exhilarating and uncertain.

Lucien is a young Parisian at the birth of the modern era, racing through the streets of Europe in an exuberant bid to become a singer for the ages. When tragedy leads him to a magical discovery, Lucien embarks on a journey that will help him—and Martin, Maria, and Anna—learn that it's not how many breaths you take, it's what you do with those you're given.

This unlikely quartet is bound together across centuries and continents by the strange and spectacular history of Richard Wagner's masterpiece opera *Tristan and Isolde*. Grandly operatic in scale, their story is one of music and magic, love and death, betrayal and fate. Matthew Gallaway's riveting debut will have readers spellbound from the opening page to its breathtaking conclusion.

The Metropolis Case Details

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Author : Matthew Gallaway

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From Reader Review The Metropolis Case for online ebook

☆?♥☆ Unsolved Mystery ☆♥?☆ says

I won this book through Goodreads First Reads Giveaway. Thank you very much. =)

- My Description -

This book is about a group of people at different times, in different decades. They all have something in common, their love of music.

- My Review -

I was 162 pages in and I wasn't able to finish it. I've been reading this on and off over the last few months, hoping I'd get more into it.

While the book was better than I thought it would be, it didn't hold my interest enough for me to finish it.

It's really too bad. It had such promise.

Maybe this book would be better suited with someone else...

Since I didn't finish, there will not be a rating.

Schmacko says

Here is an engaging first story, a fiction written by a one-time indie rocker who is obviously obsessed with...get ready for this...Wagner's Tristan and Isolde.

Most everyone I know is obsessed with one or two pieces of art or bits of popular culture. That passion can be for Vincent Van Gough or Britney Spears. There may be some snobby people who insist that one fixation is more merit-worthy, more desirable. But in truth, the effects of rapturous obsession is pretty universal whether it's for comic books, William Shakespeare, 1950s salt shakers, or my own 1300+ CDs and 5 gigabytes of digital music.

(And I might as well mention that I have a few other stimulations – Sondheim, modern playwrights, purple glass, cooking, and reading.)

Matthew Gallaway once played guitar for the critically praised band Saturnine, so his knowledge of music is sound. What's surprising is that his love took a turn toward Wagner, who was a loud, Germanic, political man who wrote bombastic and sometimes audience challenging opera and classical pieces. Wagner's hardest work, most would agree, is Tristan and Isolde, a big, blasting piece full of melancholy and death, nearly impossible for most singers, but not particularly a toe tapper.

In Gallaway's book, Herr Wagner has come to 1850s Paris to try to produce his new opera. There is a young man Lucien, who is enamored of Wagner's music and of the idea of signing opera for a living. He will become central to Tristan and Isolde's history. He will also secure a rare first manuscript of the difficult score. Lucien and that manuscript will in turn affect the lives of an early 20th century American soprano and of two

tragic kids who grew up in the same Pennsylvania town in the 1970s.

Musical comedienne Annie Russell once said, “But that’s the beauty of opera; you can do anything so long as you sing it.”

It’s true in *The Metropolis Case*. They do anything. There are threads of political intrigue, homosexuality, incest, violence, natural disaster and other tragedies of humankind and of fate. Gallaway’s talent for spinning an engaging tale – with warm and relatable characters – in the midst of this miasma is amazing. Even his schlocky first chapter – a messy, slang-laden email – doesn’t take away from the fact that the rest of the book is intriguing. Exactly how and why these four lives intersect make up the brunt of the mystery driving the novel. For me to reveal any of it would take a bit of the fun away from other readers.

That being said – besides the weird email that starts the novel (thank God Gallaway drops that stylistic conceit quickly) – there is a bit of unevenness about the novel. Though it has three “acts” splitting all four character’s lives, the tone and engagement of each narrative ebbs and wanes unevenly. Some major events connect the people, and some don’t; the choice seems arbitrary rather than artful. Finally, something purely magical happens; it’s something you’ll never, never, never see coming. In many circles, this literary trick might be considered a *deus ex machina*; to other readers, it seems like a supremely sloppy gimmick to wrap up the story. However, I defy anyone who’d say that this plot point was well structured or sufficiently foreshadowed. To me, though, it’s messy, but it’s also forgivable for a first novel, especially one that is so rapturous about its subject and so loving of its players.

Barbara says

This is just an extraordinary novel. Possibly one of the best novels I've read in a very, very long time. Once in a blue moon, if you're really lucky, you'll encounter a work of art (a painting, a piece of music, a book, a film) that changes your life in some way or, at the very least, changes the way you think about life. *The Metropolis Case* did that for me. Matthew Gallaway's magnificent prose on life, death, love, loss, pain, loneliness, and passion is so elegant and beautiful and helped me to realize that beauty, light, and color can be seen even in our darkest moments.

I found the story to be absolutely stunning. The stories of the four main characters - Martin, Anna, Maria, and Lucien are told so vividly and when we start seeing how each of these characters' lives are intertwined, the magic really starts to happen. Wagner's opera, *Tristan and Isolde*, is the thread that connects each of these characters, and their connections to each other are as powerful as the opera itself.

It's not necessary for me write what the story is about in this review, because that is included here on Goodreads in the description of the book and in many reviews of the book, so I will just say that the story is brilliant, interesting, magical, funny, intelligent, and a lot of fun.

In addition to telling a great story, Mr. Gallaway really knows how to develop incredibly believable characters. I was able to relate to all of the characters because they are so human with their vulnerabilities, their desires, their passions, and even their empty feelings when their needs and wants are not fulfilled. I really liked all of these people so much -- I was able to see their inner beauty which created such a sense of compassion within me.

Another wonderful treat is that we are taken to some fantastic cities during various time periods -- Paris, Munich, and Vienna in the mid-19th century, New York in the 60s and 70s and contemporary New York, Pittsburgh in the 70s, and we even get a "behind the scenes" glance at a Wagner Festival in Bayreuth. And while opera plays a crucial role in this book, we also get some pretty great rock music as well.

I strongly recommend this book to everyone who loves a great story about a very interesting and eclectic group of people. You absolutely do not have to be an opera fan to enjoy this novel, you simply have to be a fan of great books.

Although I received this book through a Goodreads' First Reads contest, I was not required to write a review, and certainly not required to write a "positive" review. I truly loved *The Metropolis Case*.

Thank you to Crown/Random Publishing and Goodreads for choosing me as a First Reads winner of this awesome book, and thank you to Matthew Gallaway for writing such a wonderful novel.

Posted 1/11/11 -- I just started reading this book last night and I did not want to put it down. I'm only one-third of the way through *The Metropolis Case* but I already love all of the characters, and Matthew Gallaway is an absolutely beautiful writer. I feel as though I'm reading poetry while reading this book -- Mr. Gallaway's descriptions of human emotions are just brilliant. It's hard to believe this is his first novel, but I certainly hope it is not his last because at this point I am absolutely loving his work.

Kat says

(3.5 stars) -- he did make me cry.

Conflicting thoughts about this one. I can forgive the over-the-top deus-ex-machina contrivances, given that the book functions as a sort of literary opera. And not being an opera buff myself, I give the book credit for making me thoroughly intrigued by *Tristan & Isolde*. I was carried along quickly by the tone, and I was interested in the characters' lives. However, the characters' inner, emotional lives are laid out in a series of heavy-handed pronouncements that can sometimes feel pompous and forced. Yes, I feel the author says some very emotionally authentic things. And sometimes there is a definite ring of truth to his passages. But the sheer amount of this pontificating frustrated me.

As a tiny SPOILER warning - there is a huge theme of loss and death running through the work. It almost feels like the author sat down and made a list of every kind of interpersonal loss he could imagine and slotted them in one by one. Loss of parents, lovers, siblings, children, career, country, pets - the constant tragedy coupled with the melodramatic (or operatic, I suppose) story elements combined to form something that was occasionally affecting, but often veered into something that felt forced or emotionally manipulative, or occasionally even absurd.

As a parting frustration: the author spent the entirety of the book mining the emotional depths for dark

introspection. But he ducks out of what I felt would have been the most jarring and complicated character confrontation of the book, pages from the end. Its a small thing, but it irked me.

Kathy says

I am unable to continue reading this book at this time. It is hard work.

The various stories woven together yield high points with talented and loving characters and some characters hard to understand or like. Initially one thinks elevated operatic and/or theatrical themes, but then to be thwarted and dumped in a stew.

Maybe a bit like walking into a suburban movie theatre that has 12 movies running and you get up and walk out and try the next door, etc. looking for something you may like or at least understand.

Tristan and Isolde is at the core, unifying the stories of four? central characters. I'm quitting early, so I can't guarantee the number or how this will come together later.

This is my first reading of Matthew Gallaway, and I am stepping out at the point the character based on himself, most likely, is just too untrustworthy for me to follow. Who watches the Twin Towers collapse and decides not to leave the area but rather opens a bottle of bourbon and plays a favorite LP?

Audra (Unabridged Chick) says

Did... I find myself missing Pittsburgh as I read?: YES! I spent my formative teen years in Pittsburgh, near the suburb featured so predominantly in this novel. I was totally taken back!

Did... I wish I had *Tristan & Isolde* to listen to while I read?: YES! Find it -- it's a treat to hear, regardless, but especially when you hear something referred to by the characters.

Review: I have friends who are involved -- professionally -- in the opera world so I was immediately attracted to this novel. I'm not a singer nor a musician, and my interest in opera is based on seeing my friends perform, followed by an appreciation for the history of opera and the fantastical plotlines opera employs. Although this is a novel loosely oriented around Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, I don't think one needs to be an opera fan or musician to appreciate it.

This novel was surprising to me in that the jacket blurb led me to believe it would be a historical novel more in the vein of Tracy Chevalier, perhaps literally following the characters through various productions *Tristan & Isolde*. Instead, the story follows four people as they follow their passions -- personally and professionally -- and weather intense emotional traumas. In particular, Martin -- the strongest character and story line, in my opinion -- lives through 9/11 in what was one of the first fictional renderings I've read of that day. It was startling and moving and felt very autobiographical.

The thing that kept me at 'like' rather than 'love' was the strong distance I felt in the narrative. All four main characters struggled with intense personal traumas and huge emotional canvasses, and yet, at all times I felt very much at arm's length. I don't know if this was intentional -- a novelistic rendering of audience (reader) and performer (character) -- but the effect was enough that I felt a bit like I was learning gossip third hand about friends of friends.

There's a whiff of some magical realism that came so late in the novel it felt a bit jarring but it's not entirely

unwelcome, and I rather wish it had been introduced earlier in the book. The four main characters eventually all come together in a single plot line that strains credulity yet feels very satisfying; I'm reminded a bit of the over-the-top plot lines in most operas.

In the end, this is a promising debut and I'm really excited to see Matthew Gallaway's future novels.

Meaghan O'Connell says

I read this book, swallowed it whole, really, in a couple of days. Which character was my favorite changed every few chapters, and I loved whirling through this book with them. i love gallaway--he's incisive and hilarious while at the same time underlining everything he writes with enormous compassion. He's one of the good ones, and this book reflects that. i think this book should be a MOVIE, RIGHT???

also i loved googling all of the chapter titles. it was a nice way to prolong the book when i wasn't ready for it to end.

READ IT.

Keith says

I read a brief snippet about this book in the New York Times, as well as Barnes & Noble. I was intrigued enough to keep looking for it and remembering the name of the book. I was not let down. I'd like to write that it is the story of the writing of "Tristan und Isolde" and the first production of that work - but it is so much more. There are three great story lines that are woven in such a way to make an amazing novel. When a novel drives the reader to start exploring other art works - I think that is a sign of a well written book. After reading this I started looking through my Opera recordings, and asking about the best recording of Wagner's Tristan - as well as adding Visconti's "Ludwig" to my netflix queue.

I look forward to a second novel from Mr Gallaway, and a third, fourth, etc.

Jaidee says

5 "imperfectly delicious, emotionally resonant and unapologetically melodramatic" stars!!!!

2016 Gold Award - Most favorite book of the Year !!

Please listen to this as you read my review:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLoHc...>

I want to shout from the rooftops. I want to give all of my Goodreads friends a copy. I want to read this a hundred times. I love and adore this book. Made me cry, made me laugh, made me despair, made me hope, made me love and did it over and over and over again.

I read 20 percent prior to our trip to Belize and knew I had found a sloppy masterpiece and saved the

remainder for our trip. We were lucky to find a secluded virgin beach with a small cove and I curled up and read the remainder on three visits.

This is my fourth 5 star read so far this year and it seems to be the culmination of a bizarre tetralogy:

astounded me with its poetic decay.

resonated with my melancholy nature.

helped me access my cerebral aspects.

but this book, this book, this book was something that was written, it seemed, just for me!!!

Elements of high emotion, deep love, passion for opera and artistry and search for meaning within art, magic and the power of relationship.

I found this book through a google search around fiction revolving around my favorite Opera: Tristan and Isolde (which is what my avatar is by the way :) and here this book showed up in all of its messy beauty. I saw my first performance of this masterpiece when I was 25 and I can say that I have never witnessed anything as powerful and sumptuous and sad than this. I limit myself to listening to this work in its entirety to three or four times a year or I would not be able to function. I would turn mad, obsessive like the people in this book....maybe.

4 people haunted and impacted by Wagner's opera. We travel across centuries from Paris, to Vienna, to Munich, to Pittsburgh, to New York. 4 lost people that are haunted, possessed and destined to take part in the larger drama of Tristan and Isolde. 2 men and 2 women- all lost, yearning for love, beauty and the need to connect and yield with something larger than themselves.

This is a debut work by an author and this astounds me. I have not stopped thinking about this book. I want you all to read this even if it does not resonate with you as it deeply did me.

I want to leave you with a few gorgeous passages:

" The next morning, Lucien woke up groggy; they had enjoyed more than a few glasses of absinthe before going to bed, which in combination with so many kisses and caresses never failed to leave him with the sense of having spent hours in a moonlit field of wildflowers, pressed hard against the wet earth and staring up through the blossoms at the slowly spinning stars" or

" The sad wistfulness that came from constant exposure to a story of love and death was a component but in no way explained the overwhelming sense of futility under which they labored, as if they were required each day to explain the ultimate purpose of life while knowing that the previous day's answer was no longer viable" or

" Lucien moved into position to wait for his cue and as he listened to the first breath of the cellos, he could almost hear his father and dead mother talking, while in the cascade of strings that followed he felt his heart beating in time with that of Eduard and imagined them still together in the night." or

" As the applause continued, he was reminded of certain mornings in Vienna- especially after he'd just arrived- when he would wake up next to Eduard and for a little while feel sated and content, and for the first

time he understood the consummating power of performance and how- as with romantic love- he had grasped this only after years of searching, of craving somethin he could not have described until after it was found"

Finally and (oh so fucking true!!!)

" Maria had no doubt that those who had seen this performance would never forget how the opera can make and alter history, and how, on this night, history had been made and altered"

Mr. Galloway like Maria I felt the same way about your big, wonderful, mash-up of a first novel.

Wow just wow!!!!

Tanya says

Yes! I am loving these first-reads giveaways! This is the third book I've won in a week! If you're interested in reviewing new books for Goodreads, click on "find books" and then "giveaways." You can enter to win any of their "first reads" books that sound good to you. I'm really excited to read [The Metropolis Case](#).

1/31/11

Although I was prepared to love this book, I decided to put it down a third of the way through. The story was just starting to capture me, but the characters were pushing me away. I don't enjoy reading about homosexual exploration, which seemed to be the direction 2 of the 4 protagonists were going. Overall, I just felt a negative vibe and didn't want to continue.

Sketchbook says

A reinvention of "The Makropulos Case." But Galloway imposes his personal vision which encompasses Richard Wagner, AIDS, the Paris Commune and the 9/11 attacks. Within a compelling sexual labyrinth that weaves through Time with timeless characters, he explores love & loneliness, desire & despair, and other-worldly elixirs.

Rustling our imagination are twins separated at birth, lost parents, a scientist who concocts a potion, a 'sleeping prince' who awakens to reveal a secret. In sum, careerist New Yorkers- lumbered with baggage, past and present - discover a link among themselves and to an opera singer who knew European stages over 100 years ago.

As with air and water, says a young vulnerable who's looking for love, there's "no point making distinctions between art and love." He wants both. Is he asking for too much? In this connecting struggle lives are shaped by the "love-glance motive" -- to borrow a phrase from opera buff Milton Cross.

Finale: Galloway offers a daring sequence - a duet of 'operatic' release that's a bit of the terrific. It may bollox those who incorrectly perceive this as realism, for here's a romantic fable on the nature of loving with a salute to any comedy of errors.

Cassandra says

The title is a bit misleading. It implies that there is a mystery to be solved. There isn't one, though. Not one that the characters are working to solve. Instead, the reader is left trying to figure out just what it is that binds all of the characters and their diverse stories together. It turns out that it is a man named Leo Metropolis.

Metropolis' case is an unusual one. He appears in the other characters' lives at moments when his guidance or assistance is needed. He makes appearances in the great opera houses of Europe and the United States when he feels the need to sing. He says little, and he does not linger. Even so, the impact that he has on the book's other characters, particularly Maria and Martin, is profound.

Galloway alternates between the historical account of Lucien, the singer who originates the role of Tristan in the premiere of Wagner's masterpiece *Tristan and Isolde*, and the contemporary tales of Anna, Maria, and Martin, following each from the 1960s through the months following the attacks of September 11, 2001. He does so in such a way that the language and description are always appropriate to the time period but also accessible to the reader. Galloway also does an excellent job of identifying with each of his characters, whether male or female, gay or straight. The reader is easily able to do the same.

Galloway's narrative shows remarkable poise for a debut novelist. The reader does not get lost while trying to figure out which story is being told and when. Instead, they are able to get lost in the story, imagining how it will all come together in the end. In fact, had the characters been linked by nothing more than *Tristan and Isolde*, the novel would have been completely satisfying. Going beyond that, however, and making the opera secondary to Metropolis and his tale, elevates the novel to a place where the reader is fulfilled.

That, and he almost makes me want to see an opera. Those are words I never thought I would say.

Suzanne says

I finished this book more than a week ago and have still not reviewed. I loved this book but found it hard to review, I'd been thinking about it and just didn't know how. I was actually putting it off until this quiet Sunday. This book would not have crossed my path if it wasn't for Goodreads, and more specifically, my friend Jaidee. Jaidee knows a lot of stuff.

Sometimes I write notes about my books, and the title of this one in my notebook was 'Jaidee's Book' as I couldn't remember the title at the time, and to be honest, it was the way I thought of it. I recommended my favourite book to him *Golden Boy* (he hated it) and I decided to read his favourite read of 2016. *Lucky I*. Loved it.

I know nothing of Opera music, and rarely read historical themes, but boy was I treated this time around. This is a lovely, well deserving five melancholy stars. So glad I stepped out of the square to try something new.

Stories weaved within each other through *Opera – Tristan and Isolde*. Art, culture, architecture, song and creation. I know nothing of music really, but adored the theme of love and life that it means to people who

can sing and create and produce. Love – lost and found – searching, being understood; or not. It was very dramatic, tragic; every chapter ended with a very different and thought provoking philosophical comment.

Each thread of the story did not necessarily have a strong unputtdownable plot in a way, but a sharing of stories in a slow burning communal way which was told over generations.

Read this <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>, you'll get a better picture than my in-eloquent ramblings! I find that my thoughts on a book are just that, thoughts not summaries.

This was from Eduard's story, and was one of many that I loved: *".. he was less likely to find himself in tears, and his dreams were no longer filled with endless hallways through which he ran panicked, unable to ever find the door."*

So glad I read it. So interested to see what Matthew Galloway writes for us next.

Rick says

Wow. I really liked this book. I liked it at first, and then I was sorta on edge with it for a while, but I think in the end it delivered quite nicely. I'm also super excited that my generation's music is starting to make its way into great literature. I think was talking about this drunkenly the other night and the person who was on the receiving end was utterly uninterested, but, you know, I had to read so many books of "literature" that had the Beatles or the Stones or the Doors in them - never mind Master and the Margarita which as soon as you think of "Ray Manzerek" is completely ruined. So it was refreshing to have a book where there was a major emotional scene in the film that took place to a 1992 My Bloody Valentine gig. It was exciting to have chapters named after Spacemen 3 albums (even if another one was unfortunately named after a Rolling Stones documentary). It was exciting to have Ride mentioned. The Jesus and Mary Chain. In that way, it sorta reminded me of Lev Grossman's The Magicians - understated jokes you'd only get growing up in the 90's, not a big deal made of it. But even without caring about this, this book is solid. Though I can't imagine what it'd be like reading it without a love of music. Also the 18th century portions of the novel sorta reminded me of a postmodern Suskin's Perfume. Oh, and to get to the end, and see that the book was written by Matthew Galloway - I knew I had recognized the name, but couldn't place it, until I got to the very last word of the author bio at the end, and discovered he was in Saturnine, who I really loved. I am listening to Your Maps right now. I missed these guys. Nice.

Alexander Inglis says

A somewhat daring first novel, Matthew Galloway's The Metropolis Case stiches together four lives using Wagner's most revolutionary opera, Tristan und Isolde as its thread. Lucien Marchand is a young man growing up in Europe in the 1840s who aspires to be a singer; Anna Prus, whom we first meet in 1960, is a celebrated Wagnerian singer and later professor at Juilliard; Maria is a late 1970s teenager, growing up in Pittsburgh, whose whole life revolves around opera (making for a somewhat odd childhood but leads her to Juilliard); and Martin, a divorced, gay New York lawyer who, at 41, partly triggered by the events of 9/11 which are played out from his office window, comes to the music of Tristan through the haze of drugs, punk bands and lost loves. Structurally, the novel cycles, chapter by chapter, from one character to the next, unveiling their lives and staging events to knit the players together.

The novel is at its best in the self-contained vignettes where Gallaway relaxes and indulges in wry humour and observations of the scene from the character's point of view; in other places, contrivances stick out unsatisfyingly. The worst case is the gimmick Gallaway relies on finally to bring all four stories to a single place which, I confess, once I saw it coming left me feeling disappointed. Gallaway also relies too often on death to alter circumstances rather than introduce a character with significant flaws to wreck havoc. Our four main characters, in the end, are kinda nice folks ... the story needs a bit more grit.

Notwithstanding, it was an entertaining read as the reviews below reflect. You do not need to be an opera lover, or a Wagnerite to enjoy the story; but you may need to know it has a very gay positive context slathered into these intertwined lives.

Reviews have appeared in The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, The New York Times, The Washington Post and Lambda Literary Review Online.
