

Playing the Black Piano By Bill Holm There's quite a variety of poems ranging from experiences in Iceland to nights on the prairie to classical music to a section of poems revolving around the death of a friend dying of AIDS. 9781571314178 The character of Bill Holm's new collection of poems *Playing the Black Piano* can be discerned from reading the book's dedication page; it is offered in memory of two men who practiced princely generosity to guests to literature to the liveliness and wisdom of the human spirit who kept their fine old houses open to a little good whiskey and good talk late in the night who left too soon. He begins with a poem about his ancestral home Iceland titled "The Ghost of Wang Wei Looks at Skagafjord": "How the old Chinese poets would have admired Iceland" Holm proclaims "Everything appears one at a time at great distance" and then strokes a verbal Zen painting of a poem including the image of One farmer the size of a matchstick walks out of his thimble barn to his postage-stamp hay field while over his head a river falls half a mile off a cliff. In "Night Fishing in Skagafjord" Holm conjures a thirteen-year-old girl fishing till midnight "What does she cast for every night / In this white light that lasts 'til August? / Pink trout? Love? The future? / Or does she fish to practice patience?" In an Icelandic supermarket he approaches the cashier with credit cards ready only to find that it is a cash-only establishment and perceives himself in "a foreign country even I have never traveled -- the kingdom of the poor" while impatient housewives mutter in line behind him. *Playing the Black Piano* is imbued with a sense of loss -- not just of the two men named in the dedication but in "An Early Morning Café" of those lost in the terrorist attacks of September 11 2001: "Humans so riddled with hate they turned / from men to bombs smashed the girders / under your café though they'd never met you / to murder you for the glory of God. " Holm's warning in the wake of 9/11 is clear and applies not just to the perpetrators of that horrific act but to any person or community with an overgrown sense of certainty: If you think you've bagged the one truth and that truth wants final sacrifice then you've stepped outside the human race and your plane will not land in heaven wherever you think it might be. Holm also mourns a public man Senator Paul Wellstone: This time as so often before Death snatched a big one when we could not stand to lose his voice that spoke not alone but for us millions who longed for a world green alive about to bloom. I'm left to wonder: what music will it make now? Bill Holm is himself an ebullient generous hospitable man and this collection of poems is chock full of perfectly pitched emotion and finely drawn observation. Using famous piano compositions as the vehicle Holm takes us through the dying process from finding out about his friend's illness to scattering the ashes but it is not depressing; it's profound. *Playing the Black Piano* reflects Holm's time in Iceland (his ancestral home) his ongoing love affair with music a friend's death from AIDS and his bold reactions to the world around him. Moving from Oregon forests to the deserts around Tucson from the endless marketing of long-distance telephone service to the experience of undergoing an MRI the poems speak of this man's full embrace of the world and his passion for living well. I will not shut poetry out of my life completely from now on! 9781571314178 Some haunting lines 9781571314178 MN's Bill Holm writes poetry in this book about Iceland music and death:

I gotta say I wasn't a big fan of Bill Holm until now: I tried reading "Iron John" and just couldn't get through it, In some ways he reminds me of Billy Collins but Holm is more Norse - sort of withheld humor, 9781571314178 I loved the first half of this book but was somewhat let down by the second half. Some of the poems (mainly the ones about Iceland) were incredible but many others very forgettable. Salud my friends! Holm lives up to the spirit of these old friends in poems that speak eloquently of places music pain death: But wait! Here's 5000 note -- cash the hoarded cash of the poor acrown or two kept in a cup until there's enough for bread milk salthorse a pancake: In the kingdom of the poor every language is foreign every country is strange somewhere you've never traveled before that will not want to see the likes of you again. One night I arrive at the door find a note: "I am sick, he wants to live -- / to rise from the couch shower / take everyone to dinner, Still he wants to live and about this one last wish nothing can be done, There is poetic justice however in the way that one life ending flows and merges to make it's indelible mark on another, I take my own hands to the black piano thinking this may be the last music this lovely man hears in this world. After

he goes a day or two later I found out he's willed me the blackpiano, By inviting us into his losses he provides good medicine for heart mind and soul, Playing the Black Piano resonates long after the hands leave the keys. 9781571314178 Any title with a piano in it is going to grab me but some don't turn out to be good: His poems are real relatable and filled with lines that take me to new places I would never have discovered on my own. The black piano refers to a piano in the room of a friend who is dying of AIDs: Holm also writes about travel in Iceland where he has a home as well as China the sea of Cortez and various places in the U. This is a book I will turn to many times because the poems truly speak to me. ' 9781571314178 In this new collection noted essayist Bill Holm (Coming Home Crazy Eccentric Islands The Heart Can Be Filled Anywhere on Earth) returns to his true love -- poetry: Like a modern-day Walt Whitman bestriding America and the world Holm comments on the waywardness and promise of the human species, Playing the Black Piano Some of Bill Holm's poems spoke to me. 9781571314178 Finally a book of poetry that I like! Thank you book group for choosing this for us to read. 9781571314178 Bill Holm was an American poet essayist memoirist and musician: Holm was born on a farm north of Minneota Minnesota the grandson of Icelandic immigrants: He attended Gustavus Adolphus College in Saint Peter Minnesota where he graduated in 1965: Holm won a Fulbright and went to Iceland for a year which stretched into longer, He continued to visit Iceland so regularly that his friends there helped him find a house in Hofsós, His last book The Windows of Brimnes is about his time in Iceland. He was Professor Emeritus of English at Southwest Minnesota State University where he taught classes on poetry and literature until his retirement in 2007: Though Minneota was his home Holm had travel Bill Holm was an American poet essayist memoirist and musician. Holm was born on a farm north of Minneota Minnesota the grandson of Icelandic immigrants, He attended Gustavus Adolphus College in Saint Peter Minnesota where he graduated in 1965. Holm won a Fulbright and went to Iceland for a year which stretched into longer. He continued to visit Iceland so regularly that his friends there helped him find a house in Hofsós, His last book The Windows of Brimnes is about his time in Iceland, He was Professor Emeritus of English at Southwest Minnesota State University where he taught classes on poetry and literature until his retirement in 2007: Though Minneota was his home Holm had traveled the world teaching English in China spending summers in Iceland and late winters in Arizona and visiting Europe and Madagascar: Holm was a frequent guest on Garrison Keillor's A Prairie Home Companion radio show and some of his poems were included in Keillor's Writer's Almanac. Holm was a McKnight Distinguished Artist in 2008 an award that honors Minnesota artists for their life work. "Playing the Black Piano" is just musical. An enjoyable collection of poetry. A mixed bag. .In his section of poems about Dr. Mike Doman Holm's observations are elegant direct and acute. Come in quietly. I don't need to be told. The handwriting gave me the news. While he aged a month it aged a century. The dying man has one last vital wish: ". ." But neither he nor his friends can avoid the inevitable. Go out with the best . . . He opens his eyes. "Beautiful" he says . . This book of poetry is delicious. Holm is wonderful poet and essayist.S. And he writes about the vagaries of everyday life. 9781571314178 Lovely lyrical memorable. You can almost hear Bill Holm's voice as you read. Perfect for folks who 'don't read poetry. Some didn't. And some sang arias. Later he attended the University of Kansas. Later he attended the University of Kansas. {site_link}



