



Songs in the Key of My Life: A Memoir

Ferentz Lafargue

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“Music is a world within itself, with a language we all understand.” —Stevie Wonder, “Sir Duke”

In 2003, young professor Ferentz LaFargue traveled to Paris, where his fiancée, Tricia, declared she wasn't happy with their relationship, ending what he thought was a wonderful engagement. After days of “crying”—“that sorrow-laden blend of crying and praying delivered in perfect pitch by those in mourning”—Ferentz happened upon Stevie Wonder's 1976 classic double album *Songs in the Key of Life*. Listening to it anew was a healing, spiritual trip down memory lane, helping him to come to terms with his breakup and reflect on how songs in general have been linked to his life.

In this book, Ferentz invites us to get cozy and listen as he hits PLAY on meaningful tracks from Wonder and others, including Lauryn Hill, Wyclef Jean, LL Cool J, Beanie Man, Sheryl Crow, Roberta Flack, Donny Hathaway, and Black Sabbath. He recalls:

How the fusion of rock and rap in the breakthrough Run-D.M.C./Aerosmith video “Walk This Way” helped to change an adolescent Ferentz from outcast to authority figure

How Michael Jackson's *Thriller* brought back a traumatic childhood experience

How Kanye West's “Jesus Walks” speaks to the tension between his Christian beliefs and his need to rip it up in clubs as a hip-hop head

In the tradition of Nick Hornby's *Songbook*, these words paint a portrait of a life framed by sounds, allowing all of us to think about what songs have been key in our own lives.

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