



Playing Scared: My Journey Through Stage Fright

SOLOVITCH SARA

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Stage fright is one of the human psyche's deepest fears. Over half of British adults name public speaking as their greatest fear, even greater than heights and snakes. Laurence Olivier learned to adapt to it, as have actors Salma Hayek and Hugh Grant. Musicians such as Paul McCartney and Adele have battled it and learned to cope. *Playing Scared* is Sara Solovitch's journey into the myriad causes of stage fright and the equally diverse ways we can overcome it. As a young child, Sara studied piano and fell in love with music. As a teen, she played Bach and Mozart at her hometown's annual music festival, but was overwhelmed by stage fright, which led her to give up aspirations of becoming a professional pianist. In her late fifties, Sara gave herself a one-year deadline to tame performance anxiety and play before an audience. She resumed music lessons, while exploring meditation, exposure therapy, cognitive therapy, biofeedback and beta blockers, among many other remedies. She practiced performing in airports, hospitals and retirement homes. Finally, the day before her sixtieth birthday, she gave a formal recital for an audience of fifty. Using her own journey as inspiration, Sara has written a thoughtful and insightful cultural history of performance anxiety and a tribute to pursuing personal growth at any age.

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