



What gave you the idea for this novel?

I was reading the program notes at a symphony concert that included a piece by Antonio Vivaldi, one of my favorite composers. When I read that he had composed two concertos a month for six-years, I wondered about the girls in the orphanage who played his works.

What inspired you to create your main character Grazia?

I imagined a beautiful and famous singer with perfect pitch and a pure voice who wanted to leave the orphanage. She sings and plays some of Vivaldi's pieces.

How did the society in 1723 Venice affect Grazia's and Antonio's love story?

Venice has just lost its seventh war with the Ottoman Empire. Because Venice no longer has trade agreements in the East and island trading posts in the Mediterranean Sea, their economy is suffering.

What was your source for drawing Antonio's father, Giovanni Delatesta?

I based Giovanni on two people, my maternal grandfather and a paternal uncle. My characters often are composites of individuals I have known or read about. I created the surname Delatesta, which means "of the head" in Italian.

Why was the group called The Ninety-nine so important?

In 1723, Venetian nobility was ranked from 1 to 800. The First Nine-nine families were the richest and most powerful. They paid for and ran the government, made laws, built the public works, sponsored charitable institutions, and paid the salaries of the Protectors (the police). Because Antonio's family is ranked 103, he must gain The Council of the Ninety-nine's permission to marry Grazia.

