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Thriller / 5.5" x 8.5"



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gary McAvo is author of both fiction and nonfiction, including his bestselling thriller series "The Magdalene Chronicles," and its sequel series, "Vatican Secret Archive Thrillers."

His nonfiction work "And Every Word Is True" has been hailed as a sequel to Truman Capote's landmark book "In Cold Blood." Gary is also a professional collector of ancient manuscripts and historical documents, much of which informs his writing projects.

THE DEVIL'S SYMPHONY

(VATICAN ARCHAEOLOGY THRILLERS BOOK 1)

In the shadowed depths of the Vatican's Secret Archives, archaeologist Marcus Russo, Father Michael Dominic, and investigative journalist Hana Sinclair uncover a chilling artifact—a centuries-old music box intricately crafted and bound with symbols of forgotten rites of alchemy. What begins as an academic curiosity quickly turns into a dire warning, as whispers of its sinister origins surface. The box, linked to an enigmatic 18th-century composer, Vincenzo Malvagio, holds within it a melody unlike any other—a composition rumored to have the power to summon forces beyond human comprehension. When the music is played, reality itself begins to shift, and darkness awakens from its long slumber.

As the trio dig deeper, they trace Malvagio's legacy through the abandoned monasteries of Switzerland, secretive alchemical guilds, and a Vatican conspiracy that sought to bury his work forever. Their search reveals an unsettling truth: the symphony was never meant to be merely heard—it was designed as a ritual, a key to unlocking something buried beneath the veil of history. Each note played draws them closer to an inevitable reckoning, as unexplainable phenomena spread from the Vatican to cathedrals across Europe. The music is no longer contained; it is spreading, imprinting itself onto those who hear it, bending minds and warping reality in ways neither faith nor reason can fully explain.

With time running out and the fabric of the known world unraveling, the team must find a way to silence the music before it reaches its final, apocalyptic crescendo. The melody's influence is growing, seeping beyond the walls of the Vatican and into the minds of those who hear even a fragment of its haunting refrain. As they race to uncover the final pieces of Malvagio's lost composition, they realize that the symphony itself is a force of its own—a vessel for something ancient and insidious, waiting to be unleashed. But can they stop a song that refuses to be forgotten, or has the Devil's Symphony already begun its final performance?

EDITORIAL REVIEWS

"Always a fan of Gary McAvo and his work, I jumped at the chance to read the second novel in the Vatican Archaeology Thriller series. McAvo uses his talents to highlight some great ideas and lesser-known finds, spinning them into a great story with much action and historical references. When a music box from centuries ago is found within the Vatican Secret Archives, its provenance and details are known to few. However, there is one man who is itching to get his hands on it, less for his melodious tunes and more to create havoc for many. It is up to a few dedicated individuals to keep the peace and prevent the winds of the supernatural from causing mayhem. McAvo's ideas pull the reader in once again with this piece.

While the Vatican Secret Archives are home to a number of interesting items, archaeologist Marcus Russo, and archivist Father Michael Dominic are aware of a chamber that has been sealed for over two centuries. It is said to contain some highly troubling and sinister items, though it is baffling why they were not destroyed and simply left to gather dust. Alongside investigative reporter, Hana Sinclair, the others become aware of an old music box covered in ancient symbols tied to the art of alchemy. This box is said to trace its roots back to composer Vincenzo Malvagio and the tune it plays is a composition that is not only chilling, but is said to summon forces of a darker and more sinister nature. No wonder it was locked away and kept from view.

While I have been enjoying the work of Gary McAvo for a number of years, he never becomes too repetitive. The ideas are always building off one another, while never getting stale or too simplistic. The narrative pushes the reader to feel a part of the entire process, enveloping them as they journey deeper into what is going on. Chapters speed by and leave the reader needing to know more, as they uncover truths and fictions one could not have predicted. Characters flavour the story well and keep the reader on edge as they seek to comprehend how everyone fits together. The plot, while subtle to start, soon gains momentum and the reader finds themselves surrounded by great surprises and a thoroughly entertaining set of events. McAvo has a knack for delivering a well-paced novel that never sheds too much light on fact and fiction until the final pages. Kudos, Mr. McAvo, for another gem in your collection of addictive novels!" — **MATT PECHEY, Reedsy**