

# Ann's Historical Fiction #8

05/31/24

## The novel continues...

### *Updates on a long one*

In my October newsletter, I described the novel, about composer Florence Price, I planned to write for the 2023 NaNoWriMo. I did write that novel, well some of it, during NaNo, with over 60,000 words. At that length, it was less than half finished. Oops.

I've been working on it lately. I'm now up to 65,000 words and still only about halfway. The main conflict of the story has yet to happen. There are three options here:

- 1) Publish a 125,000-word novel.
- 2) Publish two novels, using the latter half as a sequel.
- 3) Edit out a lot of the back story that still seems like story to me.

I don't know what the right path is, and I suspect I won't know to the end. At the 63,000 word mark, I finally introduced the love interest. All I do know is that all the options will require a lot of editing and rewriting.

On the next page, I'll talk about a specific issue I had with one novel—not separating what I know of the historical characters well enough from their counterparts in the story. In that novel, I didn't give them enough of a life separate from the historical record.

In the Florence Price novel, it's the opposite. Because it is a counterfactual story, I get to make up everything. Part of the reason it's taking so many words, is that I'm finding the need to create a whole new life for her character. Here's to searching for a middle ground!

Genre: Historical fiction, with a bit of fantasy thrown in for good measure.



## Kickstarter?

### *Funding the children's book*

I'm in the process of checking out self-publishing and some small presses that specialize in children's books.

Either way, though, SIE will need to find money to pay for the publishing costs.

Through a webinar from [Reedsy](#) (check them out if you are a writer!) I learned about using Kickstarter for just that purpose. Brand new authors and well-established ones (Brandon Sanderson holds the record for funds raised on Kickstarter) use the site to promote and fund their books.

No final decisions yet but be on the lookout for news as we finish the illustrations for the book.

# Writing Lessons

In previous newsletters, I've asked for anyone interested in being a beta reader to let me know. In this article, I'll explain what a beta reader does, how that differs from submissions to my critique group, and an example of what I've learned from both types of feedback.

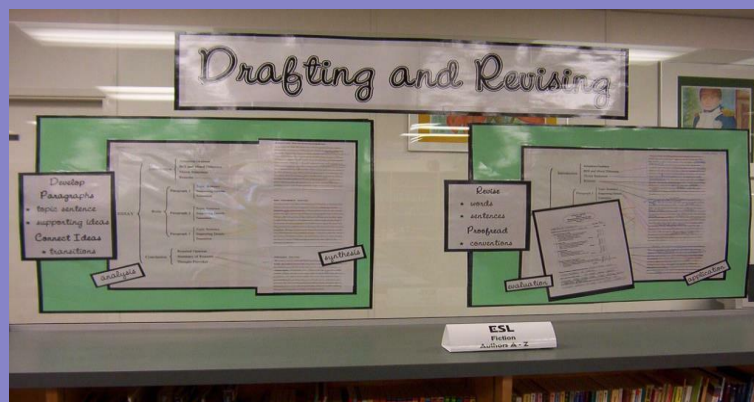
A beta reader reads an entire novel, from start to finish. Typically, they don't edit, although if you are beta reading for me and find a "very bad" word, please let me know about it! Instead, the writer usually asks the reader to answer a few high level questions. Although it differs depending on the novel, two I like to ask are: "Where did you get taken out of the story?", and "Are the main characters' voices unique?"

A critique group gets just a few pages of a novel, usually between 10 and 20. Those critiquing take a deeper dive that includes line edits, suggested sentence rewrites, and questions about the consistency of the story told in those few pages. They can also make more general suggestions, and give examples for ways to rethink the writing.

Those examples, and the comments from a beta reader can overlap, as they did for one of my novels. Both the reader and the critique group cited specific issues, and made suggestions. One of the difficulties in writing historical fiction is separating what the author reads about the character from that same character in the story. They are not the same people. In this case, I hadn't done that very well, and it took hearing concerns about the way the story flowed from both the reader and the critique group to understand that. Time to rewrite!



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# Double Stops

*These are not easy!*

In some of the music I have been sightreading with my teacher, I've encountered double stops. Double stops, on a string instrument, are when one holds down two notes at a time, on two different (adjacent) strings. It sounds simple in theory but can be challenging. For sightreading, double stops complicate the process because of the need to, within the same tempo constraints, read two notes at the same time. I'm not very good at that.

Anyone who has learned to play a violin knows where I am going with this. Yes, I pulled out my copy of Josephine Trott's, "Melodious Double Stops." For everyone else, this is a book of etudes focusing on practicing these, for me, difficult figures to play.

I did well enough on the first few etudes, meant to be easier. It's number 13 that has me struggling. It involves holding down one note on one string, while playing a few different notes on another. What makes this more difficult is not just the fingering with the left hand (the one that holds down the notes) but the need for accurate and consistent bowing across two strings for the full length of the note that is being held while the others vary.

The problem epitomizes the challenge of playing any bowed string instrument—coordinating the action of the two hands doing wildly different things. Off to practice!

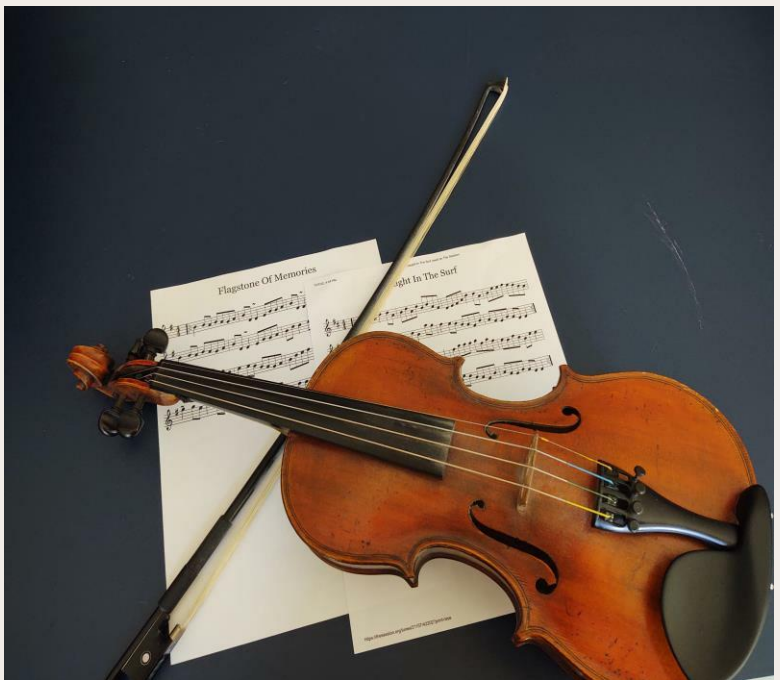


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