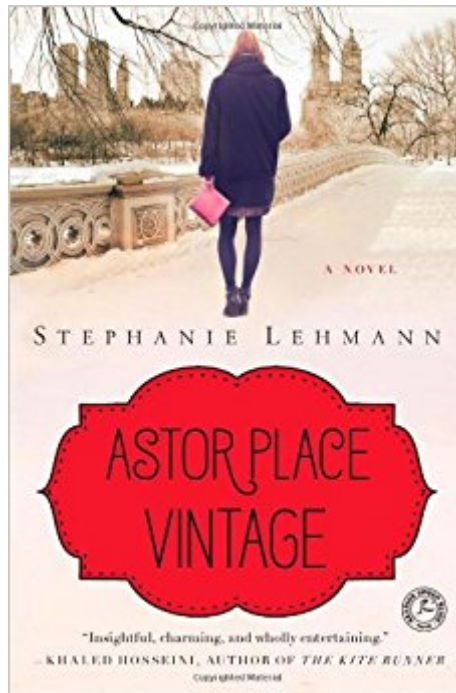




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Astor Place Vintage: A Novel



Synopsis

Amanda Rosenbloom, proprietor of Astor Place Vintage, thinks she's on just another call to appraise and possibly purchase clothing from a wealthy, elderly woman. But after discovering a journal sewn into a fur muff, Amanda gets much more than she anticipated. The pages of the journal reveal the life of Olive Westcott, a young woman who had moved to Manhattan in 1907. Olive was set on pursuing a career as a department store buyer in an era when Victorian ideas, limiting a woman's sphere to marriage and motherhood, were only beginning to give way to modern ways of thinking. As Amanda reads the journal, her life begins to unravel until she can no longer ignore this voice from the past. Despite being separated by one hundred years, Amanda finds she's connected to Olive in ways neither could ever have imagined.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Author One-on-One: Stephanie Lehman and Lauren Willig >

"A thoroughly engaging story about fate, struggle, and will, as told through the intertwined lives of two women in New York living a century apart. Past and present blur in unexpected ways in this insightful, charming, and wholly entertaining novel." (Khaled Hosseini, author of *The Kite Runner*) "Lehmann's blend of past and present perfectly woven together create an addictively readable novel. New York City will never look the same to me after reading *Astor Place Vintage*." • (Kathleen Grissom, author of *The Kitchen House*) "This soul-searching journey of two women

magically connected though time is spellbinding. I was transported by every moment." • (Marjorie Hart, author of *Summer at Tiffany*) "Stephanie Lehman's *Astor Place Vintage* is a fascinating tour of turn of the century New York. Guaranteed to appeal to anyone who likes to search for the bones of the past beneath the bustle of the present." (Lauren Willig, author of *The Secret History of the Pink Carnation*) "A novel bound to be next summer's guilty pleasure! I love Amanda and Olive and how we come to understand what links them despite the passage of time. I love what Lehmann has done with the 1907 city--how real it is." • (Beverly Swerling, author of *City of Promise*) "This utterly engrossing novel gives us a portrait of one of the most fascinating cities in the world where long after the book has ended you will walk the streets in your mind." • (Stephanie Cowell, author of *Claude and Camille* and American Book Award recipient) "A splendid banquet of fashion, style, and both old and contemporary New York City, couched in a riveting story. A feast not to be missed!" • (Lynn Cullen, author of *The Creation of Eve*) "Anyone who loves vintage clothing, feels the pull of nostalgia, and has a taste for retro will be utterly transported by this wise and wonderful novel. A mesmerizing story about two women separated by a century but united by a quest for independence, a talent for business, and the challenges of being a woman that arise in every era." (Pamela Redmond, author of *The Possibility of You*) "The past meets the present in Lehmann's work of feminist literary fiction. . . . The author combines an impressive knowledge of history, sociology and psychology to create an intellectually and emotionally rewarding story." • (Kirkus) "Lehmann does a seamless job of moving between the past and present and gives a definite sense of place to the story's two periods, with rich descriptions of city life and architecture. First-class storytelling with an enticing dose of New York City history." (Publishers Weekly, starred review)

Astor Place Vintage weaves an intriguing and entertaining tale of historical fiction. Sharing with us the lives of two women separated by a century in time, but tethered together by a mutual love of all that's New York, it is almost impossible to put down. In this richly told novel, Stephanie Lehmann bravely yet gently touches on a few timeless themes regarding feminist topics and extra-marital affairs. Her research and sensory details of turn-of-the-century New York immerse you fully in the experience. The characters, especially Olive and Angelina, were so well drawn you could imagine meeting them for lunch and having a great time. The ending comes up on you unexpectedly, and bit too quickly. I liked the wrapping up of the story: both believable and satisfying on multiple levels, yet it left me wanting more. I guess that's what she wanted. Nevermind!

This is one of those books that has been on my radar for a while but I just now had the chance to sit down and read it. It was definitely a promising prospect--the plot convention of two stories separated by time is something that appeals to me, as is the time period of Olive's story. And, indeed, there were things I found enjoyable. I really loved how Lehmann took the time to juxtapose the New York City of 1907 upon the New York City on 2007. She does an admirable job of really going over the geography of the city and how things have changed. I also appreciated the period photographs she included in the book. I also found Olive's story line intriguing. A young woman who, through no fault of her own, falls from her place in society but still has the gumption to pull herself up and achieve her dreams. Lehmann spends quite a bit of time highlighting Olive's naivete in the ways of passion, which actually fits quite well into her character and serves to draw a clear distinction between the life she lost and the life she had to live. On the other hand, I found Amanda's story line almost unbearable. A woman who has been in a 6 year relationship with a married man and then wonders why she's stuck? That is just a tired story that's been told too many times. I never felt any empathy for Amanda and, therefore, had no patience for her. I can see how Lehmann was trying to tie the characters of Olive and Amanda together, but it either just didn't connect, or it connected too easily to be believable. There were some other issues with this book. I respect Lehmann's attempt to illustrate the issues women had to face in the early 20th century in Olive's narrative, but she just tried to cram too much in. She talked about religion, women in the workplace, childbirth, birth control, sexual fidelity, and immigration. Phew! I also didn't find Lehmann's style as readable as I thought I would. She isn't a difficult author to read, but there is just something a bit uncomfortable in her voice that I found a bit irritating. It was almost as if she were not completely natural in her writing. I think if this book had been just about Olive, I would have loved it. As it is, it was just a lukewarm read for me.

Astor Place Vintage used both Amanda and Olive in two different times to focus on their experiences of being single women living in New York. Olive's story connected with Amanda's when Amanda was contacted to place several old items found in an elderly woman's basement on consignment in her vintage store. I identified with Amanda's draw toward New York's history and interest in the lives of the prior generations who inhabited her neighborhood. Amanda's interest in such topics led her to relax by reading a mysterious journal written by Olive that Amanda found among the items she accepted on consignment. Yet, that was about the extent of my interest in Amanda's life. Her entanglement with a married man was a bit of a negative for me. She came off as needy and desperate, two qualities I don't like in heroines. I also didn't find her story to be

relevant to Olive's. Amanda didn't learn or gain anything from Olive's tale, and ultimately, her portion of the book just felt like filler. On the other hand, I loved Olive's story of a young woman desperate to make a name for herself in a society where women were overlooked and underpaid. When her father died, the opportunity for Olive to spread her wings and seek gainful employment was suddenly a necessity. Olive used her knowledge of cosmetics to bluff her way into a job at a department store, where she flourished as a salesgirl. Earning a wage of mere dollars a week left her with few housing options and mandated that she lived far below the standard to which she was accustomed. Olive was my favorite character because she was spunky and bright. The author did a great job of using Olive's feminist ideals as motivations for her story. This was a good read, but the ending happened too quickly and the connection between Amanda and Olive didn't make a huge impact on either character. The flat ending was disappointing and didn't make this novel stand out to me. If you want to give it a try, here's a link: [Astor Place Vintage: A Novel](#). Please read more of my reviews on my blog: <http://fastpageturner.wordpress.com> or follow me on twitter at @dana_heyde

I'm sorry. I really try not to write bad reviews because I don't like to but when I see a book getting great reviews over and over again it makes me wonder who's writing them. From page one with this book I kept thinking, "Have I already read this?" but when I went to my bookshelf I couldn't find anything by this writer. It happened over and over again and finally I started to remember other books and I went back to my books and pulled multiple books with the same general "theme" it seemed like it was the idea and concepts of those other books, which is fine, if you can do it better than they did or if you have a new twist. I'm sorry to say this author didn't. I could see what was coming from the first chapter and I found the main character completely unlikable.

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