



## The Invisible Bridge (Vintage Contemporaries)

By Julie Orringer

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Paris, 1937. Andras Lévi, a Hungarian-Jewish architecture student, arrives from Budapest with a scholarship, a single suitcase, and a mysterious letter he promised to deliver. But when he falls into a complicated relationship with the letter's recipient, he becomes privy to a secret that will alter the course of his—and his family's—history.

From the small Hungarian town of Konyár to the grand opera houses of Budapest and Paris, from the despair of Carpathian winter to an unimaginable life in labor camps, *The Invisible Bridge* tells the story of a family shattered and remade in history's darkest hour.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

**Amazon Best Books of the Month, May 2010:** Even if this weren't her first novel, Julie Orringer's *Invisible Bridge* would be a marvelous achievement. Orringer possesses a rare talent that makes a 600-page story--which, we know, must descend into war and genocide--feel rivetingly readable, even at its grimmest. Building vivid worlds in effortless phrases, she immerses us in 1930s Budapest just as a young Hungarian Jew, Andras Lévi, departs for the École Spéciale d'Architecture in Paris. He hones his talent for design, works backstage in a theater, and allies with other Jewish students in defiance of rising Nazi influence. And then he meets Klara, a captivating Hungarian ballet instructor nine years his senior with a painful past and a willful teenage daughter. Against Klara's better judgment, love engulfs them, drowning out the rumblings of war for a time. But inevitably, Nazi aggression drives them back to Hungary, where life for the Jews goes from hardship to horror. As in *Dr. Zhivago*, these lovers can't escape history's merciless machinery, but love gives them the courage to endure. --Mari Malcolm

#### From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Given the novel's size and subject matter, critics can be forgiven for their initial skepticism over a 600-plus page book on the Holocaust--by a first-time novelist, no less. But they were very pleasantly surprised--astonished, even--at Orringer's beautifully rendered novel, which most believed, with its "sweep akin to that of *Dr. Zhivago*" (*New York Times*) and other classics, is destined to become a modern-day classic itself. Although one critic felt the novel could have used a more aggressive editor and others noted some overwrought language, most described *The Invisible Bridge* as a beautifully researched, old-fashioned love story, "the type Tolstoy might have scratched out with a gnawed pencil" (*Onion AV Club*). Four stars, or four-and-a-half stars? Only time will tell if we gave it a half too few.

#### From [Booklist](#)

\*Starred Review\* Andras Lévi wants to study architecture, but since opportunities for Jews are limited in Hungary, he goes to Paris instead. There he lives among other students at the Ecole Spéciale, makes ends meet by working in the theater, and falls in love with Klara, a fellow Hungarian with a dark secret in her past. With war looming, Andras is forced to return to Budapest, and Klara follows him. Soon, their lives are swamped by history. Andras is conscripted into the labor service, and in an act of defiance, he and a friend produce a series of subversive newspapers. As a result, just when the Lévi clan is about to immigrate to Palestine, he and his whole battalion are loaded on a train and shipped to the Ukraine. Back in Budapest in 1944, Andras reflects that the Jews of Hungary had been relatively lucky. Then the Nazis invade. Orringer's first novel (her short story collection, *How to Breathe Underwater*, won several awards) is a hugely ambitious undertaking, but she has every detail under control, from the architectural currents in Europe in the 1930s to the day-to-day struggle to survive in a work camp. The early sections set in Paris, in particular, are completely absorbing, and if sometimes the emotional force of this long, long book gets lost in the march of events, it is still an astonishing achievement. --Mary Ellen Quinn

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**Victor Willis:**

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