

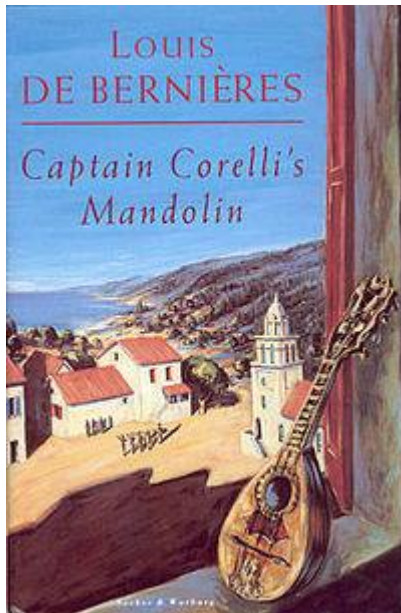
Captain Corelli's Mandolin

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Jump to: [navigation](#), [search](#)

For the 2001 film, see [Captain Corelli's Mandolin \(film\)](#).

Captain Corelli's Mandolin



1st Edition front cover

Author(s)	Louis de Bernières
Country	United Kingdom
Language	English
Genre(s)	Historical , Romance , War novel
Publisher	Secker & Warburg
Publication date	1994
Media type	Print (Hardback & Paperback)
Pages	544
ISBN	0-436-20158-5

Captain Corelli's Mandolin, released simultaneously as **Corelli's Mandolin**^[1] in the United States, is a [1994^{\[2\]} novel](#) written by [Louis de Bernières](#) which takes place on the Greek island of Cephallonia ([Kefalonia](#)) during the [Italian and German occupation](#) of [World War II](#). The main characters are Antonio Corelli, an Italian captain, and Pelagia, the daughter of the local physician, Dr. Iannis. An important event in the novel is the [massacre of Italian troops by the Germans](#) in September 1943—the Italian Acqui Division had refused to surrender and fought the Germans for nine days before running out of ammunition. Some 1,500 Italian soldiers died in the fighting, 5,000 were massacred after surrendering and the rest shipped to Germany—although 3,000 drowned when the ship carrying them hit a mine.

Contents

[\[hide\]](#)

- [1 Synopsis](#)
 - [1.1 Major characters](#)
 - [1.2 Major themes](#)
- [2 References](#)
- [3 Real story and precedents](#)
- [4 Awards](#)
- [5 Adaptations](#)
 - [5.1 Radio](#)
 - [5.2 Film](#)
 - [5.3 Theatre](#)
- [6 External links](#)
- [7 References](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Synopsis

[\[edit\]](#) Major characters

- Dr. Iannis - The island's unofficial, unlicensed doctor, who spends much of his time writing about the history of Cephallonia. He is respected by the community, although regarded as a bit odd, and is thanked for his medical services by means of food and drink.
- Pelagia - Dr. Iannis's daughter who is not like the other women on the island (she is well educated and has a lot of respect from her father), who at first falls in love with Mandras, then later with Corelli.
- Antonio Corelli - An Italian captain with a love for music and life. He detests the war, and gradually falls in love with Pelagia; but the war inevitably tears them apart again.
- Mandras - A young, handsome fisherman who falls in love with Pelagia, only to destroy their relationship by going to fight in the war, and ultimately humiliating himself.
- Carlo Piero Guercio - A good-natured homosexual Italian soldier who falls in love with Francesco only to lose him to the war. He later falls in love with Corelli and sacrifices his life to save the Captain's.

[\[edit\]](#) Major themes

Captain Corelli's Mandolin explores many varieties of [love](#). We see the initial [lust](#)-based love between Pelagia and Mandras, which burns out as a result of the war, and the change it prompts in both of them. Corelli and Pelagia's slow-developing love is the central focus of the novel. Love is described by Dr. Iannis as "what is left when the passion has gone", and it

certainly appears that this criterion is fulfilled by the love of Corelli and Pelagia. The paternal love of Iannis for Pelagia is also strong and is heavily compared and contrasted to that of Corelli.

The theme of [music](#) is predominant, offering a direct contrast to the horror and destruction that the war brings, showing how something beautiful can arise from something horrible.

The [war](#) is described in graphic detail, particularly the death of Francesco. It is responsible for the fall of Mandras and Weber, the deaths of Carlo and Francesco, and the separation of Pelagia and Corelli.

Throughout the novel, de Bernières takes a harsh view of all forms of [totalitarianism](#), condemning [Fascism](#), [Nazism](#), and [Communism](#) alike. De Bernières described this as a novel about "what happens to the little people when megalomaniacs get busy."

Another theme of the novel is the study of [history](#). Dr. Iannis spends much of his spare time attempting to write a history of Cephallonia, but often finds his personal feelings and biases running through whatever he writes. There is also a strong feeling against 'professional' history which is suggested by Carlo Guercio's statement that "I know that if we [the axis] win then there will be stories about mass graves in London and vice versa". This is reinforced by De Bernières' quotation that: "history ought to be made up of the stories of ordinary people only." From this viewpoint it can be seen that de Bernières is very much a [revisionist](#) historian, considering social history superior to that of political.

De Bernières takes an ambiguous attitude toward [heroism](#) and [villainy](#) in the novel: many of the characters, despite committing atrocities, are viewed as human victims of bad circumstances. For example, the character Günter Weber carries a great degree of sympathy from the writer, even though he fully engages with the [Nazi](#) ideology and is guilty of taking part in the killing of an [entire Italian division](#). Despite having become friends with many of the men, he must follow orders. Similarly, Mandras is guilty of [murder](#), torture and [rape](#), yet the author portrays him sympathetically: "just another life tarnished... by war."

[\[edit\]](#) References

Near the end of the novel (Chapter 62), Pelagia receives a photograph from Günter Weber with a German passage from [Goethe](#)'s "[Faust](#)" (also a very popular German *Lied*, set to music by Schubert: *Gretchen am Spinnrad*) written on the back. It reads:

Meine Ruh ist hin,
Mein Herz ist schwer,
Ich finde sie nimmer
und nimmermehr.

Which translates as:

My peace is gone,
My heart is sore [*lit.* "heavy"],
I will find it never
and nevermore.

[\[edit\]](#) Real story and precedents

De Bernières has denied that the character of Corelli is based on [Amos Pampaloni](#) who was then an Italian artillery captain in Cephellonia, despite the many similarities in their stories. Pampaloni survived execution, joined [ELAS](#), the Partisans in the Greek civil war, and fought with them in [Epirus](#) for 14 months. Pampaloni was interviewed by the *Guardian* newspaper in 2000^[3] and expressed the view that the novel was unduly critical of the Greek left.

The novel also shows some similarities to *Bandiera bianca a Cefalonia*, a novel by [Marcello Venturi](#) published in 1963, translated in English as *The White Flag* (1969).

[\[edit\]](#) Awards

1995 - [Commonwealth Writers Prize](#) for Best Book

2004 - 19th place on [The Big Read](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Adaptations

[\[edit\]](#) Radio

The novel was adapted as four 45-minute radio plays from 17–20 September 2007 on BBC Radio 4, having been chosen as a popular 'Book of the Week' on the same station some years earlier. The episode titles were "A Pea in the Ear," "Invasion of the Italians," "Looking for Snails" and "Earthquake." It was narrated by [Tom Goodman-Hill](#), with [Celia Meiras](#) as Pelagia, [Stephen Greif](#) as Dr Iannis, [Daniel Philpott](#) as Corelli. The mandolin music for it was composed and performed by [Alison Stephens](#), and the production was produced and directed by [David Hunter](#). Other cast members included:

- Carlo - [Anthony Psaila](#)
- Mandras - [Chris Pavlo](#)
- Velisarios - [Alexi Kaye Campbell](#)
- Father Arsenios - [Alex Zorbas](#)
- Lemoni - [Ania Gordon](#)
- Drosoula - [Anna Savva](#)
- Hector - [Nitin Ganatra](#)
- Officer - [Simon Treves](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Film

Main article: [Captain Corelli's Mandolin \(film\)](#)

A film version of *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* was released in 2001, with [Nicolas Cage](#) as the Italian Captain Corelli, [John Hurt](#) as Dr. Iannis, and [Penélope Cruz](#) as his daughter, Pelagia.. It also starred [Christian Bale](#),[Irene Papas](#) and [Joanna Daria Adraktas](#). It was directed by [John Madden](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Theatre

In 2011, the [Mercury Theatre](#) of [Colchester](#), [UK](#) and Kote Marjanishvili Theatre of [Tbilisi](#), [Georgia](#) produced an adaptation written by Mike Maran and directed by Levan Tsuladze. The production combined live actors and puppetry. The production had its premiere in Georgia at the Tbilisi International Festival in October 2011 before transferring to the Mercury.^{[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)}