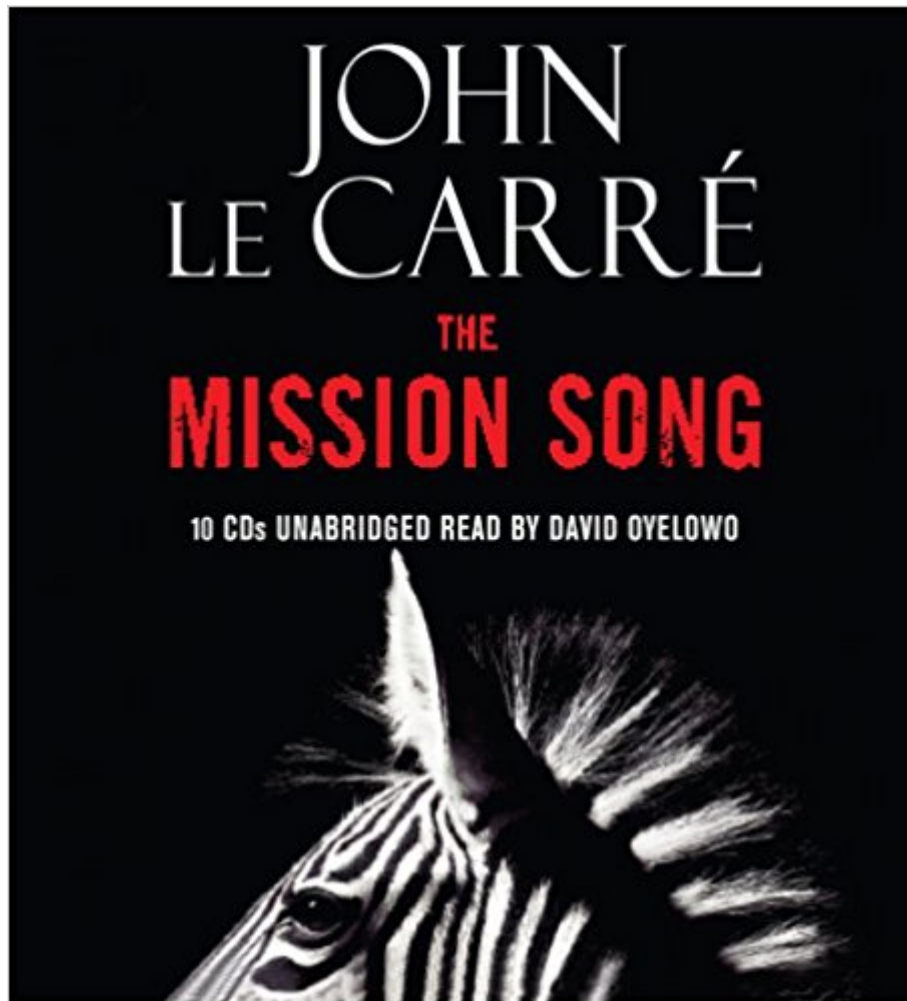




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# The Mission Song: A Novel



## Synopsis

Hailed everywhere as a masterpiece of suspense, John le Carré's return to Africa is the story of Bruno Salvador (aka Salvo), the 25-year-old orphaned love child of an Irish missionary and a Congolese woman. Quickly rising to the top of his profession as an interpreter, Salvo is dispatched by British Intelligence to a top-secret meeting between Western financiers and East Congolese warlords, where he hears things not meant for his ears - and is forced to interpret matters never intended for his reawoken African conscience. By turns thriller, love story, and comic allegory of our times, *THE MISSION SONG* recounts Salvo's heroically naïve journey out of the dark of Western hypocrisy and into the heart of lightness. "A ragingly readable adventure tale. . . . Every issue of today is here: class warfare, race, torture, immigration, language. But *THE MISSION SONG* is also a tender love story, a fast-paced thriller, and a story with as many brilliant minor characters as major. Like another favorite of mine, *The Constant Gardener*, it 'gets' the centrality of Africa to our world today." -Salon> --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Bruno Salvo, the illegitimate son of an Irish missionary father and a Congolese mother, is one of le Carré's most interesting lead characters "and one of the most difficult for an actor to bring to life using just his voice. Fortunately, Oyelowo, a veteran of everything from televised comedy to live Shakespeare, has the ability to quickly catch and transmit to listeners the many elements of Bruno's essence in this moving and surprisingly amusing audio version of arguably the author's least typical novel. Oyelowo never falters in presenting the many other

characters who flesh out the story, from the Roman mentor who shapes the orphaned Bruno's future as a professional interpreter of African tribal languages to the British intelligence agents who eventually recruit him. Oyelowo positively shines with recognizable truth as he shrewdly recreates Bruno's growing awareness of the power this knowledge gives him "personally, politically and socially. It would be difficult for any other actor, even one with more star power, to take Bruno Salvo into film or television without us hearing Oyelowo's voice in our heads while we watch. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

The Mission Song, John le Carré's 20th novel in a career spanning nearly half a century, most famously in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1964), receives mixed marks. Critics who enjoy the novel praise le Carré's intricate plotting, atmospheric settings, and his ear for dialogue; all the trademark riffs of the undisputed master of the Cold War thriller now setting his sights on new enemies. Those who detect a misfire here focus on the torturous complexity of the story and a confusing structure. Bottom line: Readers of le Carré will recall why they gravitated to his work in the first place; first-timers might have difficulty with the sometimes improbable twists and turns that impede a good spy story. Copyright © 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

I love reading LeCarre'. You do have to take your time, focus, follow every word and sometimes go back and read some things again to make sure you have it. But the stream of consciousness of the character is riveting and sometimes shocking as various events sneak up on you and catch you off guard like you are personally experiencing something totally unexpected that grabs you out of nowhere by the throat. You become the main character. Here are some additional thoughts: 1. There is a lot of thoughtful information about Africa, its beauty, natural resources, and how it is being manipulated by big business and little is being done to help protect the people and the ridiculous bloodshed and horrible raping of the country. Could it be true that USA and GB actually allow some of this to take place? 2. There is a lot of irony in this book. Some of the worst characters turn out to be some of the best and vice versa. It paints a picture of the world that you might not like and yet it also, in the end, leaves some hope. 3. LeCarre' is such a pro at describing the subtleties of spying. This book is full of instructions on how rookies and pros react and handle things. It's obvious that he knows his stuff. 4. As much as I enjoyed it, I still found that there were too many clichés such as the wife Penelope, the magazine she works for, the bad guys in government and Africa, the almost virgin Mary like girlfriend, etc. And yet certain of the characters are unforgettable and hopefully alive

and doing well in Africa. Another great book.

**The Mission Song** John Le Carr (John Le Carr (David John Moore Cromwell)) began his literary career, not in the law as his lawless progenitor might have wished, but as a gifted storyteller with a clear and present villain, and he invested several increasingly masterful novels in dumping on the Soviets, in Berlin, in British Secret Service and beyond, mostly in a "Big Brother" context, initially inspired in his own employment in MI5 and MI6. Then the Cold War ended, the spies "excuse me, "agents" were being put out to pasture, and there were no clear-cut heroes or victims, only an emerging and increasingly heartless nemesis in business, industry and finance. What happened to righteousness and idealism? They were being traded to the highest bidder, in the quest for new and vital treasures. Forget gold and diamonds, this is the world of electronic components and rare crystal combinations previously, if at all, barely known. Now our much-lauded author "also a journalist, essayist, TV, radio and film scriptwriter, even actor" is a greater than ever storyteller and his novels, no longer seedy or paternalistic, are vicious, populated by villains we can scarcely imagine, spanning the epidermic color spectrum and speaking rare and highly localized languages. If Le Carr (his carefully chosen pen name), a product of abandonment by his mother at age 5, occasionally delves into relationships, and he does, he frequently "unwittingly or otherwise" opens a peephole into his own appalling childhood, his devious and fraudulent father, and the unresolved pathos and pain in his personal psyche, apparent despite sarcasm, cynicism or what passes for incidental disregard, woven into the pages of, to date, 23 novels.

Easy to follow the plot, characters one loves until heartbreak. I have been an admirer of Mr. le Carr and after reading this book would be happy to do his laundry and cook his meals. Would recommend this book to anyone having half a brain.

This review is for the Back Bay Books (Little, Brown and Company) paperback edition, November 2007, 337 pages. **THE MISSION SONG** was on the USA Today's Top 150 Best-Selling books list for 4 weeks in September and October 2006, reaching the peak position of 15. John Le Carr has 2 novels on the USA Today best-seller list. (He published most of his novels prior to the inception of the list.) Bruno Salvador (aka Salvo), the love child of an Irish missionary and a Congolese woman, lives in England. He is the toy boy for an aggressive journalist whenever she is not sleeping her way to success, but the story is not about her. Salvo is on the verge of leaving his wife. He's just fallen in

love with Hannah. She's from the Eastern Congo and much more to his liking. Salvo is an interpreter. He speaks English, French, Swahili and a several obscure Congolese languages. British intelligence provides Salvo with a temporary identity and loans him to powerful elements to interpret rival warlords negotiating a secret deal to save the East Congo from the Rwandans and the fat cats in Kinshasa. It should have been a lucrative job for three days work. But Salvo interprets more than he should and discovers a betrayal that he and Hannah must expose. As I read THE MISSION SONG, I felt the story familiar. In fact, I so clearly visualized some of the opening scenes I figured I'd seen the movie. But there is no movie yet. The novel, first published in September 2006, is John Le Carré's most recent work. Surely, I had not read it before. But as I waded on, I realized I had. I vividly remember the plot and characters in THE CONSTANT GARDNER, although I didn't see the movie. If Hollywood films THE MISSION SONG, I'd like to see it. Maybe the movie will be more memorable than the book.

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