ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

POETRY

Two Golden Rings
Larry Corse
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Four Stars (out of Five)

David Marshall and Larry Corse met in 1995, but did not get married until October 30, 2008, because same-sex marriage was not legal in California until that year. Unfortunately, it became illegal again a few days after their wedding with the passage of Proposition 8. Happy to be married to his husband, but also acutely aware of the injustices created by Proposition 8, Larry Corse in *Two Golden Rings* writes a series of passionate poems that celebrate his love, but also argue that all same-sex couples should be free to marry if they wish.

Corse is a professor emeritus of English and theater at Clayton State University and has a novel and two previous books of poetry to his credit. He is also a composer of operas.

Two Golden Rings begins with a powerful poem about the day that David and Larry exchanged rings by the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, France. Connecting themselves with the liberation represented by the arch, Corse writes of sieging Paris with “fires of love,” and ends with the defiant declaration, “We may not give Paris back.” This poem establishes a heady, exhilarating tone that continues throughout the book.

The poems continue, making a zealous stand for marriage equality. Some, such as “The Fight for Love,” take a militant tack, speaking of love wielded as a weapon. Other poems, such as “A Modest Proposal for Happy Holidays” and “It Comes to This,” express marriage as a state of quiet joy that should not be limited by unreasoning prejudice or hate, but instead available to any who choose to unite themselves in this way. Balancing calm and excited modes in his poetry, Corse runs the gamut of emotion with verse that is both measured and charged with sentiment.

At the heart of *Two Golden Rings* is, of course, the strong bond shared by David and Larry. In quiet poems, such as "The Gentle Woodworker and the Poet," Corse compares his personality to his husband's and reflects on their relationship. He describes his husband and their life simply, with obvious love:

> *David is remodeling houses and I am off to the gym.*
> *I will cook something nice for his supper tonight.*
> *So gym, grocery store and home again.*

More clearly than any generalizations about same-sex couples wanting the same things that heterosexual couples want, this poem, with its contentment in cozy domesticity, proves the equivalence between David and Larry and their heterosexual counterparts. As a *cri du Coeur*, *Two Golden Rings* makes its case for love's universality more strongly than a purely rational argument.