



Reverend Katz Library

New Book Reviews

February 2020

As we begin a new year we invite you to come to the library to make your reading selection for 2020. Some very interesting books are found on our shelves and there is great enjoyment available for all those who enjoy reading books with a Jewish background.

Norman Lebrecht, Genius and anxiety; how Jews changed the world HIS LEB

In a hundred-year period, a handful of men and women changed the world. Many of them are well known—Marx, Freud, Proust, Einstein, Kafka. Others have vanished from collective memory despite their enduring importance in our daily lives. Without Karl Landsteiner, for instance, there would be no blood transfusions or major surgery. Without Paul Ehrlich, no chemotherapy. Without Siegfried Marcus, no motor car. Without Rosalind Franklin, genetic science would look very different. Without Fritz Haber, there would not be enough food to sustain life on earth.

What do these visionaries have in common? They all had Jewish origins. They all had a gift for thinking in wholly original, even earth-shattering ways. In 1847, the Jewish people made up less than 0.25% of the world's population, and yet they saw what others could not. How? Why?

Norman Lebrecht has devoted half of his life to pondering and researching the mindset of the Jewish intellectuals, writers, scientists, and thinkers who turned the tides of history and shaped the world today as we know it. In *Genius & Anxiety*, Lebrecht begins with the Communist Manifesto in 1847 and ends in 1947, when Israel was founded. This robust, magnificent, beautifully designed volume is “an urgent and moving history” (The Spectator, UK) and a celebration of Jewish genius and contribution.

Ben Elton, Two brothers F ELT

A deeply poignant novel set in Berlin between 1920 and 1945

Berlin 1920

Two babies are born.

Two brothers. United and indivisible, sharing everything. Twins in all but blood.

As Germany marches into its Nazi Armageddon, the ties of family, friendship and love are tested to the very limits of endurance. And the brothers are faced with an unimaginable choice....Which one of them will survive?

Ben Elton's most personal novel to date, *Two Brothers* transports the reader to the time of history's darkest hour.

Juliet Rieden, *Writing on the wall; how one boy, my father survived the Holocaust* HIS RIE

In 1939, as Hitler's troops march on Prague, a Jewish couple makes a heartbreaking decision that will save their eight-year-old son's life but change their family forever.

Australian journalist Juliet Rieden grew up in England in the 1960s and 70s always sensing that her family was different in some way. She longed to have relatives and knew precious little about her Czech father's childhood as a refugee.

On the night before Juliet's father died, in 2006, Juliet's father suddenly looked up and said: 'The plane is in the hangar.' In the years after his death, Juliet comes to truly understand the significance of these words.

On a trip to Prague she is shocked to see the Rieden name written many times over on the walls of the Pinkas Synagogue memorial. These names become the catalyst for a life-changing journey that uncovers a personal Holocaust tragedy of epic proportions.

Juliet traces the grim fate of her father's cousins, aunts and uncles on visits to Auschwitz and Theresienstadt concentration camps and learns about the extremes of cruelty, courage and kindness.

Then in a locked box in Britain's National Archives, she discovers a stash of documents including letters from her father that reveal intimate details of his struggle.

Meticulously researched and beautifully told, this is the moving story of a woman's quest to piece together the hidden parts of her father's life and the unimaginable losses he was determined to protect his children from.

Sharon Marcus, *Drama of Celebrity*

Why do so many people care so much about celebrities? Who decides who gets to be a star? What are the privileges and pleasures of fandom? Do celebrities ever deserve the outsized attention they receive?

In this fascinating and deeply researched book, Sharon Marcus challenges everything you thought you knew about our obsession with fame. Icons are not merely famous for being famous; the media alone cannot make or break stars; fans are not simply passive dupes. Instead, journalists, the public, and celebrities themselves all compete, passionately and expertly, to shape the stories we tell about celebrities and fans. The result: a high-stakes drama as endless as it is unpredictable.

Drawing on scrapbooks, personal diaries, and vintage fan mail, Marcus traces celebrity culture back to its nineteenth-century roots, when people the world over found themselves captivated by celebrity chefs, bad-boy poets, and actors such as the “divine” Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923), as famous in her day as the Beatles in theirs. Known in her youth for sleeping in a coffin, hailed in maturity as a woman of genius, Bernhardt became a global superstar thanks to savvy engagement with her era’s most innovative media and technologies: the popular press, commercial photography, and speedy new forms of travel.

Whether you love celebrity culture or hate it, *The Drama of Celebrity* will change how you think about one of the most important phenomena of modern times.

Elliot Perlman, *Maybe horse will talk* F PER

What if the only way to keep your job was to antagonise your boss?

‘I am absolutely terrified of losing a job I absolutely hate.’

Stephen Maserov has problems. A onetime teacher, married to fellow teacher Eleanor, he has retrained and is now a second-year lawyer working at mega-firm Freely Savage Carter Blanche. Despite toiling around the clock to make budget, he’s in imminent danger of being downsized. And to make things worse, Eleanor, sick of single-parenting their two young children thanks to Stephen’s relentless work schedule, has asked him to move out.

To keep the job he hates, pay the mortgage and salvage his marriage, he will have to do something strikingly daring, something he never thought himself capable of. But if he’s not careful, it might be the last job he ever has...

Warm, dramatic, and at times laugh-out-loud funny, with the narrative pull of a thriller, *Maybe the Horse Will Talk* is a love story, a reflection on contemporary marriage, and on friendship. It is also an unflinching examination of sexual harassment in the workplace and an exposé of corporate corruption that taps directly into the pulse of our times.

‘Australia’s outstanding social novelist’ (Times Literary Supplement), Elliot Perlman ‘...has many things working in his favor as a novelist: curiosity, erudition, daring and a gift for seducing readers into going along with him for the ride. He’ll get you where you want to go...’ (Washington Post)

Peter Pinne and Peter Wyllie Johnston, *The Australian Musical; from the beginning*

Musical theatre has a special place in the hearts of Australians. Whether it is *The Boy from Oz*, *Bran Nue Dae* or *Muriel's Wedding*, we love to see Australian stories on the big stage with all the glamour, energy and vibrancy a musical can offer.

However magical they are on stage, performances leave behind few traces. Australia has a rich, hidden history of achievement in musical theatre which is now largely forgotten. Drawing on their long careers in musical performance, and extensive research in public and private collections, Peter Wyllie Johnston and Peter Pinne have compiled a definitive account of the history of musical theatre in Australia.

From small amateur performances in the early days, to international achievements, to the new wave of Australian musicals from the 1990s right through to the explosion of creativity in the 21st century, they recount the emotional roller-coaster of successes and disappointments of one of the most demanding art forms. Also included is an authoritative guide to over 300 Australian musicals.

Richly illustrated with colour photos from the early days to the present, *The Australian Musical* is a book to treasure for years to come, and an invaluable resource for anyone involved with theatre and music.