

transform the political economy of Northern Italy. Surprisingly, Masters, who is willing to speculate freely on other matters, bristles at contemplating Machiavelli's understanding of a "great project" that would surely contribute to his own long-held dream of uniting Italy politically and economically.

Discovery of America

To his credit, however, Masters concludes his discussion of the ultimately failed Arno project with a fine statement that betrays his actual appreciation of what Leonardo and Machiavelli were trying to accomplish: "In the Twentieth century, the Army Corps of Engineers built the Boulder Dam, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and other dams and river projects that transformed America, uniting engineering and technology with pure science and public policy. It is worth wondering if history would have changed had Leonardo and Niccolo succeeded in transforming Florence into a seaport and irrigating the Arno valley."

Indeed. But, Masters' general reticence to "wonder" precisely here, leads to the only real disappointment with his book. One cannot look at the idea of "great projects" spawned by the

Renaissance, without taking note of the greatest of all those projects: the exploration of the New World. Both Machiavelli and Leonardo (in ways upon which we can now only speculate) were involved in the great enterprise to refound European civilization across the Atlantic. Masters documents much of the relevant known information on this, but shies away from drawing out the implications.

For instance, he details the close relationship which both Leonardo and Machiavelli had to the Vespucci family. It was, of course, the explorer Amerigo Vespucci who would lend his name to our "American" hemisphere. Leonardo befriended Amerigo himself when they both studied with Paolo Toscanelli, the geographer whose maps would later be used by the Florentine emigré Columbus. At the same time, Machiavelli's personal assistant was Amerigo's cousin Agostino. When Machiavelli commissioned Leonardo to paint a mural commemorating the battle of Anghiari (never completed), he ordered Agostino Vespucci to provide a report on the battle for the artist's use; this report, in Agostino's handwriting, still exists in Leonardo's notebooks.

Masters would have done well to

investigate Machiavelli's deep and abiding attention to anything having to do with maritime trade and oceanic exploration. Also unexplored is Machiavelli's relationship to another famous Florentine family, the Dei, which is illustrative. The Dei were bankers with branch offices across Europe; Machiavelli used them as confidential informants for his intelligence network. The Dei branch in Spain provided the currency transfer through which Spanish Queen Isabella funded Cristoforo Colombo's voyage.

When Machiavelli was writing his masterwork, the *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius*, he could think of no more appropriate metaphor than the voyages of Columbus, then echoing in the mind of every thinking European, as he opened the First Book of that work: "Although the envious nature of men, so prompt to blame and so slow to praise, makes the discovery and introduction of any new principles and systems as dangerous almost as the exploration of unknown seas and continents, yet, animated by that desire which impels me to do what may prove for the common benefit of all, I have resolved to open a new route."

—Michael J. Minnicino

An Awful Irony of the Twentieth Century

Martin Goldsmith, the host from 1989 to 1999 of "Performance Today," the daily classical music program broadcast on National Public Radio, has written a biography of his German-Jewish parents' life in Nazi Germany. *The Inextinguishable Symphony* details the history of his family, from the turn of the Nineteenth century, through his parents' chance meeting as young musicians in the symphony orchestra of the Frankfurt Kulturbund Deutsche Juden (Cultural Association of German Jews), to their eventual escape to the safety of the United States in 1938.

Goldsmith's book is a rivetting love story which, in addition, illustrates the impact of the Classical revolution of the great philosopher and Orthodox Jew Moses Mendelssohn and his collabora-

tor, poet/dramatist Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, in shaping the universal culture of the German nation. Unfortunately, it would appear that the author is unfamiliar with this history, to which leading elements of both Christian and Jewish society, including his own family, made significant contributions.

The 'Berlin Socrates'

Mendelssohn—who was known as the "Berlin Socrates"—and Lessing devoted themselves to shaping a new German society, using the ideas of Leibniz and Plato. They were supporters of the American Revolution, and their work in philosophy and the arts established the foundation upon which the great Classical German period of Goethe and Schiller followed.



The Inextinguishable Symphony:
A True Story of Music and Love in Nazi Germany
by Martin Goldsmith
New York, John Wiley, 2000
346 pages, hardcover, \$24.95

Mendelssohn's passion for the arts led him to the study of J.S. Bach through his teacher, Johann Philipp Kirnburger, one of Bach's most gifted and devoted pupils. His closest Jewish collaborators, the Itzig family, played a crucial role in performing Bach's works, and in making Bach available to serious students like Mozart. They financed Bach's two oldest sons, Carl Philipp Emanuel and Wilhelm Friedemann, and were supporters of both Mozart and Beethoven. This led to the ecumenical collaboration of Solomon Sulzer, the great cantor of Vienna, with no less a composer than Franz Schubert, in setting the liturgical year's synagogue music in the classical mode.¹

The musicians and music teachers in the author's family were of this tradition. The Jewish community had attained full citizenship in Germany only at the beginning of the Nineteenth century, through the efforts of Mendelssohn and Lessing a century earlier. Over this short period, however, they had made leading contributions to the development of Germany, and were politically active in republican causes. Thus, the process of the Nazi rise to power, and Hitler's commitment to exterminate the Jews, constituted in themselves an attack upon German Classical and republican culture. The author describes certain features of this, as seen through the eyes of his family.

Nazi Onslaught

Almost immediately after Hitler took power in January 1933, the Nazis removed leading Jewish classical musicians from their posts. The author's description of the humiliation, coercion, and threat of physical attacks forced upon Otto Klemperer, then chief conductor of the Berlin State Opera, and Bruno Walter, who had become a noted conductor with the Berlin City Opera and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, are chilling. Both fled Germany.

Rudolf Serkin, who had been given the honor of performing both Brahms piano concertos with the Hamburg Philharmonic during that city's week-long music celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of their native son, was removed from the program at

the personal request of Hitler, who had decided to attend the opening concert. This incident had a special impact on the author's father, who was then a 20-year-old music student, for it was a concert given by a "20-something" Serkin of Beethoven's "Emperor" piano concerto, heard by Goldsmith's father as a small child, which influenced him to become a classical musician.

The Jewish community fought back, as Goldsmith reports: "In the face of political, economic, legal and social exclusion from daily life, a few leaders of the Jewish community in Germany had decided that the most effective response would be a cultural one." During that summer of 1933, they created the Berlin Kulturbund Deutsche Juden, to perform theater, classical music, and opera. To counter the degradation, they would celebrate the gifts of Classical knowledge.

Nathan the Wise

The Kulturbund recruited a core of Jewish conductors, musicians, singers, and actors, many of whom were leading members of orchestras and theater troupes, from among the several thousand who had been dismissed from their positions by the April 1933 Nazi decree. No longer free to attend public concerts or theater, the Jewish community now had a sanctuary to which to flee from the Nazi madness.

The creators of the Kulturbund purposely set October 1, during the Jewish High Holy Days, as their opening night. They chose Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*, whose protagonist, the Jew Nathan, was widely recognized to be a portrait of Lessing's friend Mendelssohn. Kurt Baumann, the director of the Kulturbund, remembered: "There had never been a question which play it should be. There was only *one* work that was suited to depict our new situation."

This courageous political statement did not go unnoticed. Joseph Goebbels, under whose watchful eye the Kulturbund had been legally established, banned any further performances. But the Kulturbund became a rallying point for the Jewish community of Berlin, and 20,000 people joined immediately.

During its first three months, the association's output was amazing. They performed Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, staged Shakespeare's *Othello*, and played orchestral concerts which included works by Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, Pergolesi, and Chopin. There were string quartet evenings, piano recitals, violin recitals, choral concerts, two lectures, and other performances as well.

A True Love Story

It was in the Kulturbund's Frankfurt orchestra that the author's parents met in March 1936. The author's mother had taken violin lessons beginning at age three from her father, himself an orchestra concertmaster and founder of the Gumpert Conservatory of Music, one of Dusseldorf's premier academies. She won a position with the Kulturbund orchestra at the age of 18. The author's father was in the process of emigrating to the safety of Stockholm, when he was asked to stand in for the first flutist for two performances. When the position became open permanently, he returned to the orchestra, and to his 19-year-old sweetheart.

Goldsmith vividly describes his parents' excitement for the exceptional Kulturbund, and their passion for playing classical music, as well as their young love and commitment to one another, all of which kept them vibrantly alive despite the horrors surrounding them. They spent two years with the Frankfurt and Berlin Kulturbund orchestras, before emigrating to the United States, where Goldsmith's mother performed with the St. Louis Orchestra and the Cleveland Symphony for 35 years.

On his radio program, Martin Goldsmith was known to feature exceptional recordings that reflected his parents' era. It is one of the ironies of the awful history of the Twentieth century, that a Martin Goldsmith, whose love and appreciation of music was nurtured in the cradle of the German Classical renaissance, would find himself transmitting that tradition to an audience of lucky American listeners.

—Steven P. Meyer

1. See my "Moses Mendelssohn and the Bach Tradition," *Fidelio*, Summer 1999 (Vol. VIII, No. 2).