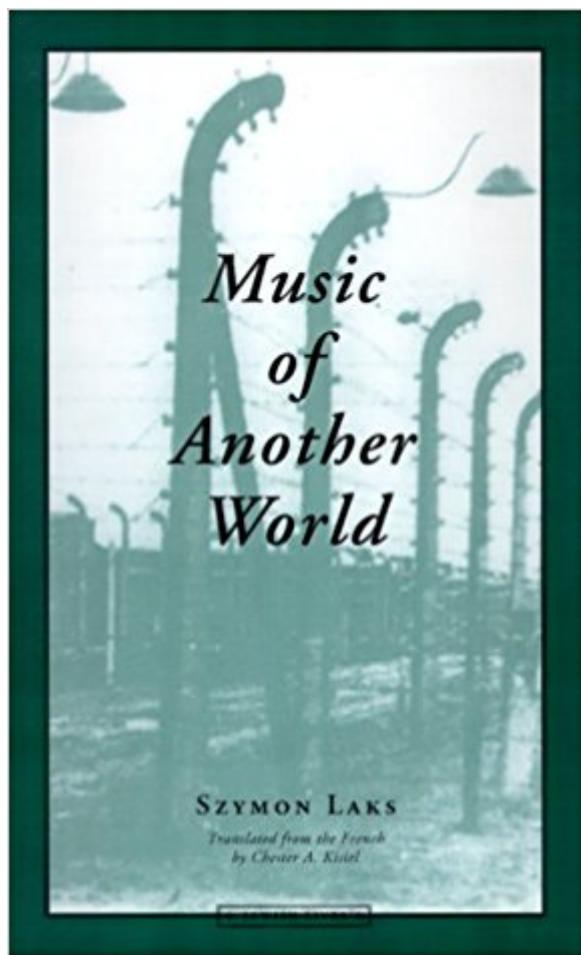


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Music Of Another World (Jewish Lives)



Synopsis

Compassionate yet detached, ironic yet pitilessly honest, Szymon Laks, the kapellmeister of the Auschwitz orchestra, presents a disturbing description of a phenomenon seldom mentioned in the literature of the Holocaust: the presence of music among the crematoria. His story is a testament to the human spirit and to music itself, the beauty of which Laks and others honored even as the lives of so many were destroyed.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Although laconic and fragmented, the Polish composer's (1901-1983) Holocaust memoir is valuable as eyewitness testimony. A violinist, composer and conductor in the Auschwitz II orchestra, Laks explains that as camp routine annihilated the ranks of the orchestra--who did double duty as musicians and hard-labor crews--he had to implement a special kind of orchestration, "which makes it possible for any group to perform any work, regardless of the presence or absence of one or even a few musicians." The author drolly denies that the orchestra performed as runaway prisoners were hanged: "I am not absolving the orchestra, I am absolving the Germans, who love music too much to use it for such prosaic purposes." He muses on a Nazi whose forbidden passion for Jewish music caused him to be sent to the front, on clandestine camp celebrations where musicians entertained kapos and other bigwigs for cigarettes and food, and on cultural exchanges with the women's orchestra (the latter recalls Fania Fenelon's Playing for Time). The songs that originated in the

camps were "vulgar," says Laks, "and had nothing in common with raising people's fortitude." Nevertheless, samples are reproduced here (not seen by PW). Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Polish

When the author of Music of Another World tried to first publish his book, one publisher turned it down because he said it was too sympathetic to the Nazis. After reading the book I can understand why. Music of Another World is about the authors time in Auschwitz as a member of the mens orchestra. He very rarely referred to the Nazis at all and then only by one phrase. He also wrote very little about specific unpleasant experiences in Auschwitz. Since the enemy was hardly referred to I couldn't relate well to the book. I'm glad the book was written because it is of important historical significance, but it wasn't really my type of book.

I found this book a very personal, humble and interesting description of an unusual Holocaust camp experience. I found it utterly moving.

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