

congratulated on her 30-year commitment to the project. It provides a valuable additional building block for both military historians and those interested in the New Zealand Irish. The bedrock is Austin's own diary, or rather his memoir, Mabbett noting that it is essentially 'a brief retrospective account of Austin's deployments and engagements, drawing partly on memory, and for the latter years probably field notes'. To contextualise, she has fossicked widely amongst New Zealand and Irish sources. Even so, it has sometimes been necessary to generalise, to speculate, but for the most part the suggestions are convincing. Inevitably, there are a few minor errors — for instance George Grey's biographer was James, not John, Rutherford, while Wanganui's foremost merchant house was headed by William Hogg Watt, not Watts, but such quibbles are minor. The writing is crisp, clear, often engaging. And a commendation is also due the publisher, Steele Roberts Aotearoa. Nicely designed and well illustrated, the book lives up to the firm's usual high production standards.

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The Violinist: Clare Galambos Winter, Holocaust Survivor. By Sarah Gaitanos. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2010. 280pp. NZ price: \$44.50. ISBN: 978-0-86473-645-1.

IT IS ONE of the truisms of reviewing that biographies and memoirs are often of lives that would be deemed fantastical if rendered within fiction. Yet like all clichés the elements of truth contained within them should also cause us to reflect just what we are encountering. Such is the case with this book. Created out of a combination of memoir, oral history and secondary research, *The Violinist* reads as a combination of all three — but is both more than and less than a sum of its parts. This is due not only to the combination of genres used and the life lived, but also because it is a book that seems unsure of what it is meant to be, what type of story it is meant to tell, and how that life is to be told. Is this a war survivor history, a violinist's life history, a history and memoir of émigré life in New Zealand, or a cultural and social history? It is all and none of these because it is written by two different people — the memoirist and subject, and the oral historian and author.

Perhaps these are issues only for those, like me, who are not the intended reader? For this is not a book written for academics; it is not written for those who look for an engagement with wider cultural theory and scholarship beyond the descriptive. Those who are academics will already know much of the periods under review and so will want more than what is primarily an introductory narrative to the times. But that is also to expect too much of both the life and the author. If I could suggest a possible audience, it would be a book group; for it is the type of lower-middlebrow text that would make such readers feel 'informed'. (Another possible — and important — readership is suggested at the end of this review.)

The life lived is really the multiple lives of a single person. For this book is a three-part story of how a young Jewish girl known as Klari, who grew up in pre-war Hungary and studied music, managed — along with her aunt Roza — to survive Auschwitz and slave labour in a munitions factory, followed by a death march across Europe. Post-war, they found their way to New Zealand, whereupon Klari (now known as Clare) joined the fledgling New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (NZSO). Therefore we read a history of the Jewish population in Hungary, a story of how a form of protection that existed until 1944 was devastatingly ended within the focused application of the final solution. Then we read a harrowing account of life in the Shoah, of life and death in Auschwitz, and then the far lesser known story of slave labour camps, in this case a massive, camouflaged munitions factory in the German countryside. The interlude of the death marches at the

end of the war gave way to the life of the displaced person in post-war Europe. Then there is the hope — and realisation of that hope — of a new life sponsored in New Zealand by members of her family who had emigrated pre-war. Fearing anti-Semitism here, they had taken on what could be termed the Antipodean Marano identity of orthodox Christians.

The second half of the book is of the life of Clare Galambos and her aunt in post-war Wellington. If the first half is an account of European horror, the second is really an insider's experience of life in the NZSO. It is also the story of her relationship with a Swedish musician 30 years her senior, who in himself would be a fascinating subject for a biography: an amateur boxing champ, 25 years a film composer, musician and band leader in Paris; tours of inter-war South America; an accompanist to Edith Piaf. The experiences of the NZSO in these formative years have been told elsewhere, but this second section also points to the possibility of a collection of insider accounts that would add to a deeper understanding of the orchestra and cultural life in a small nation.

The episodic nature of this review is a reflection of the text. The narrative is fragmented and broken into 11 chapters, each named for a musical movement. It is a fascinating story, a horrific story, a redemptive story, and one that also tells of the limits of art and music to heal the scars of deep trauma.

The astute reader may note a caution in what I have written and this would be correct, for this book suffers from a question of pitch. As I read I wondered who was the book aimed at, who should be its ideal reader? It is not those who read the NZJH for the history is already known. Historians of the Shoah are not so likely to read of life in post-war New Zealand, while historians of post-war cultural life and the émigré community possess their own specialised interests. The writing is solid and accessible, but it is not an academic history. The numerous photographs mean that often it feels like flicking through a family album. But then I thought of my 14-year-old daughter Harriet, who has had a long-standing interest in the period. So I gave it to her and her brief report was most enthusiastic — and probably the best endorsement that it could be given:

The Violinist was a fascinating read about a musical Jewish girl during World War Two. I have read a wide variety of novels set in this era and this autobiography has been the best. It was easy to follow and how the Jews were treated was more exposed, that is not censored as is usual, which made it a raw but fascinating read. The second half of her life in New Zealand was interesting, but not as much as the first half. Living in this household I already know a lot about life in New Zealand at that time, but I know all of my friends do not. So I believe that this book should be part of the reading curriculum in high schools for years 11-13.

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Into the Silence: The Great War, Mallory and the Conquest of Everest. By Wade Davis. The Bodley Head, London, 2011. xiv + 655pp. NZ price: \$39.99. ISBN: 978-0-375408-89-2.

FOR MANY NEW ZEALANDERS, the exploits of British mountaineers Mallory and Irvine are a footnote to what many still regard as a defining moment in New Zealand's history: Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay's successful ascent of Mount Everest in 1953. To the extent to which Mallory and Irvine's endeavours have featured at all in our popular culture, it is as potential challengers to Hillary and Norgay's title of being the first men to reach the summit. When Jeffrey Archer's 2009 book, *Paths of Glory*, postulated that Mallory and Irvine may have reached the summit before Hillary and Norgay, some New Zealand media expressed outrage. One editorial, headlined 'Jeffrey Archer's insult to Sir Ed', berated the author for taking 'a swipe at Sir Edmund Hillary's legacy'.¹

The story of Britain's interwar exploration of Mount Everest has been told in some