

came notorious during the 1930s for its harsh anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant editorials.”

Némirovsky's defenders say her novels and stories merely reflect the historical context in which they are set, and she defended herself against contemporary accusations of anti-Semitism by saying of her Jewish characters, “That is the way I saw them.”

To Franklin, two things give the lie to this defense. One is that *David Golder* is no isolated instance. As a recent biography by Jonathan Weiss makes clear, Franklin reports, “Némirovsky was the very definition of a self-hating Jew.” The second damning bit of evidence is a personal letter Némirovsky wrote in September 1940 to Marshal Henri Pétain, leader of the collaborationist Vichy France government. “I cannot believe, Sir,” she wrote, “that no distinction is made between the undesirable and the honorable foreigners”—clearly placing herself in the latter camp. Her plea for exemption from the mounting anti-Jewish strictures was ignored, and publishers began rejecting her writings. After her arrest in July 1942, her husband, Michel Epstein, argued in a letter to the German ambassador that “it seems . . . unjust and illogical to me that the Germans would imprison a woman who, though originally Jewish, has no sympathy, and all her books show this, . . . for Judaism.”

Suite Française, Franklin argues, “was not just a chronicle; Némirovsky saw it also as a form of revenge” against the country that had abandoned her. The sympathetic portraits of many of the German characters in the novel clearly reflect the author's own feelings. But though numerous critics have admired her unflinching depictions of the French, forced by small steps into full collaboration with their conquerors, many readers have also noted, Franklin says, that “there are no Jewish characters in *Suite Française*.” The ironic detachment Némirovsky employed to such devastating effect against the French may have required too great an effort to encompass her own situation, that of a relentlessly anti-Semitic Jew crushed by cultural prejudices her writings helped perpetuate.

ARTS & LETTERS

Bach the Unknowable

THE SOURCE: “J. S. Bach in the Twenty-First Century: The Chapel Becomes a Larder” by Harold Fromm, in *The Hudson Review*, Winter 2008.

THINK OF WOLFGANG AMADEUS Mozart and you might picture an abused little prodigy being ferried to performances across Europe by his greedy father. And many people can't conjure up Ludwig von Beethoven without seeing the irascible genius, completely deaf, having to be turned around to see the tumultuous standing ovation at the premiere of his Ninth Symphony. Compared with the fame of these two masters, the name Johann Sebastian

Bach produces no popular image at all.

Yet Bach (1685–1750) is the “father of Western music,” writes critic Harold Fromm. He's in the “very chemistry of Western musical blood, like red cells, white cells, and platelets in our material plasma.” Bach fails to cut much of a human figure simply because, apart from enough music to fill 160 CDs, he left so little behind. It doesn't help that he lived in Leipzig, far from the great centers of European culture.

Because his only surviving correspondence lies primarily in church and

EXCERPT

Holding a Space for the Theater

The act of dedicating oneself to acting and speaking together—the act of forming some kind of collective theatrical organization—is inherently political. . . . This is no longer possible. . . . We have passed, perhaps not irretrievably, into a period that is postpolitical, postdemocratic, and post-tragic. The political task of theater, in the face of such a collapse, is somehow to hold open a tiny space between the collapsing walls.

—NICHOLAS RIDOUT, professor at Queen Mary University of London and coauthor of *The Theatre of Societas Raffaello Sanzio*, in *Theater* (Fall 2007)

municipal ledgers, the great composer comes off as an “aggressive businessman whining about maltreatment and underpayment,” though in fact he lived a rich professional, social, and family life and earned considerable recognition. Ten of his 20 children died before adulthood, but four lived to become famous musicians in their own right.

Bach was born in Thuringia in present-day Germany, lost both parents by the time he was 10, and by 18 was employed as a professional organist. In 1723 he was named cantor and music director at a school and four churches in Leipzig, where he struggled to stage his compositions using mostly student singers and musicians.

In more than a thousand compositions, Bach perfected the contrapuntal (or counterpoint) style, in which two or more independent but

EXCERPT

Beyond the New South

The Old South hurtled into the New within a single generation, and then—carried headlong by its own momentum—hurtled still faster into the New South as the commerce of corporate homogeneity swept across the region.

—RICK BASS, author, in *Southern Review*
(Winter 2008)

harmonically related melodic parts are played at the same time—a challenging proposition that music teachers sometimes describe to beginning students as akin to patting their heads and rubbing their stomachs at the same time. He changed the way music was played. Before Bach, the thumb had been only rarely used in keyboard playing, but he pioneered its far greater use (along with that of the little finger) to hold down a key

while the other fingers played around it. This made it possible to produce both dominant melodies and elaborate flourishes at the same time. It also made the music harder to play.

During his 27 years in Leipzig, Bach volunteered to compose a new church cantata of his own almost every Sunday for a period of five years. He continually recycled material, changing instrumentation, adding and deleting.

Two of his greatest works, the Mass in B minor (1748–49) and the *Christmas Oratorio* (1734–35), were “tweaked from mostly secular existing gems,” Fromm writes.

In Bach’s day, words mattered more in the Lutheran Church than music. This was liturgical music, after all. Today the words seem pietistic—even “deadly,” Fromm says, while the music is almost universally regarded as inspiring and astonishingly inventive.

OTHER NATIONS

An Energy Cold War?

A SURVEY OF RECENT ARTICLES

AMERICANS ARE TOO ACCUSTOMED to sparring with the Russian bear to allow it to fade quietly into the ranks of demographically challenged second-tier nations. Now

the former Evil Empire roams the earth again as “corporate Russia,” fueled by oil and gas revenues, steered by a semi-authoritarian government with global ambitions, and equipped with a foreign-policy instrument called Gazprom.

It’s easy to see how such a threatening new poster child of energy aggression emerged, writes Andreas Goldthau, a RAND Corporation fellow, in *Policy Review* (Feb.–March 2008). Russia owns 27 percent of the world’s gas reserves (with energy giant Gazprom controlling most of that), and accounts for 22 percent of global gas production. It is home to 6.2 percent of international oil reserves and produces 12 percent of all crude oil. High prices for