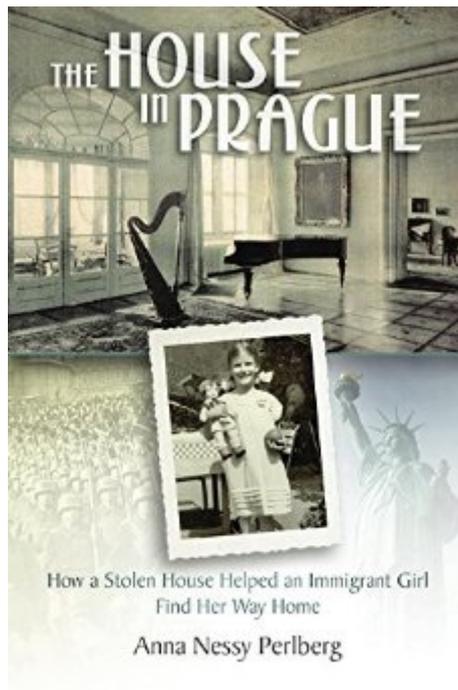


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The House In Prague: How A Stolen House Helped An Immigrant Girl Find Her Way Home



Synopsis

A cherished house, the family it sheltered, and the true meaning of home. 1939: the Nazis have invaded Prague. Little Anna huddles with her doll in the corner of a train car while a German officer shrieks, "You are Jews!" Fleeing for their lives, her family has abandoned their elegant house near Prague Castle, bringing their life of privilege to an abrupt halt. In this memoir that reads like a novel, we meet Anna's shining and beautiful opera singer mother, her prominent lawyer father, and their circle of friends that includes Albert Schweitzer and the family of Czech President Thomas Masaryk. Through Anna's eyes, we relive magical Christmases, summers in the country, and a terrifying trip to Nazi Dresden that changes everything. We experience the family's escape, their voyage to Ellis Island, and Anna's struggle to become an American girl in a city teeming with immigrants and prejudice. Post-war life brings cherished Holocaust survivors and their harrowing stories. After the Velvet Revolution of 1989, Anna's family sues for the return of their house in Prague. But will they prevail? And if they do, what then? The House in Prague is richly illustrated with pictures and artifacts from the author's family archive. Written with straightforward, lyrical clarity, the members of her family and the many famous musicians, authors, and poets that pass through their lives come alive for the reader. A gripping story on its own merits, this tale of war, love, and loss dares us to think about the immigrant experience in fresh ways. Index included. "An exquisite rumination on history, loss, and love. Anna Perlberg's voice is a luminous guide to the heart of home - hers, but also, as is true of all great stories, ours." (Caroline Heller, author of Reading Claudius: A Memoir in Two Parts)

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Customer Reviews

"The House in Prague," is the story of Anna Nussy Perlberg's beautiful home in Prague, how she fled in 1939, and the epic journey of her life in America as a young girl who barely spoke English. Only the first quarter of the book is about her life in Prague (she left at age 7). She came from an extraordinary family, wealthy, educated, and talented. Her mother, Julia Nussy, was an opera singer. She had perfect pitch and could sing for Schoenberg and Berg; she knew Josef Suk (Dvorak's son-in-law) and George Szell, whom she and Anna visited when he gave a Czech music concert in New York. Julia played duets in her home with Alfred Schweitzer (who was also a Bach scholar and musician). They were friends with Thomas Masaryk, the first Czech president (after WWI) and his family, some of whom Anna came to know as part of the Czech community in New York. And what a home it was. Her father was a wealthy lawyer, also musical, and the large house had two concert grand pianos and two harps. They had a staff of a cook, a governess, maids, a driver. The book is really centered on that house and her memories of the people in it, and their fates in America. Her father was Jewish, and the tale of their flight across Germany and into Holland with little Anna clutching her doll is vivid and terrifying. Half his family died in the camps; he left just days before they came for him. But there is more here about the extraordinary immigrant experience in America. As a little girl in New York, Anna learned English largely from memorizing popular songs and radio dramas. And there is a lot here about her education, her going to Columbia University, meeting writer and poet Mark Perlberg, and going with her new husband to Tokyo, as he was an army reporter during the Korean war.

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