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Last Boat To Yokohama: The Life And Legacy Of Beate Sirota Gordon



Synopsis

Last Boat to Yokohama tells a story of both tragedy and grandeur in the 20th century. It recounts the life and work of Beate Sirota Gordon: the influence of her father, Leo Sirota, one of the greatest pianists of his generation; her secret work ensuring women's equality while helping to develop the post-WWII Japanese constitution; at the age of 22; her broad influence on hundreds of Western artists such as Robert Wilson, David Byrne and Peter Sellars; who were introduced to leading contemporary Asian music, dance, theater and visual artists through her extraordinary cross-cultural efforts. The book relives Beate's drive, talent, ambition, and influence, with intimate diary excerpts from her mother, an introduction by Beate herself, and an afterword from her daughter, Nicole.

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Customer Reviews

In 2013, when it was announced that Beate Sirota Gordon, contributor to the Japanese Constitution, had passed away, there was scant information available about this singular woman's life. But now, I'm excited to report, there's not just one book on Beate Sirota Gordon, now there's two! TWO! (I'm not even being sarcastic!) Publishing this month, we have a biography written by Nassrine Azimi and Michel Wasserman. As someone who devoured Beate's memoir, I was eager to see what new information this book reveals. In Last Boat to Yokohama, authors Nassrine Azimi and Michael Wasserman, firmly anchor Beate's story within events of World War II and the years leading up to it. We know the Third Reich had grand plans for conquering Europe, but how did Japan fit into their plans? Last Boat to Yokohama explains how Germany had been a long time ally

of Japan “in fact, many of its institutions had been based of Germany’s. It also details how Nazi Germany pushed their anti-semitic policies in Japan. However, since Japan did not share Nazi Germany’s prejudices, the popular Jewish musicians were protected” for a time. The authors detail the deteriorating situation from Beate’s father, Leo Sirota, from losing his job at the Imperial Academy to the constant surveillance of the Japanese police. In the movie Schindler’s List, there’s a scene where a group of women argue against rumors that the Nazis have created death camps. The Germans would never do such a thing, they argue. Likewise, Leo Sirota believed that Japan would never go to war with the United States. That’s why in September of 1941, when the Sirotas visit Beate in America, they end up returning to Japan in November 1941. The Japanese would attack Pearl Harbor a few weeks later. The Sirotas were on the last boat to Yokohama.

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