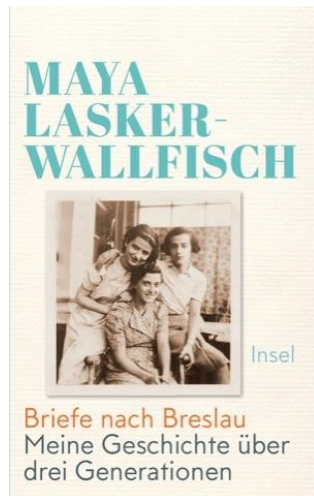


Maya Lasker-Wallfisch explores the transgenerational trauma of the Holocaust in her memoirs of her musical family



Monday 15 June 2020

Suhrkamp | 254 pages

Briefe nach Breslau

Letter to Breslau

By **Maya Lasker-Wallfisch**

Translated by **Marieke Heimburger**

"A classic for the next generation."

Sabine Bode

In her memoirs to be released by **Suhrkamp**, **Maya Lasker-Wallfisch** offers a unique exploration of the impact of the Holocaust on three generations of her family. The book, **Letter to Breslau**, interweaves stories from Lasker-Wallfisch's life with those of her mother Anita, told through letters written to her grandparents, whom she never knew, because they were murdered in the Izbica concentration camp in 1942.

"My Dearest Grandparents, I am your granddaughter, Marianne (Maya), born to Anita Lasker your youngest daughter in 1958. I arrived sixteen years after you were both murdered in Nazi Germany. Your grandson Raphael was born five years earlier. [...] The letters that follow are a tribute to you both and a conduit to conversations that we never had; a way for me to have a relationship with you. All my love, Maya"

Maya Lasker-Wallfisch is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and educator, specialising in transgenerational trauma. Her memoirs are released on **Monday 15 June 2020** in German as **Briefe nach Breslau**, translated by Marieke Heimburger, with plans for the release of an English edition in due course.

Maya Lasker-Wallfisch is the daughter of **Anita Lasker-Wallfisch**, the cellist and activist who grew up in Breslau, Germany (now Poland). Her miraculous story of survival is well-documented, attributing her survival to the fact she played the cello and thus was recruited into the infamous Women's Orchestra of Auschwitz Birkenau. Finally, Anita Lasker-Wallfisch was liberated on 15 April 1945 along with her sister Renate Lasker. The book's release coincides with the 75th anniversary of Maya's mother and aunt Renate's liberation from Bergen-Belsen.



Maya Lasker-Wallfisch is named after her aunt Marianne Lasker. The three sisters grew up in a loving assimilated home in Breslau with Maya Lasker-Wallfisch's grandparents. Maya's grandmother was a gifted violinist, her grandfather was a lawyer who had been awarded the Iron Cross in the First World War. The family had read Goethe at home and organised chamber music evenings as the world disintegrated around them and all hopes of escape were thwarted.

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, now 94 years old, did not talk to her family about her experiences until the 1990s, when she wrote her memoirs, *Inherit the Truth*, and began regularly

visiting Germany, a country she had long refused to set foot in, to tell her story to schools, universities and Parliament. After a 35-year embargo on her travels to Germany, she realised the importance of her testimony and the responsibility she has as an eyewitness-survivor. She has become an outspoken peace advocate late in her life and received many honours for her contribution.

But Maya Lasker-Wallfisch grew up in silence: nobody talked about her family's German past or her mother's experiences of the Holocaust: such things were not encouraged in post-war Britain. Her mother was a founder member of the English Chamber Orchestra, and her brother Raphael Wallfisch is also an eminent cellist whose recent acclaimed *Voices in the Wilderness* recording series charts the work of forgotten Jewish composers. Her father was the concert pianist Peter Wallfisch, who died in 1994.

Maya Lasker-Wallfisch couldn't escape the wounds of her family history and struggled to find her place both personally and professionally for many years. In her memoir, she describes the despair of not being able to communicate in the languages of her parents: first, the language of German and second, the language of music. Alienation was inevitable.

In order to 'save her self' Maya Lasker-Wallfisch sought a myriad of ways to forge an identity all of which took her further from any life that could be approved of or understood by her highly-cultured parents. Long before the concept of transgenerational trauma was recognised Maya exhibited many of the symptoms that now have contexts from which the unconscious transmission of trauma can be understood and thought about. We are born into the families that shape our identity, that tell us who we are. Nothing remarkable about that, but what if the family hides a history so horrific, that the silence becomes the forcefield of experience that despite not knowing the facts, the precarious nature of living is felt viscerally in every cell of the body. This is the story she tells as she describes the turmoil and confusion that was the landscape of her life. The reader will see how although Maya's story is an entirely different tale of survival, it is nonetheless, just that.

To overcome the silence, she wrote letters to her grandparents, her direct way of setting up a dialogue with her past. Piece by piece her words have brought the family together and helped her understand how one's own history always depends on what happened in the past.

By publishing her memoirs first in German, Maya Lasker-Wallfisch begins to close the gap between her heritage and all that has been lost. She has recently taken German citizenship.



"Maya's courageous book has greatly enriched the understanding of transgenerational transmission, the perspective on several generations in historical contexts. It recalls the dangerous psychological and political legacies of the Nazi dictatorship and proves that the destructive spell of the past can be broken."

– Der Freitag

"An important book that makes it vividly clear how the Holocaust affected not only the survivors but also the second generation, the children of the survivors, who knew nothing about the family history"

– Aviva Berlin

Maya Lasker-Wallfisch



Maya Lasker-Wallfisch lives in London where she works as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and educator. She has a particular interest working with people whose lives have been impacted by the Holocaust and other displacement trauma.

She has been in private practice in London for over 25 years. Other projects in 2019 and 2020 saw her move from the consulting room to the stage where her original concept of producing and being the

Artistic Director of *The Laskers from Breslau*, which premiered at the Jewish Museum in Berlin.

She is currently working on her second book, and is often a guest speaker with her mother in Germany.

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