

Books

BOOK EVENTS

Holocaust novelist set for event at Posnack JCC

BY OLIVE H. COGDILL
Correspondent

Although 2015 ends on a quiet note, the year has been filled with some excellent literary events. And looking ahead, 2016 may be an even better year with British author Val McDermid coming to Delray Beach in January; Meg Cabot scheduled as the Broward Public Library Foundation's guest during its Lit!Lunch on Feb. 5; and the Literary Feast scheduled for March 5. Details to come.

Growing up during Holocaust

Jim Shepard, author of "The Book of Aron," will be the guest speaker at this month's installment of the Diane & Barry Wilen Jewish Book Festival at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 17 at the David Posnack Jewish Community Center, 5850 S. Pine Island Road, Davie. Set in the Warsaw ghetto, "The Book of Aron" revolves around 9-year-old Aron, whose only friends are a rowdy bunch of young smugglers who steal to keep their families alive. Aron finds refuge in an orphanage run by the real-life hero and children's rights advocate, pediatrician Janusz Korczak. Shepard's novel relies heavily on history to show the impact of war and genocide on children. Tickets cost \$10 for members, \$12 for nonmembers. For tickets, visit jccbooks.com or call 954-434-0499, ext. 336. Some tickets may be available at the door. In addition, the Ruth E. Cohan Jewish Book Review Series will be presented by the Rose and Jack Orloff Central Agency for Jewish Education in Davie. For more information, contact Judy Asuleen, director of Adult and Family Education for Orloff CAJE, at 954-660-2074. Dates and locations of the series are available on the website at orloffcaje.org.

Civil Rights and hope

As part of the Mandel Jewish Community Center Book Festival, Jo Ivester will discuss her novel "The Outskirts of Hope" at 10 a.m. Dec. 9 at Temple Israel, 1901 Flagler Drive,



Jim Shepard will be the guest speaker at this month's installment of the Diane & Barry Wilen Jewish Book Festival at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 17.

West Palm Beach. Ivester's memoir is based on her childhood experience of growing up in a small Mississippi town during the height of the civil rights movement. Cost is \$36 for members and \$42 for guests; to register, visit jcconline.com/bookfestival.

Save on Boca festival

The 10th annual Festival of the Arts BOCA is scheduled for March 4-16, 2016, but now is the time to take advantage of a big savings on the event. Tickets range from \$15 to \$225 per person, but a discount of 20 percent is being offered through Dec. 31. For more information, visit festivaloftheartsboca.org or call 866-571-2787. The festival will feature musical presentations by violin superstar and conductor Joshua Bell, jazz trumpet legend Herb Alpert and his wife, Grammy Award-winning singer Lani Hall, and Cirque de la Symphonie, among others. The festival's Authors & Ideas program will include CNN host Fareed Zakaria, MacArthur "Genius" Fellow Robert Sapolsky, Pulitzer Prize finalist Laila Lalami and history expert Jay M. Winter.

Author notes

Weston resident Bruce D. Forman, a rabbi and psychologist, recently re-

leased a Kindle edition of his fourth book, "Under the Chuppah: A Jewish Couple's Guide to Weddings and Meaningful Marriage," co-authored with Judaic artist and scholar Shoshannah Brombacher of Brooklyn, N.Y. For more information, visit underthechuppah.info.

Planning for Sleuthfest

Looking for a gift for the would-be writer on your list. Why not registration for Sleuthfest, considered to be one of the top conferences devoted to the craft of writing. Sponsored by the Florida chapter of the Mystery Writers of America, Sleuthfest will be Feb. 25-28, 2016, at the Doubletree, Interstate 95 and Hillsboro Boulevard, Deerfield Beach. Although it is geared for those interested in writing crime fiction, writers of any genre will find a bounty of information discussed during the conference's panels and discussions. Guests of honor will be C.J. Box, author of the novels about Wyoming game warden Joe Pickett, Florida honoree P.J. Parrish, and forensics guest of honor Valerie Plame, a former CIA covert operations officer, in addition to other published authors. Publisher guest of honor will be Neil S. Nyrren, executive vice president and associate publisher and editor in chief of G.P. Putnam's Sons. Details on Sleuthfest and registration at sleuthfest.com. Registration through Jan. 15 is \$365 for members and \$405 for nonmembers.

Romancing the holidays

The Florida Romance Writers will honor its volunteers and present lifetime achievement and lifetime service awards to its members 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Dec. 12 at GG's Waterfront Bar and Grill, 606 N. Ocean Drive, Hollywood. And, of course, there is sure to be a discussion about the romance genre. Cost is \$25 for members, \$30 for non-members. To register, contact Rossie Cortes at rossie@iq-mc.com by Dec. 9.

Items for the January column must be received by Dec. 20. Email olinecog@aol.com.

Best sellers

HARDCOVER FICTION

1. "Cross Justice" by James Patterson (Little, Brown, \$29). Last week: —
2. "Tricky Twenty-Two: A Stephanie Plum Novel" by Janet Evanovich (Bantam, \$28). Last week: 2
3. "The Guilty" by David Baldacci (Grand Central, \$28). Last week: 1
4. "Rogue Lawyer" by John Grisham (Doubleday, \$28.95). Last week: 3
5. "The Bazaar of Bad Dreams: Stories" by Stephen King (Scribner, \$30). Last week: 4
6. "See Me: A Novel" by Nicholas Sparks (Grand Central, \$27). Last week: 5
7. "All Dressed in White: An Under Suspicion Novel" by Mary Higgins Clark and Alafair Burke (Simon & Schuster, \$26.99). Last week: 6
8. "The Crossing: A Bosch Novel" by Michael Connelly (Little, Brown, \$28). Last week: 9
9. "The Magic Strings of Frankie Presto: A Novel" by Mitch Albom (Harper, \$25.99). Last week: 10
10. "Go Set a Watchman: A Novel" by Harper Lee (Harper, \$27.99). Last week: —

HARDCOVER NONFICTION

1. "Killing Reagan: The Violent Assault That Changed a Presidency" by Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard (Henry Holt, \$30). Last week: 2
2. "Thing Explainer: Complicated Stuff in Simple Words" by Randall Munroe (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, \$24.95). Last week: —
3. "The Pioneer Woman Cooks: Dinnertime" by Ree Drummond (Morrow Cookbooks, \$29.99). Last week: 1
4. "Guinness World Records 2016" by Guinness World Records (Guinness World Records, \$28.95). Last week: 4
5. "Thomas Jefferson and the Tripoli Pirates: The Forgotten War That Changed American History" by Brian Kilmeade and Don Yaeger (Sentinel, \$27.95). Last week: 3
6. "Destiny and Power: The American Odyssey of George Herbert Walker Bush" by Jon Meacham (Random House, \$35). Last week: 5
7. "Humans of New York: Stories" by Brandon Stanton (St. Martin's, \$29.99). Last week: —
8. "Crippled America: How to Make America Great Again" by Donald J. Trump (Threshold Editions, \$25). Last week: 8
9. "Ripley's Believe It Or Not! Eye-Popping Oddities" by Ripley's Believe It Or Not! (Ripley, \$28.95). Last week: —
10. "Troublemaker: Surviving Hollywood and Scientology" by Leah Remini and Rebecca Paley (Ballantine, \$27). Last week: 6

For the week ended Nov. 29, compiled from data from independent and chain bookstores, book wholesalers and independent distributors nationwide.

— Publishers Weekly

BOOK REVIEW

San Francisco characters mark lively debut novel

BY OLIVE H. COGDILL
Correspondent

Boynton Beach author Susan Cox makes an impressive debut with the well-plotted "The Man on the Washing Machine," which won last year's Minotaur Books/Mystery Writers of America First Crime Novel Award.

Cox ladles on the humor while also delivering a multilayered tale about a close-knit San Francisco neighborhood and a young woman trying to reinvent herself. Cox's light approach to "The Man on the Washing Machine" is balanced by perceptive back stories for each character.

In her native England, Theophania "Theo" Bogart was a "university flunk out, society bubblehead, celebrity photographer." But about 18 months ago, she fled from London to San Francisco to escape the publicity surrounding a family scandal. Now she's found a new family of friends, changed her name and opened Aromas, a bath



"The Man on the Washing Machine"

By Susan Cox. Minotaur, 304 pages, \$25.99

and body shop. The community garden shared by residents and business owners reminds her of home; it helps, too, that her grandfather also relocated to San Francisco.

But this quiet area implodes when Tim Callahan, a painter and petty

thief, dies in a fall off a roof. The police suspect foul play, which is reinforced when another murder happens.

The brisk plot's twists and turns lend plenty of surprises while maintaining believability. Applying just the right touch of humor, Cox takes the reader to hidden San Francisco neighborhoods, showing how Theo has found a true home in her adopted city. While many of Theo's neighbors are on the eccentric side, each has a ring of authenticity, including an abused teenager, the handsome head of a women's shelter and an elderly gardener. And, yes, there really is a man on a washing machine, and what a character he is.

Cox's well-designed plot should serve her well in future tales about Theo and her cobbled-together family.

Olive H. Cogdill can be reached at olinecog@aol.com.

Meet the author

Susan Cox will discuss "The Man on the Washing Machine" at 7 p.m. Dec. 11 at Murder on the Beach, 273 Pineapple Grove Way, Delray Beach; 561-279-7790; murderonthebeach.com.



BOOK REVIEW

A fractured relationship is at the heart of 'Clowns'

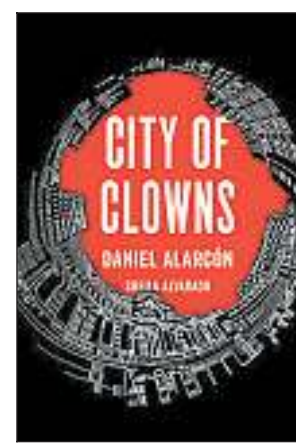
BY SHOSHANA OLIDORT
Tribune Newspapers

The figure of the sad clown is, they say, cliché. But as clichés go, it's a rather potent one that draws on Freudian notions of repression and the human subconscious to evoke a sense of dread and subterranean despair. These are the emotional contours of Daniel Alarcon's new graphic novel, aptly titled "City of Clowns" (based on Alarcon's short story of the same name), in which a young Peruvian journalist named Chino is assigned to write a piece on street entertainers and winds up aimlessly wandering the streets of Lima dressed as a clown.

Chino's assignment comes just hours after he receives word of his father's death. Long estranged from the man who had left a young Chino and his hardworking mother for his mistress, Chino says he is not particularly bothered by the news of his father's passing. It's the assignment, rather, that induces a sense of melancholy: "(T)he idea of it made me sad: clowns with their absurd and artless smiles, their shabby, outlandish clothes."

And yet, the timing of the assignment is propitious for Chino, who finds himself suddenly compelled to revisit his childhood. Despite, or perhaps precisely because of, his lifetime of resentment toward his father, Chino is overcome by a desperate need to understand the man who exploited and then abandoned him.

The story of Chino and his father is told in equal parts narration and flashback, with simple, black and white illustrations by



'City of Clowns'

By Daniel Alarcon
Illustrated by Sheila Alvarado
Riverhead, 144 pages, \$22.95

Sheila Alvarado that complement Alarcon's understated yet poignant prose. The opening illustration is particularly evocative: Chino's mom — a cleaning lady, mopping the hospital floor — and her co-worker are depicted in line work, their shadows looming large in the foreground. But even at their best, Alvarado's sketches never transcend their supporting role in this book. Alarcon writes in simple, conversational language that makes for an easy read while also evoking a sense of intimacy, that quality more often associated with memoirs than fiction.

While the story begins in Lima, Chino's own story goes back to Pasco, a place that is "neither city nor country," but rather, "isolated and poor, high on a cold Andean puna." Here kids "inhale glue from brown-paper bags or get drunk in the weak morning light before school." Chino's father, like many of the men of Pasco, is em-

ployed by the mining industry, his job "brutal and dangerous" involving a descent in to the earth and "monotonous, uniform" work. Beyond the immediate physical risks, the work takes an emotional toll on miners' lives in the real world. Their senses and sensitivities dulled by the job, many of the miners become alcoholics, and the mucus they expel is a "tarry black" that the miners themselves call "the color of money."

Chino's father decides to move the family to Lima, and it's against the backdrop of this urban environment, pulsating with life and filled to bursting with grit, that Chino grows up. As Chino recalls, the move was "the only good thing" his father had ever done for the family.

Not surprisingly, the journalistic assignment laid out at the beginning of the book takes a back seat to the more personal investigation into his father's secret life. But clowns eventually re-enter the picture, becoming, for our hero, "a kind of refuge" from the complexities and humiliations of his family history.

At a bar one night Chino notices a clown sitting nearby and tries to engage him in conversation. The clown tells how he came to Lima penniless, and how he'd lived under a bridge. Asked about his line of work the clown shrugs: "It's work, brother, better than some, worse than others. I'm not good at much else. It's either this or stealing." When Chino asks how he chose his career the clown corrects him: "No, brother. You've got it wrong. It's like this. You wake up one morning, and boom! You're a clown."