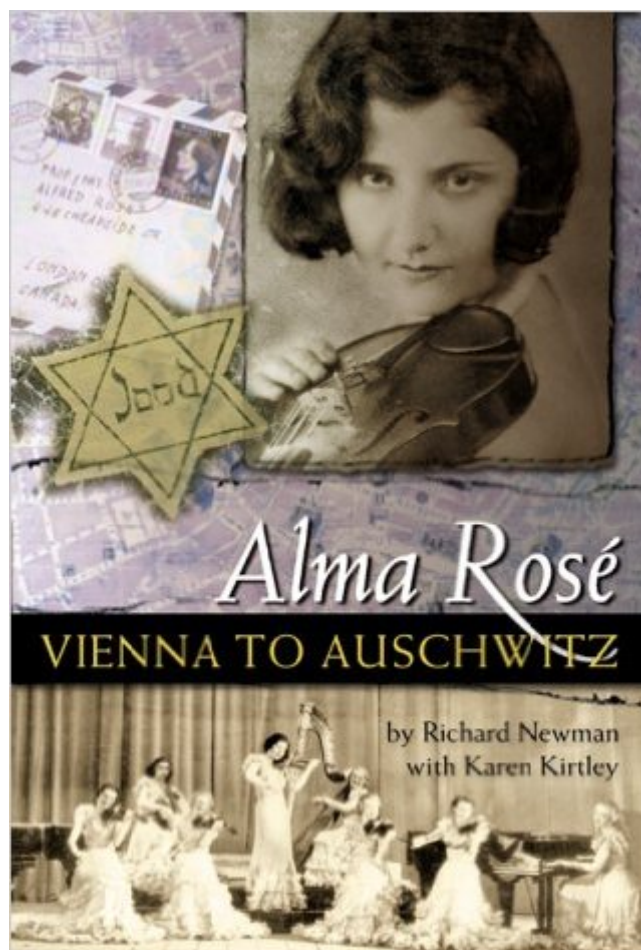


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# Alma Rose: Vienna To Auschwitz



## Synopsis

Alma Ross's story first came to public attention through the intriguing 1980 film *Playing for Time*. The true story of this heroic woman is now told for the first time. Rose was born to musical royalty in Vienna when the imperial city was the center of the musical world. Her father was violinist and concertmaster Arnold Rose; her uncle was Gustav Mahler. In the 1930s she founded and led a brilliant women's touring orchestra. Like many other Viennese Jews, the Rose family was caught off guard by the rise of Nazism. Alma assisted her family to flee but was herself caught and deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. There, Alma again formed and led a women's orchestra---the only women's musical ensemble in the Nazi camps---thereby saving the lives of some four dozen women. In telling Alma's full story, the authors honor her and the valiant prisoner-musicians for whom music meant life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Alma Ros's Vienna to Auschwitz" is a poignant and beautifully related account of one the most extraordinary women who ever lived. Alma Ros, the daughter of the most renowned violinist of Vienna who was concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic and the first violinist of perhaps the finest string quartet in the world, was also the niece of Gustav Mahler. She became a fine violinist and musician in her own right, taking musical Vienna by storm, and creating a famous and successful women's orchestra which toured throughout Europe. Soon after the Nazi takeover in Austria, the Jewish family left for England where Alma continued to give concerts, playing even in her father's illustrious quartet. But she also took the risk of concertizing in Holland. She was trapped

by the sudden Nazi blitzkrieg and takeover of Holland, tried to escape, was betrayed and caught by the Nazis, and sent to Auschwitz-Birkenwald. It was at Auschwitz that Alma's extraordinary life takes on new dimensions: within the death camp, she creates and directs a women's orchestra composed not only of traditional symphonic instruments, but also of guitars, mandolins, accordions, and recorders, playing arrangements made and copied by women inmates of Auschwitz. Because of Alma's work at Auschwitz, hundreds of women were saved from the Nazi gas chambers; in fact, many survivors contributed to the book through interviews with the author. This story has been told before, but never as well as Richard Newman and Karen Kirtley relates it. Mr. Newman took twenty-two years of painstaking work of research and interviewing before completing the book. In the Editor's Note, Ms. Kirtley points out Mr.

My review is best expressed in a letter to the authors. While the letter speaks little of the content of the story, it does the reflections of the reader: I have just finished your book, Alma RosÃ©, Vienna to Auschwitz and felt compelled to write a word of thanks for such an excellent book. I have lived in Vienna for 23 years and in our early years I walked by the RosÃ© house in the Pyrker gasse each day, taking our oldest to the Volksschule. Of course, at that time, I had no idea the importance of number 23. Through your book and others of Viennese history I have gained a profound sense of history that a midwest American, growing up in the suburbs, rarely has a chance to learn. We have since moved from the 19th district, but each time I am in the city the enormity of life that has gone on before me deeply tugs at my soul. The stones I walk on have carried the lives of so many, each woven into a history of joy and often of utter loss and evil. I believe your book was one of those that has allowed me to enter into a life past. Through it I have gained new perspective that the joy and beauty I now enjoy is not without the marring of tragedy and sorrow of many who were innocent. I was also able with my family to visit Auschwitz this summer. The visit has left a lasting impact on our minds and it certainly allowed me to have even deeper sense of personal presence as I read your book. The immensity of the tragedy leaves one lost for thoughts and words. The life of Alma RosÃ© puts a reality to that part of history that seems unbelievable, yet was played out in the very places I have lived and walked.

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