

"speaks to the kind of relationship a people have with their place." With this interpretation, Ricks tries to find a connection to his own country even as he spends his voyage's last day paddling through a scum of oily water and past an island prison with high walls and razor wire. The book truly conveys the experiences of a long journey through remarkable terrain. Readers will share some of Ricks's elation over natural beauty and hard-won insight. But they will also be frustrated by a narrative that is as unnecessarily arduous as the journey it recounts was inevitably so. (July)

☆ TRIFLES MAKE PERFECTION:

The Selected Essays of Joseph Wechsberg

Edited by David Morowitz. Godine, \$24.95 (308p) ISBN 1-56792-092-X
Evoking a world in which "a happy amateur string quartet is a greater miracle even than a happy marriage" and good restaurants are considered "temples," Wechsberg, a Czech émigré and an essayist of Old World elegance, published regularly in the *New Yorker* and *Gourmet* from the 1940s until his death in Vienna in the late 1970s. Morowitz, a physician and fan who corresponded with him, has assembled this collection as "a bright window to a lost, perhaps lovelier world." A Jew who lost his father in WWI and his mother in Auschwitz, Wechsberg more often wrote about fine violins, wines and hotels than human tragedy. He ends one essay by remarking that "the bitter truth is that roughly half of the instruments that Antonio Stradavari made are lost forever." Another lovingly describes eating a lunch in a French restaurant that comes as near to gastronomic perfection as possible. His essay on the Budapest String Quartet compares its members' characters to the "tempo[s] of the four movements of Beethoven's Opus 59." Nonetheless, the sadder facts of European history have an impact, if indirectly, on the account of a restaurant register that is left blank from 1940 to 1944, and on a passing reference to America's 1945 bombing of the Viennese opera house. The collection ends with Wechsberg's saddest work, "The Children of Lidice," in which he talks to a Czech boy about his forced "Germanization" during the Nazi occupation. Here, even more than in his other pieces, Wechsberg conveys his unassuming view of the human condition through a complex combination of joys and sorrows. Subtle, old-fashioned style like Wechsberg's may have fallen out of favor, but this book forcefully brings back its pleasures. (July)

EVERYTHING IMUS:

All You Ever Wanted to Know About Don Imus

Jim Reed. Birch Lane, \$18.95 (224p)

ISBN 1-55972-930-9

In this fan's tribute to the "I-Man," the legendary radio shock jock Don Imus, Reed lovingly recapitulates every tasteless detail of Imus's rise to media infamy. Acknowledgments to "listeners who are as crazy about Imus as I am" and to anonymous members of Imus newsgroups on the Net who "helped me dig a little deeper into Imus history" may give a sense of Reed's research methods and partiality to his subject. After glancing at Imus's childhood as a bad seed on his family's Arizona ranch, and his brief stint in the Marines, Reed tracks his hero's airwave ascendance, beginning with his 1970 "Disk Jockey of the Year" award and ending with his unceremonious 1977 firing from NBC. Even the news that Imus's mid-career struggles with cocaine and alcohol addiction were largely to blame for the firing doesn't put a damper on Reed's celebratory tone. About half the book chronicles the rivalry that has dominated Imus's career since 1982, when brash upstart Howard Stern arrived at New York's WNBC. Timelines chronicle the fight, while charts compare the virtues of Imus to those of his nemesis (Imus wins every time). Stern may currently be ahead in the ratings, but Reed never gives up hope. Reed also includes lists of Imus's philanthropic acts, on-air characters and "Disgruntled Sponsors." A doting, awkward tribute to the man who once said, "The two most important things that happened in radio were Marconi invented it and I decided to talk on it," this book is brain candy for hardcore loyalists, but will prove a turnoff for the unconverted. (July)

A PRODUCER'S BROADWAY JOURNEY

Stuart Ostrow. Praeger, \$19.95 (198p)

ISBN 0-275-95866-3

A man who has done everything on Broadway, Ostrow began as a protégé of composer-lyricist Frank Loesser, going on to direct (Meredith Willson's 1963 *Here's Love*), write (*Stages*, 1978) and, mostly, produce: *1776* (1969), *Pippin* (1972), *M. Butterfly* (1988). As other outlets for his energy, he also joined the University of Houston faculty and established the Musical Theatre Lab as "a safe place in which to experiment." The Lab brought professionals and students together for 27 productions, including *Really Rosie* by Maurice Sendak and Carole King. Here, Ostrow offers a celebration of the Broadway musical and "a meditation on what caused its decline," looking back over half a century of Broadway's best from 1950's

Guys and Dolls all the way to *Rent*. Ostrow, has a penchant for brisk, tart sentences and pulls no punches, admitting that producing has entailed "a few bargains with the Angel of Death." In two startling pages, he explains how *Scratch* (1971), his effort to bring together "two American poets dramatizing folklore with song," collapsed: "It was a risky idea from the start, but when Bob Dylan betrayed us, 79-year-old Archibald MacLeish was devastated." He also divulges his role in the origins of Bob Fosse's 1979 movie *All That Jazz*. The project began as a collaboration, a "string quartet" about four characters. But when Ostrow fled the superficiality of Hollywood, Fosse turned it into a symphonic "extravaganza." Ostrow takes such delight in quoting his favorite lyrics that the small-type copyright list fills eight pages. Readers with their own Broadway recollections may wish a CD had been packaged along with this trove of tunes, dances and reminiscences. (July)

IN THE WINGS: A Memoir

Diana Douglas Darrid, foreword by

Michael Douglas. Barricade, \$22

(368p) ISBN 1-56980-151-7

Born Diana Dill to a privileged family in Bermuda in 1923, Darrid, the mother of actor Michael Douglas and former wife of Kirk, writes that she acquired an "English schooling reticence" during her teens. Indeed, an admirable reserve and dignity characterize this memoir. Working as a Powers Agency model, she graced the cover of *Life* in the early 1940s. She met Kirk Douglas in New York City, and although their subsequent marriage resulted in two children, Michael and Joel, it ended quickly. They separated in the early '50s as he rose to fame on the strength of *Champion* (1949), while she played a supporting role in Joseph Mankiewicz's *House of Strangers* (1949). She later married the actor-producer-novelist Bill Darrid; they remained together for 37 years until his death in 1992. Her own career was prolific if not stellar, including a dozen movies, live television, Broadway (Edward Albee's *Everything in the Garden*) and several stints as a regular on *Days of Our Lives*. Darrid tells anecdotes well, amusingly relating how her car broke down on a deserted California highway 20 minutes before curtain time, and how the actor Murvyn Vye, unable to handle screaming directions from Otto Preminger, became "trembling and incoherent" on stage. As one might expect, a host of celebrities make cameos, but Darrid does not linger on them. Even her friend, the "charming and funny" Brenda